Conflict in the Unions

The Communist Party of Australia, Politics & the Trade Union Movement, 1945-60

Douglas Jordan

About the author

Doug Jordan (1951-2014) was longtime socialist and activist in the progressive movement. From 1972 to 1998 he was a tram conductor in Melbourne (with a spell on Adelaide's trams in the late seventies), was active in union affairs and participated in the great 1990 strike. Jordan was a co-presenter of the weekly City Limits program on Melbourne's Community Radio 3CR. He was also active in the movement to defend public housing. At the time of his death he was working on an unofficial history of the Victorian Tramways Union.

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1. Introduction

This book examines the attempts of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) to inject Marxist ideas into the Australian trade union movement between 1945 and 1960. It will evaluate the character, levels and efficacy of political activity conducted by CPA union activists. Specifically, through an examination of the communist press and a wide range of diverse secondary sources, it will investigate CPA union activists' efforts to build trade union support for the peace movement, their attitudes to the postwar mass immigration program, and their support for the emerging Aboriginal civil rights movement. Because of the prevailing Cold War atmosphere, almost any issue associated with the CPA was viewed with either suspicion or outright hostility. Yet, these activists consciously chose to pursue their political goals as communists. Theirs was a generation shaped by the Great Depression, the rise of fascism and World War II. These experiences had instilled in them both a consistent anti-capitalist outlook and a blind admiration for the Soviet Union and its leadership. This duality was to shape their political activity in the trade unions.

In 1944-45 the CPA reached the peak of its popularity which included the leadership of a significant section of the Australian trade union movement. It was confident that this would continue into the postwar period. However, within two or three years much of this support was eroded due to a combination of national and international factors. The 1950s was a time when the CPA was isolated from much of the Australian labour movement and its advocacy of political trade unionism found only limited support beyond its own periphery. By 1960 there were signs that this isolation was slowly coming to an end. In 1954 the split in the Australian Labor Party (ALP) removed many of the extreme anti-communists from the ALP and opened up new opportunities for collaboration between members of the two parties. In 1958, the establishment of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA) with broad trade union support, saw the issue of Aboriginal human rights become an important issue in Australian and international political debate. The trade union panel at the 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress witnessed the start of the return of non-communist led

unions to active involvement in the peace movement which echoed some of the earlier traditions of the Australian labour movement. These developments allowed the CPA to move back towards the mainstream of the Australian labour movement. Thus, the study of the period between 1945 and 1960 can provide important new insights into the nature of CPA trade union activity in an era when it faced many difficulties in gaining support for its policies.

The significance of 'political' trade unionism has often been underestimated in the relevant literature. Ian Turner, for example, a CPA member from the mid-1940s to the late-1950s, believed that '… most communist trade unionists were militant trade unionists first and communists second. The party often complained about it'.[1] Tom Sheridan has suggested that many communists were ideologically illiterate and 'relatively unsophisticated intellectually'.[2] While these claims were true for some individuals, it cannot be applied to the majority of communist union activists. Yet, during the Cold War trade unions became a battleground between the competing ideologies. This had a particular resonance in Australia due to the relatively widespread influence of the CPA in the trade unions. The central question that this book examines is the extent to which communist union activists fulfilled their role as leaders of the working class. This involved not only politically educating their co-workers but also, convincing them that trade unions had an important role to play in the ending of the capitalist system.

What distinguished communist union activists from other trade union militants was their broader understanding of the role of trade unions. Marxism insisted that trade union activity could not be limited to economic struggles but had to address broader political issues. The challenge that faced communist union activists was to how to implement this policy. They were faced with a number of immediate obstacles. In particular, the climate of the era made it difficult for any issue linked to the CPA to gain widespread support. They were also faced with an ALP, the dominant working-class party, that was bitterly hostile to the political causes that the CPA was promoting. Many union members accepted the industrial militancy of their communist leaders but did not support their political outlook.

This situation led some communist union activists to retreat from raising political issues in the trade unions. When they did this they faced a constant barrage of criticism for 'economism' — that is the abandonment of revolutionary trade union politics. However, many others abided by CPA policy and raised political issues in the unions. This book will examine the ways in which they did this. In doing so it will extend our knowledge of the period.

The CPA insisted that all its members regularly attend Marxist educational classes.

This would have exposed them to many of the core texts of Marxism. The aim of this education was to transform militant trade unionists into communist activists and it had an impact. For example, Harry Pollitt, even after he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain concedes that he was regarded as a militant trade unionist and not as a communist. It was not until after he had the opportunity to study the writings of Marx and Lenin and the lessons of the Russian Revolution that he was able to become a seasoned communist activist.[3] Communist trade union officials were often members of leading party bodies, both at the state and national levels, and therefore in a position to determine both the shape and direction of party activity. They could not perform this task unless they had a relatively high degree of political understanding.

Communist Party of Australia

The CPA was not the first significant revolutionary organisation to emerge in Australia. A decade earlier the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) challenged the belief that Australia was a workers' paradise which had successfully solved the class divisions that plagued other countries.[4] Despite their fundamental differences, the IWW and the CPA shared certain similarities: support for a revolutionary change in Australia and an enduring hostility to the reformist approach of the ALP. Like the IWW, which was influenced by American radical traditions, the CPA's program was also shaped by external forces — in this case, the leaders of the Soviet Union.

In his pamphlet *What is to be Done?*, first published in 1902, Lenin argued for a new concept of a revolutionary working-class party.[5] Lenin's arguments had two major elements. First, a working-class party had to be selective in its membership and be composed of professional revolutionaries committed to the destruction of the capitalist system. The working class could never reach full revolutionary consciousness by itself and revolutionary ideas had to be brought to them by professional revolutionaries. The party had to be organised on the basis of democratic centralism — full democracy for all members to determine policy, but a decision once made was binding on all members. Second, trade unions could not confine themselves to economic demands but must address political issues as well. In these political struggles assisted by the revolutionary party, the working class would ultimately reach a revolutionary consciousness. Failure to do this would limit trade union politics to 'bourgeois politics of the working class'.[6] These ideas were a dramatic break from the practices of the world's social democratic parties, including the ALP. However, after the formation of the Third International (Comintern) in 1919, they were the founding principles that became binding on all affiliates.

The CPA's formation in October 1920 entrenched already existing differences

between reformist and revolutionary approaches into a permanent and often bitter division. With the formation of the CPA came the call from Moscow to challenge the reformist social democratic parties. However, an internal impetus was the disillusionment that many labour movement activists experienced with the early ALP governments. This was exemplified by Vere Gordon Childe's *How Labour Governs*.[7] At the centre of this disillusionment was his condemnation of the 'selfish and cowardly opportunism which has distinguished the workers' parliamentary representatives'.[8] The refusal of ALP parliamentarians to abide by party policy and the inability of the party rank-and-file to reverse this led many radicals to look to new methods of organisation through which they could achieve their gaol of a socialist society. The success of the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917 was to provide that model.

The history of the CPA therefore cannot only be understood in the Australian context. For most of its first 40 years its overall policies were determined by its links to the international communist movement, and in particular the Soviet leadership. As we have seen many of these ideas were not necessary incompatible with Australia's own radical traditions. The divisions in the Australian labour movement between revolutionaries and reformists were entrenched well before the Bolshevik Revolution. Those Australian revolutionaries who turned to the Russian Bolsheviks did so for understandable reasons. Despite the isolation of the CPA after the ebb of the radical upsurge that followed World War I they remained confident they made the correct decision and that history was on their side.

From the mid-1920s onwards a profound change started to occur in the international communist movement. The early years of the Comintern were marked by intense and democratic debates over tactics and policies before a decision was made — which was then binding on all affiliates. However, following the death of Lenin, Stalin, after a bitter power struggle assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union and subsequently, the international communist movement. Under his leadership the Comintern was transformed from a genuinely democratic international organisation into one where the interests of the Soviet leadership were paramount. The polices that were developed by the new leadership were introduced without debate and, constantly changed as the political interests of the Soviet leadership evolved. The Stalinist leadership abandoned the revolutionary internationalism of the Lenin era and substituted it with absolute loyalty to its policies. This often meant that the actions of the world's communist parties actions were directed at ensuring the survival of the Soviet leadership, rather than advancing a revolution in their own countries. These policies were then blindly followed by the majority of the world's communists despite the often negative impact they had in their own countries.[9]

For communist trade union activists these sometimes rapid changes in politics on occasions had a significant impact. Between around 1948 and 1952 the CPA entered a new period of extreme hostility towards the ALP, that was similar in many ways to the excesses of the early 1930s. The change in policy was the product of a new analysis by the Cominform — a de facto replacement for the Comintern which had been abolished in 1943. The development had repercussions for many communist union activists. It limited their ability to gain support for the political causes they wished to promote in the trade unions and the policy also effectively ended the opportunities for co-operation with ALP members for half-a decade. Only when the policy was abandoned by the Soviet Union leadership in the mid-1950s was it possible for communists to return to the previous policy. Thus, the close connection between the CPA and the international communist movement shaped the overall direction of Australian communist union activists.

There are several substantive histories of the CPA. In general, these histories are often sympathetic to CPA activists, acknowledge their contributions to the labour movement, but regard the introduction of Leninist ideas as incompatible with the earlier traditions of the labour movement. They either call for a return to these traditions or accept the failure of the communist project. However, as Humphrey McQueen has demonstrated, one tradition of the early Australian labour movement was infused with working-class racism.[10] It was from this tradition that the CPA, assisted by the Comintern, consciously attempted to break and to build a party based on Leninist principles and internationalism.

Alastair Davidson's *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History*, was the first history of the CPA written by a non-party functionary.[11] Its central argument was that CPA history was marked by conflict between Australian radical traditions and an imposed, alien tradition from the Soviet Union. It was published when there was considerable ferment in the CPA and a new leadership was departing from the rigid Stalinist framework that had been a central feature of the CPA for four decades. This involved taking an increasingly critical stance towards some of its own history. Davidson's book, originally a PhD thesis, was linked to this approach. The new leadership collaborated with Davidson and made available its records.

A similar approach was adopted when E.A. Bacon, a leading party functionary, published a history of the post-World War II CPA.[12] In particular, it claimed there were 'left sectarian' trends in the CPA that reached a peak with a decision to challenge the ALP for the political leadership of the working class in 1949.[13] This theme is common, as we shall see, to most of the other CPA histories and memoirs. Perhaps, the most explicit expression of this view is W.J. Brown's *The Communist Movement and Australia:*

An Historical Outline-1890s to 1980s.[14] However, he outlines the important role played by party leaflets, job bulletins, party sponsored meetings in the workplace and the contributions they made in raising the political consciousness of workers.[15] This lends support to the focus of this book. Most earlier attempts by the CPA to write its own history produced little more than Stalinist mythology tracts.[16] There was a constant tendency to ignore the contributions of earlier revolutionary groups such as the IWW. The CPA was always presented as the final outcome of a revolutionary process. Any mistakes committed by the CPA were minimised or attributed to a previous leadership that had since been removed from office.

As Davidson acknowledges, his book 'probably suffers from the defects inherent in a pioneer work'.[17] In the 40 years since it was published there is more documentary evidence available to historians. This includes material from the Comintern archives in Moscow, which have shed new light on the history of the CPA. In addition there are many sources now available in Australia such as the CPA's own archives, memoirs of party members and union records. These have made some of Davidson's judgements untenable. In particular, as this book will demonstrate, communist-led union involvement in the peace movement was more extensive than Davidson suggests. Stuart Macintyre's *The Reds* adopts a similar approach to that of Davidson.[18] It was commissioned by the Search Foundation, which inherited the resources of the CPA after it voted to dissolve, and is the first of a projected two-volume history. Arguably, he insufficiently recognises that Stalinism was a betrayal of Leninism, not its logical outcome. The emphasis in both histories is often on the negative impact of Stalinism and the distortions this imposed on the party. As a result, this emphasis underestimates the idealism that often shaped the activism of the majority of the CPA membership. These conflicting trends often existed in the CPA simultaneously and both need to be recognised.

In contrast, Robin Gollan's *Revolutionaries and Reformists* presents an alternative view.[19] It ends in 1955 shortly before Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes and the Soviet invasion of Hungry: two events that had a profound impact on world Communism. Gollan's history is much broader than the narrow institutional focus of Davidson's, and examines the social forces outside the CPA. By placing events in their wider historical context, Gollan writes with greater sympathy about developments in the CPA. In particular, the negative impact of Stalinism is outlined without becoming a narrow anti-communist condemnation. In the 1930s and the 1940s there was no other viable revolutionary alternative to the CPA. The frequent changes in policy from the late 1920s onwards and the support given to them by party are treated with sympathy, not contempt. Gollan convincingly argues that CPA was shaped not only by

its links to the international communist movement, but also by Australian radical traditions. To emphasise one factor over another is to misunderstand the character of the CPA.

Tom O'Lincoln's *Into the Mainstream: The Decline of Australian Communism* is a Trotskyist analysis of the CPA.[20] Its strength is in its understanding of Stalinism and its negative impact on the party. His analysis of the immediate postwar period is persuasive as he correctly emphasises that the subsequent criticism of CPA leaders from this period, of practising 'left sectarianism' towards the ALP, provided the justification for an adaptation to the ALP bureaucracy and its reformist policies.[21] However, he almost certainly underestimates the extent of this 'ultra-left' period, the negative impact it had on the CPA and the extent to which it became isolated due to its own actions.

A number of former CPA functionaries have published their memoirs. The first to appear was from Ralph Gibson.[22] Others were published after the radical revolt of the 1970s ebbed and the prospects of a fundamental social change seemed remote.[23] These memoirists shared several common features. All joined the CPA after Stalinism was imposed on the party and during their time as functionaries they helped to enforce its rigid doctrines. The life of a party functionary was demanding. It involved an absolute commitment to the CPA and its aims. This often meant the destruction of personal relationships as well as acceptance of a parsimonious lifestyle. However, it was a commitment made willingly at the time. The central theme that emerges from all these memoirs is the warning about the dangers of ultra-leftism. This meant that the CPA had to avoid the error of adopting a program too far in advance of the ALP. These memoirs make apt criticisms of some of the excesses of the CPA, particularly in the 1940s. Undoubtedly in this period there was a return to some of the elements of the Third Period sectarian attitudes. To a large extent conflict between the Chifley government and the CPA was unavoidable. The government had endorsed the western alliance against the Soviet Union. On the economic front, the government's refusal to end wage pegging and its opposition to a shorter working week brought it into conflict with the trade union movement. However, in the late 1940s the CPA used a language that raised barriers between it and the workers it wanted to recruit.

CPA and the trade union movement

Communist influence in the trade unions grew from the mid 1930s onwards as Australia commenced recovery from the Great Depression and reached its peak in the immediate postwar years. J.B. Chifley later acknowledged that the success of communists was based on the fact that incumbent trade union officials had 'not been active

enough in fighting for their members' interests', and that communists had worked 'like beavers' and their methods 'obtained benefits for their members of their union where old methods did not succeed'.[24] However, the crucial point is that communist union activists had a broader agenda than militant trade unionism, whose aim was to secure the best possible pay and working conditions. It was this broader political agenda that differentiated communist union activism from that of other militant currents or its more conservative rivals. It is an examination of this activity that forms the core of this work.

Tom O'Lincoln's pamphlet, *The Militant Minority: Organising Rank-and-File Workers in the Thirties*, is a study of communist union activity during the peak of the Great Depression.[25] As early as 1920 the Comintern had insisted that all affiliates work within the established trade unions, even though they may be reformist or reactionary. For the Comintern leaders unions were crucial organisations: they represented the majority of organised workers and communists had to seek leadership positions within them. It was one of the more important lessons that communist union activists learnt from the Comintern. It was a rejection of ideas, often prevalent in radical sections of the labour movement, that revolutionaries had to build new revolutionary unions. After its formation the Militant Minority Movement (MMM) affiliated to the Red International of Labour Unions replacing the NSW Trades and Labour Council.

The MMM was established as the CPA entered the 'Third Period'. This meant repeated denouncements of the ALP and the majority of trade union leaders as 'social fascists'. This limited the ability of the MMM to grow. While this position was imported from the Soviet leadership, it dovetailed with the experiences of many Australian trade unionists and the unemployed. The failure of the labour movement leadership to solve the social crisis generated by the Great Depression made these ideas acceptable to communist trade union activists. Despite this approach they continued to work within the established trade unions seeking to win leadership positions. It was during this period that their activity in the MMM and the associated Unemployed Workers' Movement (UWM) earned them the respect of many trade unionists. This was to provide them with the foundation through which they began to win union leadership positions. Many of the later communist union leaders received their initial political training in the Militant Minority or UWM. The skills they learnt there were to be invaluable once they had assumed their union leadership roles.

L.L. Sharkey joined the CPA in 1922 and was elected to the party's central committee in 1927. From 1948 onwards as the general secretary, he emerged as its main theoretician on all key issues.[26] His pamphlet, *The Trade Unions*, was reissued numerous times

from 1942, when it was first published, and provides a clear indication of the CPA approach to the trade unions.[27] Sharkey explained in unambiguous terms both the importance of trade unions to the CPA and the party's expectations of its trade union cadres. The importance of the CPA trade union officials in the production of the pamphlet is indicated by Sharkey's acknowledgement of the role played by 'Comrades Wright and Thornton' in its development, as well as Jack McPhillips for supplying data about the postwar period in the later editions.[28] These were three of the leading CPA union activists and it tied them directly to the political ideas in the pamphlet.

Sharkey's central point was a restatement of Lenin's views about the role of politics in trade unions and apply those views to Australian conditions. The aim of CPA union activity was to 'kill this reactionary idea' that there be no politics in the trade unions or that they be limited to reformist or those acceptable to the ALP.[29] In an explicit condemnation of some CPA union officials, Sharkey criticised those who suffered from 'trade union narrowness', who failed to 'popularise party policy outside purely economic and organisational fields' and neglected to study 'Marxism-Leninism and its application to their problems'.[30] In 1981 McPhillips updated Sharkey's pamphlet with the publication of *Communists and the Trade Unions*. McPhillips again emphasised the importance of trade unions raising political issues as a critical part of their day-to day activities.[31]

In 1964 the party's trade union record came under attack in a booklet from E.F. Hill, the former Victorian functionary. Hill explained that the main activity of a communist trade union official occurred in an environment where it was difficult to maintain a revolutionary outlook. The constant pressure on communist union officials to improve working conditions diverted time away from the task of raising the political awareness of their membership.[32] Hill's view echoed that of Sharkey and confirms the constant demands from the party hierarchy that communist union officials perform their dual roles expected of them: that of militant trade union leaders winning improvements for their membership and as political educators of the working class With a trade union movement dominated by officials with a non-revolutionary outlook only the strongest of Marxist-Leninists could continue to perform both tasks.[33] By the mid-1960s Hill believed that the political degeneration of communist union officials was a contributing factor in the CPA's abandonment of revolutionary politics.[34]

Sondra Silverman's article is a useful introduction to the history and nature of trade union political strikes in Australia.[35] As she notes there is a long history of political strikes by Australian trade unions.[36] Silverman lists a number of political strikes commencing with the anti-conscription struggles of 1916.[37] However, one of the earliest political strikes occurred in 1865 when Port Phillip stevedores refused to

load the Confederate raider the *Shenandoah*.[38] These earlier forms of political strikes occurred well before the formation of the CPA. Thus, to a large extent, the CPA could claim that its support for political strikes was consistent with Australian labour movement traditions.

As Sharkey noted political strikes challenge the government, the state and capitalist power.[39] It was this potential power of trade unions that led many conservative trade union leaders to reject not only political strikes but to limit strikes to a weapon of last resort.[40] The divisions between the CPA and conservative unions were clear. In the post-World War II period it became increasingly difficult for the CPA to mobilise support for political unionism. There was one exception to this. In the aftermath of World War II communist-led unions were able to mobilise wide support for bans on Dutch shipping in support of Indonesian independence. This position was broadly consistent with the Chifley government's and helps to explain why they took no action to remove the bans.[41]

In the light of further evidence Silverman's claim that 'Political strikes were supported at all times by the Communist Party' needs to be modified.[42] In 1947 the Sydney based national leadership overruled attempts led by Victorian CPA unions to impose bans on the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range. This occurred before the Chifley government passed legalisation prohibiting industrial action at defence projects.[43] The experience shows that the authority to make policy in the CPA rested with the full-time functionaries and that many communist trade union officials accepted the need for a disciplined and organised response to the use of trade union power.

Greg Mallory's *Uncharted Waters* examines two instances of political action by trade unions.[44] These were the 1938 Port Kembla 'Pig Iron' dispute and the introduction of the Green Bans by the NSW Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) in the 1970s. In both instances the driving forces behind the industrial action were members of the CPA. At a basic level this indicates support for the ideas of political trade unionism by at least some communist trade union activists over a long period. They are also illustrative of the wide nature of political trade unionism adopted by the CPA. Central to the CPA approach was the concept of the 'social responsibility' of trade unions to use their industrial strength to change policies which it considered to be detrimental to the interests of the majority of the Australian working class. The bans on the export of pig-iron to Japan were part of the CPA's opposition to the growth of fascism, as well as a concrete act of solidarity with the Chinese people who were resisting a Japanese invasion. The 'Green Bans' raised the issue of how workers' labour power was to be used. The BLF objected to their labour being used to foster capitalist development instead of being directed to socially useful projects such as affordable housing.

Trade union histories

Sheridan's *Division of Labour* is a compelling and definitive account of this conflict between the two wings of the labour movement.[45] At the centre of many of the industrial struggles was the CPA. However, as Sheridan clearly demonstrates, the CPA was not alone in its support of industrial militancy. After 15 years of depression and war workers were finally in a position to achieve significant improvements in conditions, and they refused to let the opportunity slip. There were widespread fears that another depression was imminent and that workers had to make gains before its onset. During this period the CPA moved steadily away from its wartime collaboration with the Labor government to a policy of outright hostility. Sheridan clearly demonstrates that the CPA mistakenly believed that trade unionists' determination to achieve their economic aims had translated into political support for the CPA. Quite clearly it had not. Once unionists had won their demands they were no longer prepared to accept unnecessary strikes that appeared to have little purpose. When the communist-led coal miners' strike commenced in June 1949 it quickly became a battle of wills between the CPA and the Chifley government. The almost total isolation of the CPA in the labour movement was demonstrated when draconian legislation passed to break the strike went largely unopposed by the trade union movement.

The Seamen's Union of Australia (SUA) was one of the major unions that had a significant communist presence on its leadership bodies for more than four decades. In 1981 a history of the union's first 100 years was published.[46] More recently, the union's history has been brought up to date with a commissioned history that ends with the amalgamation of the SUA with other waterfront unions to establish the Maritime Union of Australia.[47] All authors are sympathetic to the political ideals that were pivotal to the SUA's activities. A radical political culture had deep roots in the union that went beyond the CPA membership. In part this was the product of the bitter industrial relations throughout most of the union's history. This provided the initial stimulus to an anti-capitalist outlook. Moreover, the frequent contact with seamen from other countries meant that SUA members were more resistant to traditional working-class racism. The peace movement had a particular resonance for union members. Its members transported war materials into the war zones so questions of peace and war remained in the forefront for the SUA. Its internationalism was also evidenced by its consistent support for the Aboriginal human rights movement. These decisions were made by the rank and file of the union and there was no guarantee that the union's leadership decisions would be endorsed by the membership. From 1941 to 1978 Eliot V. Elliott was the communist SUA federal secretary. He emerges as a complex individual, hated and loved at times, but someone who used the force of his

personality to convince his membership to support radical policies.

The Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) was a kindred union of the SUA. It shared a common political framework and took part in many common struggles. Margo Beasley's history of the union is a detailed account of the union and its support for militant and political unionism.[48] This can be traced to similar factors that produced the militancy in the SUA. The obsessive determination of the Menzies' government determination to defeat the communist leadership of the WWF is authoritatively analysed by Sheridan in his history of the WWF in the 1950s and 1960s.[49] There were constant attempts to exaggerate CPA influence in the union by all parties involved, including the CPA. However, the extent and nature of CPA influence was revealed in the election for WWF general secretary in July 1961 following Jim Healy's retirement. He was replaced by C.H. Fitzgibbon, an ALP member. This demonstrated, once again, that support for communist union officials was often based on personal factors, rather than a complete endorsement of CPA policy.

In the late 1940s the Federated Ironworkers' Association (FIA) became a battleground between the CPA and anti-communist forces. This struggle for control of the union is extensively outlined in the history of the union.[50] It was sparked by the determination of the national communist-led FIA leadership to impose total control over the union's local branches. At the centre of the unfolding dispute was the Balmain branch in which, at least initially, Trotskyists had a leading role. An important factor in the defeat of the communist-led FIA was its inflexible attitudes and political arrogance displayed by its refusal to work with other progressive groups. This approach was in sharp contrast to many other communist union officials who were more willing to establish some limited forms of co-operation with non-CPA forces. Daphne Gollan's detailed account of the Balmain struggle explains the views of the anti-communist forces in the FIA.[51] Important additional confirmation of these accounts is supplied by the memoirs and biographies of some of the central individuals who participated in the dispute.[52]

The peace movement

Despite its brevity, Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy's *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History* is useful in helping to establish that there has been a continuous tradition of political opposition to Australia's involvement in war, or preparations for war, dating back to the Sudan War.[53] Their evidence confirms that the formation of the Australian Peace Council (APC) in 1949 and its explicit challenge to Australian government policy was not unique in Australian history. The key point that Saunders and Summy make is that the Australian peace movements have characteristically been

alliances between middle-class activists, often intellectuals or Christian pacifists, and radical socialist or trade union groups. This ability to unify diverse and potentially hostile groups has on occasions given the peace movements the political strength to challenge government policies. While the specific composition of the peace movements has changed over the decades this feature remained unchanged.

The role of trade union and radical socialist groups in the peace movement organisations is well documented. The relevant literature permits this book to argue that the positions adopted by the CPA in the 1950s can be traced back, in part, to the historical traditions of the Australian labour movement. Chris Healy, in *War Against War*, traces the involvement of labour movement organisations in anti-war activity stretching back to the Sudan War.[54] Joe Harris's *The Bitter Fight*, while lacking a rigid academic framework, provides important additional information about the early labour movement's involvement in anti-war activity.[55] Brian McKinlay's *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850-1975* is an invaluable source of original documents detailing the labour movement's involvement in anti-war activity over the last century.[56]

Verity Burgmann's account of the Hughes government's destruction of the Industrial IWW during the First World War, because of its consistent anti-war and anti-capitalist activities, parallels the attitudes that developed towards the CPA during the Cold War.[57] The pamphlet, *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts* by J.P. Forrester, a member of the NSW ALP central executive, was published in 1964.[58] It clearly indicates the views of the Catholic-influenced section of the labour movement and its extreme hostility towards the CPA. It ignores the earlier history of working-class opposition to Australian involvement in overseas wars. It was this hostility that prevented the CPA's attempts to build wider union support for the peace movement for most of the 1950s.

CPA and the Aboriginal movement

From the mid-1920s onwards the CPA was the most consistent working-class supporter of the Aboriginal human rights movement. It was the first labour movement organisation to develop a specific program of demands that addressed their issues. It then called on the rest of the labour movement to unite with it and force Australian governments at both the federal and state levels to alter their policies.

Tom Wright's *New Deal for Aborigines* was the most important expression of CPA policy on Aborigines.[59] It linked the oppression of Aboriginal people to the development of Australian capitalism. Among the key demands it raised was the demand for equal wages which was to be a focal point of CPA trade union activity in the postwar period. A similar approach was adopted by Gerald Peel, a CPA functionary, in his pamphlet

on the Torres Strait Islanders.[60] It called upon the Australian labour movement to support their campaign for democratic rights. These two pamphlets provide compelling evidence of the increasing importance that the CPA placed on the Aboriginal human rights movement in the postwar period. Bob Boughton has assessed the CPA's support for the Aboriginal human rights movement over a period of 50 years, and found that this involvement was extensive.[61] It included the development of a specific program that provided solutions to Aboriginal inequality, coverage of Aboriginal issues in party publications and active support for Aboriginal protests and strikes. As Boughton notes, the CPA's initial involvement in Aboriginal issues was a result of pressure from the Comintern. The Comintern demanded that all its affiliates address problems of racial oppression in their own countries — including both the indigenous population (if any) and migrant workers. But the extensive nature of CPA support for Aboriginal human rights over such a long period suggests that it cannot be simply ascribed to 'directions' from the Soviet Union. Many communists had a genuine commitment to Aboriginal issues, which was derived from their strong internationalist and humanist outlooks.

Andrew Markus has commented that the CPA was the only section of the labour movement that gave consistent support to the Aboriginal movement. In a similar way to Boughton he discerns the stimulus for this involvement coming from the Comintern in the period between 1928 and 1931.[62] Hannah Middleton's *But Now We Want The Land Back* is a Marxist history of the Aboriginal people.[63] While she is critical of the lack of a historical materialist approach in Wright's pamphlet she acknowledges its importance as a first attempt to develop a working-class policy on Aboriginal human rights. A key turning point in Aboriginal history came shortly after the conclusion of World War II when pastoral workers in the Pilbara cattle stations went on strike in May 1946. Max Brown's *The Black Eureka* is the most substantive account of the strike.[64] The title emphasises that the significance of the strike to many Aboriginal people was similar — as was the attitude of many white Australians — to the Eureka rebellion. Brown also describes the important role of the CPA in mobilising support for the strike both in Perth and more broadly from the trade union movement. At the commencement of the strike, Graham Alcorn was the CPA functionary who worked closely with Don McLeod, the white communist who had earned the trust of the strikers. Alcorn's recollections of the strike provide important evidence of the CPA policy at the time of the dispute.[65] His insistence that the strike's central demand had to be a wage demand led to conflict with McLeod who sought to address other, more political, issues.

In his history of Aborigines in Western Australia, McLeod described the

circumstances that led to his involvement in Aboriginal politics and the course of the strike.[66] However, while he acknowledged the role of the communist-led Seamen's Union in banning the transport of 'black' wool, McLeod made no reference to the broader support mobilised by the CPA. McLeod's history was published in 1984 and reflected his changed political outlook from the late 1940s. The high esteem in which McLeod was held by Aboriginal leaders is confirmed by Peter Coppin and Clancy McKenna, two of the leaders of the Aboriginal strikers.[67]

The CPA and migration

Markus's research has produced valuable insights into the development and introduction of the mass immigration program of the Chifley government in the late 1940s.[68] The original intention was that the overwhelming majority of migrants would come from Britain. When this failed Arthur Calwell, the minister for immigration, was eventually forced to turn to non-traditional sources for migrants. World War II had created millions of refugees and it was from this source that a significant proportion of Australia's first postwar migrants came. The majority were from Eastern Europe who refused to return to their homelands that were now under Soviet occupation. Markus correctly claims that communist-led unions' opposition to the arrival of refugees from Eastern Europe was based on their presumed political outlook. However, in order to build support for its campaign the CPA consciously appealed to the racist traditions of the Australian labour movement. communist-led unions such as the Miners' Federation, the FIA and the Victorian branch of the Australian Railways Union (ARU) were either successful in preventing the entry of Eastern European migrants into the workplace, or signed agreements that confined them to the lowest paying jobs. The Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) also conducted a sustained campaign against the building of migrant hostels.[69]

It can be seen, then, that there is an extensive literature on the involvement of Australian trade unions in political issues outside the customary province of union concerns. There is also discussion of the interest in and initiatives taken by communists — both at the rank-and-file and leadership levels — in such activity. However, there has been no systematic, scholarly study that attempts to analyse this activity over a range of fronts in a specific historical period. This is surprising. Trade unions were an important battleground during the Cold War between the competing ideologies. Many of these battles focused on the CPA and its activities in the trade unions. Much of the existing literature has focused on the industrial militancy of communist union activists and has neglected the political dimension. This work will ratify this omission by a detailed analysis of this activity. A detailed examination of what occurred in the trade

unions in this period is vital if we are to understand what happened in this era. This work seeks a coherent understanding of the extent, limits, contradictions and character of communist political activism in the union movement. It will therefore make a significant contribution to our understanding of the period.■

2. Communism and the Trade Unions: An Overview

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the scope and nature of CPA union activism in the immediate postwar period. In 1945 after more than two decades of intense activity the CPA was a leading force in the Australian trade union movement. A significant part of its membership was experienced cadres who were confident that they could continue to build the party's influence in the trade unions. During this period the party put considerable effort into educating both old and new members to ensure they could fulfil this role. Communist union activists threw themselves into the postwar struggles armed with a belief that a new social order was about to emerge. It was an era of intense political activity and communist union activists were prominent in all of the postwar struggles.

This chapter also examines some of the tensions that existed between communist union activists and the party leadership. In the late 1940s and early 1950s they faced a barrage of criticism by the leadership for their failure to project themselves as communist activists. As the Cold War intensified the demands by the party leadership became increasingly shrill and insistent. All party members had to meet their obligations even if it meant temporary isolation. The leadership was driven by its loyalty to the Cominform and its attempt to ensure that the party was a position where it could organise resistance to the growing war threat. The pressure on communist activists was often intolerable. In many cases they were not in a position to deliver what the party leadership demanded and expected. They coped in the best way they could, never fully abandoning political activity within their unions, but invariably doing less than the party leadership wanted.

The first significant campaign was the challenge to the Chifley government's economic policies. Almost immediately the war ended the restraints on industrial action also ended. The vast majority of Australian workers were determined to reap

the benefits of years of sacrifice and wanted quick improvements in living standards and working conditions. In particular, they wanted a 40-hour week and an end to the wage pegging system which blocked their bargaining power at a time of severe labour shortages. These demands ran counter to the Chifley government's economic policies and it was determined to resist them as long as possible. The CPA union activists threw themselves into the strike wave that was to achieve these demands by 1948. The success of the campaigns convinced the CPA that it had been solely responsible for the success of the campaigns and workers were now turning to the party for political leadership. It was mistaken. Once the demands had been achieved worker support for further industrial action rapidly ebbed, the CPA became increasingly isolated. Nevertheless it persisted with this view for a number of years and it was to distort the approach to trade union activity.

Simultaneously with the postwar strike wave, the CPA led the union movement support for Indonesian independence. For four years a series of bans was imposed on the transport of military goods to the Dutch forces attempting to regain their former colony. The action was broadly consistent with Chifley government policy and the strong anti-colonial outlook that emerged in the Australian labour movement in the aftermath of the war. For the CPA it provided the opportunity to demonstrate that trade unions had a wider role in the political process than one limited to questions of wages and working conditions. However, by 1948 with the onset of the Cold War, trade union activities outside these traditional areas were viewed with increasing hostility. The party was now regarded as the direct agent of the Soviet Union and its policies. This limited the ability and determination of the CPA union activists to pursue similar trade union actions on other issues.

The Cold War brought new problems for the party. The party congress in May 1948 formally endorsed the Cominform's analysis of the world situation. The new position required unrelenting hostility to social democracy, reminiscent of the 'social fascist' period of the early 1930s. This caused particular problems for many communist union activists. They worked in an environment where the overwhelming majority of their members and the bulk of other officials were supporters of the ALP. These communist activists were torn between their loyalty to the party to which they belonged and their survival as union officials. Already, they faced a powerful opposition from within the unions from the Industrial Groups who were determined to oust all communist influence from the Australian trade union movement. Under this pressure a number of communist union officials and activists began to limit their activity to economic issues only — which negated their role as communist activists.

The CPA at the end of the war

The German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 transformed the political fortunes of the CPA. This process was helped by the party's enthusiastic support for the war and its identification with the heroic resistance of the Red Army to the German invasion.[1] In 1944 the party changed its name to the Australian Communist Party to emphasise a new Australian identity.[2] When it held its 14th Congress at the Sydney Town Hall, August 9-12, 1945, there were perhaps as many as 5000 people present.[3] A report to the congress by party functionary Len Donald revealed that membership had swollen from 3569 in 1938 to 22,052 in 1944.[4] The increase in membership was paralleled by a growing influence of communists in the leadership of a significant proportion of the Australian trade union movement.

This influence was clearly revealed at the 1945 congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) where the CPA was the dominant influence in an alliance with other left forces that was able to command a majority of around 90 votes.[5] This congress was the high point of communist influence in the ACTU.[6] At the congress the CPA was not yet ready to break with the policies of the Chifley Labor government or with the majority of the mainstream trade union movement and the policies it advocated were consistent with this attitude.[7] Whilst it was starting to move towards a more critical analysis of some of these policies, it still wished to abide by the resolution of the 1943 congress which had called for the cooperation of 'all working class parties'. As a result it did not seek to replace Albert Monk or Percy Clarey, the two non-communist officials of the ACTU.[8] This decision was also an indication of the caution which the CPA was prepared to adopt at this stage in the way it applied its increased influence in the trade unions and the fact that, despite the significant communist representation in the ACTU, its central leadership remained moderate and willing to work with the Chifley government.[9]

During the war the ACTU had grown from a federation that represented only 10% of all union members to one that now covered about 30% of union members.[10] It was now in a much stronger position to influence government policy, particularly with an incumbent Labor administration that had worked closely with the union movement during the war in order to gain the cooperation it needed to mobilise the resources necessary to defeat the Japanese threat to Australia. On occasions this had involved direct discussions with leading communist union officials such as Ernie Thornton, Jim Healy and Eliot V. Elliot, who represented workers in industries that were essential to the war effort.[11] As Australia started to face the challenges of adjusting from a wartime economy to dealing with postwar problems (demobilisation of the armed forces, the necessity of ensuring full employment, and the challenge of avoiding another

depression similar to the 1930s), there was every indication that government and union cooperation would continue.

The CPA in theory now had the power to shape and potentially defeat any of the government's industrial and political polices with which it disagreed. This power was enhanced because the CPA's influence was not confined to the biannual ACTU Congress. It either led or had considerable influence in many of the state and provincial Trades and Labour Councils around Australia. These included the Ballarat,[12] Bendigo,[13] Newcastle,[14] Queensland[15] and Illawarra (later renamed South Coast in 1949)[16] to name only a few of the Trades and Labour Councils in which communist influence was strong. In addition, through its leadership of key unions that covered almost every sector of Australian industry there was a veritable army of around 300 communist part-time and full-time union officials who were in a position to advocate communist policies.[17] These officials were supported by a well-organised structure of party branches and fractions, as well as shop committees and other networks that provided avenues for non-communist militants to work with the party and support its program.

The challenge that now faced the CPA was whether it would continue its collaboration with the Chifley government or pursue a more militant policy in the trade unions. After the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the CPA had moved from its position at the start of the war — when Ernie Thornton, the general secretary of the FIA, had declared 'we made strikes our business'[18] — to a policy where it urged all Australian workers to fully support the war. It had opposed strikes, criticised worker absenteeism and supported the government's economic policies, including wage pegging and the dilution of tradesmen's standards.[19] The end of the war and the defeat of fascism had eroded the paramount need by the CPA to subordinate Australian working class interests to the defence of the Soviet Union. The CPA was now free from this restraint and could now consider pursuing a more aggressive policy in the trade unions in both the industrial and political arenas. The CPA also re-established contacts with the international communist movement, which had been disrupted by the war, and this was to have a major impact on the direction of its policies.

The CPA leadership

By the early 1930s the real power and authority in decision making in the CPA rested not with the rank-and-file members but with the central leadership of the party. At the apex of this leadership was the Central Committee Secretariat composed of full-time officials of the party.[20] In 1945 the secretariat members were J.B. Miles, general secretary, L.L. Sharkey, national president, and Richard Dixon, national assistant secretary.[21] Their power was never absolute but it was impossible for political or central

committee members to successfully challenge their political decisions. While in theory the secretariat was a subcommittee of the political and central committees, the reports it prepared for these bodies were never rejected. From the late 1940s onwards, after presentations by Sharkey or Dixon to these committees, those who followed would always open their remarks by saying, 'I agree with the report by Comrade Sharkey'.[22] This is compelling evidence that even communist union officials felt obliged to defer, at least in words, to these powerful party leaders.

The authority of these leaders rested on their fidelity to the Stalinist leadership in Moscow and their commitment to impose its decisions on their own party. They saw this as a necessity for advancing the socialist revolution to which they had devoted their adult lives. By social origin they were working class and had devoted enormous time and effort to educating themselves in Marxist theory. For example, after searching for work, Sharkey would go to the public library where he would remain till 10 o'clock at night reading widely on history, politics and philosophy. He mastered the complexities of dialectical materialism which helped convince him to become a Marxist.[23] Similarly, Dixon after being initially sceptical about radical politics became a convinced Marxist due to his contact with communist activists and his own study.[24] Jack Blake's initial reading commenced as a 16-year-old miner when he was handed a copy of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, by Charlie Nelson, a communist activist in Lithgow. From there he progressed steadily to training in Moscow before returning to Australia and becoming a leading party functionary.[25]

Before assuming their role as party leaders they had been active in the trade union or radical movements which helped give them the authority to impose discipline on other communist union activists. Sharkey had been a lift operator, and had been elected as vice-president of the NSW Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union in 1925 and as a delegate to the Labor Council in 1925.[26] Miles had been a stonemason active in the Queensland labour movement[27] and Dixon had been a railway clerk in Lithgow where he was recruited to the CPA by Charlie Nelson, a Miners' Federation activist.[28] Jack Blake was a former Lithgow miner who joined the CPA in 1925 and had been active in the Militant Minority Movement before moving to Moscow for intensive training in Marxist theory.[29] In 1949 Blake was brought to Sydney from Victoria to lead the party's peace movement as well as to direct the education of party members.[30] It was this secretariat that was to direct the party's activities as it moved into the postwar period.

Their social origin in the working class meant that the CPA leadership had a great deal in common with the majority of their membership. Once they assumed the role of a party functionary it was a hard and unrelenting task with their lives totally devoted

to achieving the party's goals. They survived on the basic wage or less and were expected to work long hours. Without the support of friends and family Victorian functionary Bernie Taft would have found it impossible to raise his two children. Nevertheless, he would feel guilty if he found himself home on a Saturday or Sunday night.[31] Similarly, shortly soon after returning from studying in China, Keith McEwan was appointed as a Victorian country organiser. With a young family he experienced many of the same problems as Bernie Taft.[32] In the early 1930s Ralph Gibson had rejected the prospect of a well paid university career for the uncertain life as a communist activist.[33] Before he had become a party functionary Sharkey had been the industrial advocate for the Miscellaneous Workers' Union and had been successful in gaining lift drivers their first increase for years.[34] The total dedication and self-sacrifice by party functionaries to the CPA's goals enhanced their ability to call on all party members to make similar levels of commitment. As we shall see many party members responded to this call and actively supported its campaigns.

The postwar strike wave

The struggle to defeat the Axis powers had involved enormous sacrifices by the Australian working class. The war had followed the Great Depression which had seen tens of thousands of Australians unemployed or underemployed for almost a decade. With the surrender of Japan in August 1945, many Australian workers in common with workers around the world looked forward with confidence to the construction of a new social order which would ensure that the bitter experiences of the previous 15 years would never be repeated.[35]

The failure of the Chifley government to deliver rapidly the expected improvements in living and working conditions sparked a massive wave of industrial unrest. After 15 years of depression and wartime austerity, Australian workers were now in a position, due to the high demand for labour, to achieve significant improvements in living standards and working conditions. The strike wave was an indication of the determination of the majority of Australian workers to seize this opportunity to bring to an end the wage pegging policies of the government and achieve a working week of 40 hours.[36] In doing so they entered into a major confrontation with the government which was determined to resist these demands for as long as possible.[37] The opponents of the CPA often portrayed the strikes as part of an international communist conspiracy aimed at wrecking postwar economic recovery in Australia and other western democracies. However, similar strike waves occurred in Britain, the USA and Western Europe where communist influence in trade unions was often much weaker than in Australia. Such claims were therefore more often a product of increasing Cold War

tensions rather than being based on any concrete evidence of an international communist conspiracy to foment strikes and thwart economic recovery.[38]

The CPA was an active and enthusiastic supporter of this strike wave and of the right of workers to restore their living standards.[39] One measure of this was that from August 1945 until the end of 1947 nine communist-led unions representing only 26% of the workforce were responsible for 84% of strikes.[40] These strikes often involved miners, seamen and waterside workers who had well established traditions of rank-and-file militancy that predated the emergence of their new communist leaderships and whose strike actions were often in defiance of their elected officials' recommendations. Despite being communist-led it was never possible for the leaderships of the unions involved to eradicate totally these rank-and-file actions and impose on their memberships their own understanding of revolutionary unionism.

It was these traditions that often challenged and undermined the CPA's insistence on the need for disciplined, well-organised and politically conscious strikes by workers, rather than the often spontaneous and anarchical actions that these workers readily adopted despite opposition from their communist-influenced leaderships. During the war Sharkey had denounced striking miners as 'crude unorganised militants' and 'because of their backwardness' they would never join the party.[41] Other writers have also acknowledged that industrial relations in the mining industry at this time were the product of longstanding bitter relationships between mine owners and workers and the strikes that occurred were not simply the product of communist activity.[42]

The CPA's support for the postwar strike wave reflected the sentiment that existed in significant layers of the working class to challenge the Chifley government's rigid economic policies. At first it acted to enhance party support within the trade unions.[43] However, once the majority of workers achieved their goals of pay increases and a reduction of the working week to forty hours, support for communist trade union militancy started to decline. Australian workers were not prepared to accept any explicit political challenges to the policies of Labor governments.[44] The 1947 ACTU Congress, which was held after two years of intense and widespread strike activity, witnessed a decline in the left-vote from the previous congress. Anti-communist unions now had a majority of the congress delegates and were in a position where they could defeat the majority of radical motions moved by the communist-led left wing. Yet, Tom Wright, in his report to the CPA central committee, described it as a 'congress of progressive unionism because of the progressive nature of the decisions and claimed that most of the successful resolutions were moved by the left-wing section of the congress.[45] In addition, the challenges by Wright for president of the ACTU and Jim Healy for one of the vice-president positions were only defeated by a margin of less

than 40 votes.[46]

The strike wave was to reach its full intensity with the coal strike of 1949. What started as a potentially normal industrial dispute quickly escalated into a major confrontation between the communist-led Miners' Federation and its supporters and the Chifley government that was supported overwhelmingly by the trade union movement. For both, the strike became a battleground for the political allegiance of the majority of the Australian working class. The strike was the first major test of the CPA's new position of unrelenting hostility to all expressions of non-revolutionary working-class politics. This policy was reminiscent of the policies of the early 1930s when the ALP, rather than an openly capitalist party such as the Liberal Party, was considered and treated as the main enemy of the working class.[47]

At the CPA's 1948 congress Richard Dixon, demanded that 'the Labour (sic) Party and reformist betrayers be isolated' and that the CPA had to come forward as 'the organiser of people's struggle against reaction'. He accused ALP leaders of vying with the leaders of the Liberal and Country parties in attacking the CPA.[48] In April 1949, a few months before the coal strike, the language used by CPA leaders grew even sharper with L.L. Sharkey, declaring that the ALP leaders were 'the definite allies of warmongers and imperialist aggressors who are just as anti-Labour as Hitler and Mussolini', and declared that the aim of the CPA in the next period was 'to liquidate reformism as the decisive party in the working-class movement.'[49]

At the same time a virulent anti-communist current emerged as the dominant force in the ALP. As early as June 1946 NSW ALP Conference had overwhelmingly declared that 'the Communist Party to be a danger to Australian democracy and a permanent foe of the Australian Labor Party', and it totally rejected any form of alliance with the CPA.[50] In 1948 the South Richmond ALP branch placed a motion on the agenda of the Victorian conference demanding that the CPA be banned.[51] In 1948 the NSW Industrial Groups State Conference unanimously adopted a motion directing all members to do everything in their power to oppose communist polices in the workplace and to work for the defeat of any communist seeking union election.[52]

These two diametrically opposed views of the role of trade unions were fought out through the medium of the coal miners' strike. The Chifley government insisted that the miners return to arbitration and when the union resisted it became determined to use any means necessary to defeat the challenge to its policies. The developments over the previous two years had assured the government and the methods it used — including the seizure of union funds, the jailing of union officials and the eventual use of troops in the open cut mines — of the support from the bulk of the labour movement.[53] These methods helped to defeat the most explicit political challenge by

communist-led unions to the domination of the labour movement by the ALP. The defeat was to induce into many communist union activists a considerable degree of caution in the ways they thereafter attempted to stress the political aspects of any strike struggle. This was in marked contrast to the immediate postwar period when the CPA was able to use its union influence to make a significant impact on Australian's foreign policy.

The Dutch shipping bans

One of the results of World War II was the emergence of powerful anti-colonial movements in the European Asian colonies that were not prepared to await passively the return of the various European powers and the reestablishment of colonial rule. On August 17, 1945, Indonesian nationalists under the leadership of Sukarno declared their independence in a small ceremony in Jakarta.[54] They faced an uncertain future with the Dutch determined to regain total control of their colony. However, they gained strong and decisive support from the Australian trade union movement, which immediately placed bans on the transport of military goods to the Dutch authorities in Indonesia. This action made an important contribution to the successful outcome of the independence struggle.[55]

The bans on Dutch shipping provided an ideal opportunity for the CPA to demonstrate in actual practice its view that trade unions had a contribution to make to the wider political process. Their role could not be confined to the issues of wages and working conditions. Instead, they had to participate in issues such as solidarity with colonial people struggling for independence. The CPA had emerged from the war with a greatly enhanced prestige. It had made a significant contribution to the final outcome by its virulent opposition to strikes and a ready acceptance of impositions on workers' conditions as necessary measures to win the war. It could now draw on some of this prestige to win support from within the labour movement for Indonesian independence. The success of the campaign became an important factor in strengthening the party's belief that many Australians shared its overall political outlook.

Even before the formal declaration of independence, communists in the Australian army in Borneo had from May 1945 helped Indonesian nationalists to produce and circulate leaflets and paint pro-independence slogans on a number of buildings.[56] In Sydney the party leadership mobilised its supporters in the land and sea transport unions and on the wharves to offer concrete support to the Indonesian struggle for independence.[57] A series of articles started to appear in *Tribune*, written under the direction of the party hierarchy, which called on the Australian labour movement to fully support the demand for independence.[58] The involvement of the party hierarchy

from the start of the campaign indicates the importance they placed on the issue and their expectations that CPA union militants would abide by party discipline and apply party policy on the issue. Jim Healy, whose union, the WWF, was to play a key role in the campaign, was held in high regard by the party leadership because of his commitment to frequently discuss issues with them.[59]

Over the next four years a number of trade union bans, spearheaded by the Seamen's Union and the WWF, were placed on the transport of materials, particularly war materials, to the returning Dutch colonial authorities. While the core support for the bans came from the CPA and its union militants there was widespread labour movement support for the bans.[60] The recent war was not just about resistance to the Japanese invasion but had strengthened already existing anti-fascist and anti-colonial tendencies in the labour movement on which the CPA was able to draw for support. In November 1945 the ACTU Interstate Executive endorsed the ban of war materials to the Dutch authorities.[61] Over the course of the four year campaign almost 30 unions supported the bans which indicates that the ban were able to attract support beyond communist-led unions.[62] A survey of ALP voters in December 1945 found that 40% supported Indonesian independence.[63]

However, there was opposition to the use of trade unions' industrial strength to pursue wider political goals. The Melbourne WWF branch was led by anti-communists who remained strong and inflexible opponents of the federal communist-led leadership.[64] The ideological basis for their opposition to the Dutch shipping bans was expressed in an article in *News Weekly* in January 1949, which claimed that Indonesian independence would be a victory for international Communism and that following this victory Australia would be 'next in line' for a communist takeover.[65] In May 1947, the Industrial Groups reported to the ALP Federal Executive that they had held talks with Prime Minister Chifley and he had agreed to talk directly with the union about the bans.[66] After its initial support for the bans the ACTU leadership attempted to persuade the unions to drop or modify the bans but was only successful for limited periods of time.[67]

The Chifley government also faced pressure from outside the labour movement to take action to end the shipping bans. Opposition leader Menzies warned that government inaction over the bans placed at risk our alliances with our former wartime allies and if this continued it would mean that Australia would lose the next war when it started.[68] Menzies also contrasted the government's position with that of the Attlee Labour government in Britain, which was supportive of the Dutch position.[69] The US naval attaché, Commander Stephen Jurika, who was reporting to his government on CPA influence in Australian trade unions, expressed amazement that the communist-

led WWF was supporting Indonesian nationalists and that the government had failed to take action to end the bans.[70]

The Chifley government's attitude towards the union bans was often ambivalent, with the government neither publicly supporting nor opposing the bans, which by their very nature were a challenge to their authority to decide foreign policy issues.[71] The government may have been prepared to tolerate the bans, because it allowed it to shift responsibility for decision making on a potentially difficult issue from the government to the union.[72] The critical point is that the union's position in support of Indonesian independence was not inconsistent with government policy, which provided another reason for the government to take no action to suppress the bans. Chifley was sympathetic to Indonesian independence and regarded it as both inevitable and desirable, and warned the Dutch that their behaviour was contributing to the growth of Asian nationalism.[73] Similarly, H.V. Evatt, the minister of external affairs, privately expressed his support for the Indonesians to his staff.[74] Jim Healy claimed that when he was involved in meetings with senior government ministers they told him that not one of them was opposed to the bans, but they could not put this attitude publicly.[75]

It was only in Western Australia that a union was penalised for imposing a ban on Dutch shipping. The absence of a separate ACTU branch bound the unions closely to the ALP hierarchy and this left little room for independent political action outside their often moderate policy. The Carpenter's Union was disaffiliated from the ALP in November 1945 after it refused to accept a direction from the State ALP Disputes Committee to drop a ban on the servicing of a Dutch submarine.[76] This was virtually the only occasion that a union was penalised for imposing a ban on Dutch shipping. This remained the situation even as the conflict between communists and non-communists in the trade unions rapidly escalated. Even after the maritime unions had refused requests from the ACTU leadership on a number of occasions to modify their bans, the ACTU leadership declined to make the refusal a public issue.[77]

The success of the trade union bans on Dutch shipping was a demonstration that it was possible for trade unionists to use their industrial power to shape government policy. For the CPA it was confirmation that its advocacy of political trade unionism could find a response in the Australian working class. It offered the prospect of power to make policy decisions being taken away from the government and placing it in the hands of trade unionists. It was by its very nature an implicit challenge to the existing social order, which was well understood by critics of the shipping bans. However, to a large extent the bans remained in place because of the tacit acceptance by the Chifley government. When the CPA attempted to develop similar industrial bans on the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range which directly challenged government

defence policies, it responded quickly by introducing legalisation that made such actions illegal.[78] This action confirmed that any attempt by the CPA to develop to the full the revolutionary potential of its trade union program it would encounter fierce resistance from the government.

By early 1948 the CPA hierarchy became increasingly convinced that a significant number of workers were ready to break from the ALP and look towards the CPA for political leadership.[79] This clearly exaggerated the extent to which the initial widespread worker support for the strike campaign of 1945-48 had translated into a general support for the political program of the CPA.[80] Its outlook would also have been reinforced by the lack of any hostile reaction by the Chifley government to the Dutch shipping bans. The party leadership now had to convince its trade union cadres that the time had arrived for a more aggressive policy in the trade unions; one that offered a clear political alternative to the domination of the trade unions by the Labor Party.

The communist outlook

At the end of World War I, Australia had experienced profound economic and social problems as it adjusted from a war economy to a peacetime economy.[81] As a result of this historical experience there was a widespread fear in Australia that history would repeat itself and the end of the recent war would bring another depression.[82] This attitude was not confined to Australia. In Britain working-class memories of depressions following major wars extended as far back as the Napoleonic wars.[83] In the United States government officials in August 1945 were warning that unemployment would climb from one million to five million within three months.[84] The fear of an impending economic downturn was an additional factor in helping to convince many workers of the need to improve living standards before yet another depression brought about their inevitable decline.

The belief that a depression was approaching became an integral part of the CPA's analysis and was to shape all areas of party activity.[85] The move away from its former collaboration with the Chifley government by the CPA and its aggressive support for strikes was aimed at increasing its political leadership in the trade unions.[86] When the Great Depression erupted in 1929 the CPA was small, isolated and riven by internal factional disputes. As a result it was unable to organise any real resistance by workers to attacks on their wages or working conditions.[87] It was a bitter experience for communists and one they were determined would not be repeated in the coming depression.

In February 1947, the annual conference of Sydney CPA branches emphasised the critical role of all party members in extending the party's trade union influence by

helping workers win substantial improvements in pay and working conditions. This would build working-class confidence in their own strength and create the conditions in which the final destruction of the capitalist system could take place.[88] A report to the party's central committee by Richard Dixon in September 1947 emphasised that it was only the CPA with their anti-capitalist program that offered the working class a real solution to the approaching economic crisis.[89] While he acknowledged that the party was much stronger than it had been in 1929, there was a serious lag in recruitment to the party and this needed to be overcome if the party's goals were to be fulfilled.[90] As the Cold War atmosphere intensified and the attacks on the CPA escalated, Dixon linked these changes to the capitalists' fear of the consequences of the approaching depression and the preparations that were being made for a war against the Soviet Union.[91]

When the CPA held its 15th Congress in May 1948, the certainty that another depression was approaching was incorporated into the party program. The resolution warned that the world was 'about to plunge into the biggest of all its economic crises'.[92] These warnings continued to be repeated over the next six months with the CPA drawing on every negative economic feature to boost its argument.[93] In August 1950, two years after the party program had warned of an immediate depression, Bernie Taft, a Victorian party functionary, could still claim that 'crisis conditions are maturing in Australia'.[94] In reality, except for brief periods of recession the world was about to enter a 30-year period of almost sustained and continuous growth. This was perhaps a unique development in the economic history of capitalism which had been previously marked by continuous cycles of boom and bust.[95] However, as E.A. Bacon, a party functionary, later explained, the incorrect prediction 'naturally affected the party's approach to the tactical problems of the day'.[96] Other communist leaders of the era have also reached similar conclusions about the political errors that were made in this period.[97]

In his address to the congress L.L. Sharkey, the newly elected general secretary, acknowledged that a postwar economic boom was continuing in Australia, but stressed that such booms immediately precede and help create the conditions that lead to a crisis of over production and depression.[98] The conference resolution and Sharkey's address emphasised the correctness of the Cominform analysis which had divided the world into two camps. One, led by the Soviet Union was peace-loving and democratic, while the other, led by the United States, was imperialist, undemocratic and threatening to launch new wars to protect their political and economic interests.[99] The CPA considered that the ALP was now in the 'camp of the imperialists' and it 'more clearly embraces the sabotaging role of social democracy'.[100] Sharkey also questioned the

need for unions to affiliate to the ALP, because it strengthened 'reformist ideology'. He then went on to endorse the proposal by the FIA leadership for a political levy.[101]

In his speech to the congress Ernie Thornton, the FIA general secretary, outlined how the levy would operate. He claimed that in the FIA allegiance to the ALP was very much a formal affair and that there were no more than five or 600 members of the union who were also members of the ALP. Once the proposal for the levy had been introduced, each member could decide where it went: the CPA or the ALP.[102] In the same week as the party congress, a National Rank and File FIA Convention of job delegates, and a FIA National Conference overwhelmingly endorsed the proposal. However, it struck opposition from the Industrial Register and it was never implemented.[103] Despite the claim of widespread membership support for communist policies in the union, Thornton and his co-communist union leaders were already facing a sustained and serious challenge to their almost total domination of the union.[104] The proposal by Thornton to give his union members the option of directing a political levy towards the CPA rather than the ALP, was an attempt to develop a more public face for the party in the trade unions. For the first time it provided the opportunity for large numbers of unionists to publicly identify with the political ideas of their leaders.[105] As Sharkey explained the task now facing communist unionists was to differentiate themselves from all other political currents active in the trade unions. The aim of the levy was to 'separate the masses from the right-wing leaders in the trade unions and elsewhere'.[106]

The congress was the culmination of the move by the CPA to move to a position where it was prepared to openly challenge the ALP for the leadership of the working class. Communist union activists worked in a milieu where the overwhelming majority of workers and their union officials saw the ALP as their political representatives rather than the CPA. Communist union officials were usually a minority current within the unions they led. As a result they had to forge a unity with other union officials who were usually ALP supporters if they wanted to maintain their leadership positions. Under these circumstances other communist union officials were not prepared to follow Thornton's example and introduce a political levy with the option of directing it to the CPA. Where a formal break occurred between communist led-unions and the ALP it was often the result of ALP state branches disaffiliating unions that had elected communist officials.[107]

However a number of communist-led unions did donate union funds to both the CPA and the ALP during state and federal elections despite the potential difficulties this may have caused with sections of the ALP leadership. It was one way in which communist union officials could meet some of the criticisms they faced from their

party hierarchy. In general this policy was accepted by members of the unions concerned. Only in one instance did the issue of the right of unions to impose political levies erupt into a major political issue. In October 1956 the Hobart branch of the WWF voted to strike a political levy to assist the ALP in the approaching state election. Frank Hursey and his son Dennis refused to pay the levy because they were Democratic Labor Party supporters and as a result were expelled from the union. In what was to become a protracted industrial and legal dispute the right of the union to impose and a collect a political levy was eventually upheld by the High Court.[108] The dispute was important because it allowed the CPA union militants to rebuild some of the bridges that had been disrupted or broken during the 'left turn' period. The right of trade unions to be politically active was an issue that could and did unite both communists and traditional ALP supporters.

Even if Thornton was correct about the numbers of his union's members who were actually members of the ALP, it is clear that the majority continued to support the ALP and not the CPA. Thornton's statement that the policy of the union was decided in 'consultation with the leaders of the Communist Party' and not with the leaders of the ALP acted to further galvanise opposition groups within the union.[109] What had started off as a revolt spearheaded by the Balmain Ironworkers branch, in which the left-wing Trotskyist critics of the CPA were prominent, quickly became a vehicle through which the Industrial Groups were able mobilise the majority of the union's members to defeat all FIA communist union officials by 1952.[110] Thornton's political outlook and activity were shaped by his membership of the CPA and his commitment to support party policy. Thornton was clearly one of the communist union officials willing to abide by and implement this policy. Sharkey's endorsement of the FIA proposal ties it directly to the CPA leadership. This slavish loyalty to party policy was a significant factor in the defeat of the communist leadership of the union and of other communist union officials who followed a similar course.[111]

During the Great Depression many individuals who joined the CPA did so because of the perceived failure of the ALP to adequately protect people from its negative impact. The resistance of the Chifley government to wage improvements and shorter working hours was, for many communists, history repeating itself. In March 1948, a march of striking railway workers and their supporters in Brisbane was savagely repressed by the police. Among those seriously injured in the unprovoked attack was Fred Paterson, the only communist elected to an Australian parliament.[112] The police were acting in full accordance with new legalisation quickly pushed through parliament by the Hanlon Labor government which barred picketing, all kinds of public protest and made it illegal to even advocate strike action in Queensland. In addition, the

federal Labor government barred welfare payments to the families of striking railway workers.[113] For the CPA these actions were vivid confirmation of the treachery of Labor governments and helped to strengthen the new position on the ALP.

From 1945 onwards, the CPA faced a steady haemorrhaging of its membership, and by 1952 it had declined to only 6000 members.[114] Eric Aarons, secretary of the Sydney Marx School, believed that many of the wartime recruits had 'a rather one-sided view of the party traditions, tactics, and methods of struggle'[115] Similarly, Ralph Gibson believed that the Melbourne University students who joined at this time, lacked the revolutionary understanding of the depression-era communist students.[116] The loss of membership almost certainly strengthened the party by removing those middle class elements who did not share its rediscovered revolutionary goals or working class orientation.[117] In the Sydney party district (and almost certainly elsewhere), the party's ability to mobilise effectively its membership was enhanced by the halving of its turnover rate from 23% in 1946 to 11% in 1948.[118] This meant that new recruits were staying longer in the party, which gave the party leadership new opportunities to educate them and turn them into effective communist militants.

The prediction of an imminent depression on which the CPA based its trade union tactics was clearly a mistake. But it was not totally without foundation. In 1952 an increase in unemployment and a rapid rise in inflation had a significant impact on the standard of living of tens of thousands of Australian workers. Apart from existing economic problems such as the shortage of electrical power and basic materials, inflation was fuelled by the rapid increase in military spending due to Australia's commitment to the Korean War, which limited the government's ability to address these other issues.[119] For a brief period the spectre of another catastrophic depression hovered but faded, as the recession was only of a short duration. During this period the CPA was able to boost its membership to 8000.[120] At the time the Korean War was still being fought and the government was developing policies so that Australia would be ready for war by the end of 1953.[121] The CPA's ability to grow, despite the prevailing Cold War atmosphere, is an indication of the potential that may have existed for large numbers of workers to turn to the CPA for political leadership in the event of a prolonged depression in Australia.

From the mid 1940s onwards the CPA outlook was shaped by two factors — its links to the Soviet leadership and its own experiences. The adoption of the Comintern's 'two camp theory' in 1948 dovetailed with communist trade union activists experiences around the country. During the long struggle to achieve the 40-hour week and for an end to wage pegging ALP governments had often reacted to the campaigns with hostility. It was therefore a natural progression for many communist union activists to

adopt a more aggressive attitude towards the ALP. At the centre of this activity was the CPA's analysis that another depression was imminent — a view that was shared by many others. During the strike wave many communist union officials had demonstrated their superior ability at winning improvements in conditions than many of their political opponents. The challenge that faced these activists was to translate the respect they had earned into support for the broader political objectives of the CPA.

A working-class based party

From the mid 1940s onwards many CPA members willingly accepted directions from party functionaries about where they worked.[122] The aim of the policy was to strengthen existing CPA workplace influences or to establish new bases of support for the party in the working class. It was often a continual process with J.A. Brown, in January 1956, calling for this campaign to be organised systematically. He went on to suggest that communists should seek work in particular factories, not factories in general. The concentration should be on the 260 factories that employed nearly a quarter of a million workers.[123] In South Australia the party leadership, just after World War II, convinced a number of members to become ironworkers, railway workers or wharfies.[124] In Melbourne from the late 1940s onwards, Keith McEwan moved from working on the production line at General Motors-Holden, to a building site, to a job in a hospital, before finally working on the waterfront. These moves were usually made after consultation with a party organiser. On at least one occasion the change involved a significant reduction in wages.[125] After being sacked from training as a nurse, Bert Fagin moved to Wonthaggi where he worked in the mines for almost two years.[126] After a conversation with Bill Bird, the communist secretary of the Victorian Seamen's Union, Fagin accepted his assistance to obtain a job and then spent the rest of his working life as a seamen and active unionist.[127] Rae Stewart abandoned a safe and secure job as a senior school teacher to work in the textile industry where she considered the workers to be particularly oppressed and in need of political leadership. Tragically, she was to die as a result of a workplace accident in November 1949 about five years after she commenced work in the industry. During her time in the industry she had been elected both as a shop-steward and as a delegate to the annual conference of the union.[128]

Trade union activity had always been central to the political activities of the CPA. In the immediate postwar years with a return to more traditional union activity and the ending of the no-strike pledge this role was enhanced. Communist trade unionists started to assume a leading role at all levels in the party. This can be gauged by the information given about the delegates who attended the February 1947 Sydney district

conference. There were 115 delegates who were trade unionists out of a total of 136 delegates, and of the 113 branches represented 39 were industry-based.[129] The delegates averaged six years membership; those elected to the district committee had an average of 12 years membership, and those of its executive of six averaged 15½ years membership.[130] The majority of the delegates were clearly longstanding and experienced cadres. They represented the full gamut of party experience that ranged from the bitter and isolated days of the depression, the growth during the 'Popular Front' period in the mid-1930s, the era of illegality at the start of the war, and finally rapid growth during the war and then decline as the Cold War impacted on the party.

In the immediate postwar period the CPA stressed the importance of building of party branches in the workplace. The new policy prioritised the activities of active trade unionists and helped ensure their dominance at the expense of non-working class members.[131] In 1948, the party published a pamphlet which contained four articles by leading French communists on their experiences of building a mass party that had deep roots in the working class.[132] The aim of publication was, as a brief foreword explained, to improve 'the training and promotion of cadres, basing the party more firmly in the factories and expanding the scope of branch activity'.[133] The 1951 party congress adopted a new constitution which stressed the crucial role of factory organisations in building the party.[134]

A similar policy was adopted by the Communist Party of Great Britain which in 1950 had emphasised that 'factory branches are the most important (sic) basic organisations of the party'.[135] It had some success in this area. In 1945 there had been 40 factory branches in Coventry,[136] and in 1950 Communist Party branches were active at Duples and De Havilland in North West London, Austin in Birmingham, and Players in Nottingham.[137] This common approach by many of the world's communist parties came at a time when they were moving towards challenging social democratic parties for the allegiance of the working class. The establishment of widespread factory branches meant that communist parties were now in position to offer their alternative policies to their co-workers on a daily basis. In Australia, until the formation of the Industrial Groups the ALP had no on-going visible presence in most workplaces. Their formation was a direct response to the activity of the CPA in the trade unions.[138] One of the advantages of factory based branches was that party meetings could, in some instances, be held in working hours thus reducing the barriers to participation in party activities by potential recruits. Thus, the formation of factory branches should be seen as part of the CPA's determination to expand its working class membership.

Yet, there was often a disparity between the expressed aims of the party and the ability or willingness of members to fully implement them. However much the party

hierarchy attempted to force its preferred organisational model on the membership it was never able to fully achieve its goal. In 1950 there were still party members who had not been convinced of the merits of factory organisation as opposed to the more traditional branch structure.[139] The new organisational structure tended to underestimate the contributions made by members, often women, who were only active in the locality-based branches of the party and not in the preferred industrial branches or the trade unions.[140] Yet branch members were extremely active in building support for CPA supported campaigns such as the drive to obtain signatures for the World Peace Council's 'Ban the Bomb' petition.[141] These branches were usually located in working-class areas and their larger size and greater variety of members would have offered far greater satisfaction than the much smaller factory-based branches.

The increased emphasis on factory organisation meant that it was now possible to establish a branch with only three members instead of the previous seven or eight that were required.[142] Such a small branch would have been placed under enormous strain as it struggled to fulfil the same party building tasks as much larger branches and this may explain some of the reluctance of some party members to establish such branches. However, shortly after starting work at Melbourne's Royal Women's Hospital, Keith McEwan was able to recruit four co-workers and a new party branch was established.[143] In 1947 John Sendy, a recent recruit to the CPA, started work at the Woodville plant of General Motors-Holden, where he joined four other experienced communist union activists . A new party branch was quickly established and among its main activities was the production of a factory bulletin, building opposition to the conservative union leadership, and selling party literature.[144] After resigning in September 1947 to attend a three-month party school in Sydney, the factory refused to rehire Sendy when he returned despite the difficulties the plant faced in attracting workers.[145]

On occasions the CPA had to overcome obstacles in order to sustain a viable workplace branch. After being given a list containing the names of 93 party members the new two-man executive of a waterfront branch discovered that there were only around 50 active members. Many of the others had dispersed to ports around Australia. The remaining members were divided into groups of 14 from which a new executive of four was established.[146] Over three years it built a strong branch culture. By the end of 1956 it had sent 10 members to the party school and by June 1957 it aimed to have sent half the branch to the school.[147] After the end of every second branch meeting an innovative education program was developed using lantern slides as an aide to learning.[148] Lastly, the annual reissue of membership cards was turned into a combined social and political event in which families and sympathisers were invited.[149] This flexible approach indicates that the CPA was prepared to adapt its approach to retain

its members.

Elsewhere communist union activists were more successful in establishing viable industrial branches or trade union fractions that offered their members a rich and varied political life that could both sustain their political commitment and provide avenues for political activity. The role of communists in establishing a strong system of job representation at Perth's Midland Workshops led Owen Salmon, an Electrical Trades Union state organiser, to describe it as the only workplace in Western Australia that operated virtually as a 'communist cell'.[150] A CPA branch was established in the 1940s and functioned with mixed success until the 1960s.[151] In North Queensland by the mid 1940s the CPA had emerged as a major social and political force with wide support in the local trade unions.[152] It was the strong support from miners, railway workers and waterside workers across the Bowen electorate that was a key factor in the election of Fred Paterson to the Queensland Parliament in 1944.[153]

When the Lowe Royal Commission released the results of its inquiry into the Victorian CPA it found evidence of party branches in a number of different workplaces as well as extensive evidence of party fractions in trade unions.[154] Interestingly, the report listed only three: Johns and Waygood Ltd., General Motors-Holden and the State Electricity Commission (SEC).[155] This represents only a very small proportion of the CPA's industrial branches that were active at this time. The CPA SEC branch was still functioning when communist Malcolm McDonald started work at the Newport Power station in 1955 and there was close collaboration with communists in the La Trobe Valley which was the centre of Victoria's power generation.[156] This longevity of a communist presence in the power industry was replicated elsewhere such as in the mining industry, on the waterfront and in sea transport and some state branches of the Australian Railways Union.

In Melbourne's western suburbs the party established a number of industrial branches including those at H.V. McKay's and the Williamstown Dockyards and a full-time party official co-ordinated their activities.[157] The CPA at one stage had 30 members working at the Angliss Meatworks and those who remained became part of the driving force in the industry.[158] The workplace became a political training ground for some workers, who when they left the industry, took their experiences with them and applied them in their new workplaces.[159] In the Victorian Teachers Union a communist fraction of approximately 100 members met on a fortnightly basis to plan their strategy.[160] In the building and construction industries the party established committees that met frequently and helped to co-ordinate work of the communist union officials in the numerous craft unions that covered the workers in the industry.[161]

In a society where working people were often treated with distain the CPA was

able to offer a rich and satisfying alternative. The establishment of factory-based party branches had several purposes. For the communist union activist the branches directly connected their politics with their daily life as a member of the working class. They provided the opportunity for the CPA to directly present a public face to the people they most wanted to recruit, their co-workers. Daily contact with communist union activists would have weakened some of the anti-communist prejudices that were widespread. The branches were also important because they could offer mutual support to communist activists. As in the case of the waterside branch, they performed a dual social and political function. In a political atmosphere that was still hostile to communist ideas the social network provided by workplace branches was an important bulwark against isolation.

Marxist education and communist union militants

When new recruits joined the CPA they were exposed to a whole range of political ideas which they were expected and required to absorb. People only became communists after they joined the party and not before.[162] This was achieved by a combination of extensive political education programs at all party levels, including self-education, combined with extensive political activity where the theory was put to practical use.[163] The participants in the early Australian socialist movement also took pride in their knowledge of politics, philosophy, economics history and culture. The CPA inherited this tradition and attempted to apply it in new ways to the requirements of a vanguard party.[164] The party's constitution specifically demanded that all members raise 'the level of his or her level of Marxism-Leninism'.[165] Yet, despite this there was resistance by some party members to increasing their knowledge of Marxism.[166] However distorted by the requirements of Stalinist orthodoxy, many party members received an extensive grounding in basic Marxist theory.

As the party grew in the mid 1930s there was an urgent need to educate the new members in socialist theory. In 1935 the party leadership announced that there would be a year of intense study for new members of the basic writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.[167] In the post war period the party leadership again emphasised the requirement that all members undertake a systematic education program. The aim of the training was to ensure that every communist combined 'within himself theoretical strength with the practical organisational strength of the proletarian movement.'[168] In a similar way, the Communist Party of Great Britain saw its role as the training of future working class leaders.[169] As well as a party membership card, members also held a party educational card which listed the courses they had attended.[170] It was the task of the educational director in each branch or district to check on the educational

progress of each member and discuss any problems they had experienced.[171]

The establishment of Marx Schools in Melbourne and Sydney at the end of the war marked an important step forward for the party. They offered courses in Marxism and working-class history to both party members as well as interested members of the public. The courses were always in conformity with existing party policy.[172] As well as the Marx School the party carried its own internal education. These were aimed mainly at its working class cadres. In Sydney in mid-1950, out of the 180 members who went through a fortnightly party school, 120 were from the factory floor and 165 were trade unionists.[173] When John Sendy attended a three-month party school in 1947 the majority of his fellow students were industrial workers. They then used their training to become leading trade union officials in the following decades.[174]

The working-class militant who joined the party was exposed to new ways of thinking. In a society that often discriminated against working people many of them seized the opportunities presented by the party to deepen their understanding of politics and Australian society. The party shared the general working-class disdain of intellectuals and their assumed leading role in political debate. The majority of the CPA leaders were working-class militants who had educated themselves in Marxist theory. It was a leadership that actively encouraged its working-class membership to follow the same course. It was this working-class cadre that was to bear the brunt of the organised attack that was made on communist union influence.

The role of the CPA educational programs was to equip communist union activists with the material to carry out their political work in an effective way. It did not, and was not intended to, provide them with a broad political education. For example in 1959, the party ran two three-week educational schools focused solely on Marxist philosophy because it provided the means of changing the world.[175] The party leadership also drew up a series of course outlines in Australian history, economy and current political issues for individual study.[176] Sharkey's pamphlet on *Trade Unions* continued to be an important focus of the CPA's educational activity not only for members, but also a wider audience. One estimate was that it had sold 60,000 copies by 1960.[177] Its republication confirms the ongoing determination by the CPA leadership to politically educate their membership in Marxist politics.

Opposition to the growth of communist unionism

The growth in communist union influence drew a strong reaction from forces in the ALP who were concerned about the possible impact on ALP policies from delegates from communist-led unions. At the time, the majority of delegates to ALP conferences came from affiliated trade unions and the fear was that delegates from commu-

nist-led unions would support their leadership's politics. In response, the ALP between 1945 and 1948 in the four eastern states established the ALP Industrial Groups to directly represent the party in the trade unions and to offer a political alternative to the CPA.[178] At first, communist union officials such as Jack McPhillips welcomed their formation believing that that it could lead to wider political unity in the workplace between the two parties around common interests.[179] These views were not totally unrealistic. When the Groups were first established in NSW they included some members who held left-wing views. Many of these were rank-and-file unionists who had rejected the CPA's slavish support for the war after June 1941 and its willingness to see working conditions eroded because of this.[180] As late as 1947, at the second conference of the NSW Industrial Groups, many of the resolutions passed were radical, including a call for the nationalisation of industry under workers' control.[181] However, the Groups quickly came under the dominance of 'The Movement', a secret and obsessive group of Catholic activists who were determined to destroy communist influence in the trade unions.[182]

The first meeting of 'The Movement' was held in Melbourne in August 1942.[183] By 1946 it had established a national organisation and had full-time officials in every state.[184] A March 1951 report claimed a membership of 5000, in 260 district and 70 industrial groups.[185] It became the most important organisation in the struggle to destroy communist influence in the trade unions.[186] The organisational structure of the Movement was the mirror image of the CPA. It was 'cell against cell, faction against faction, and cadre against cadre'.[187] In the same way as *Tribune* organised and educated communist activists, *News Weekly* performed a similar role for anti-communist activists.[188] The Movement was to play a key role in shaping the policies of the Industrial Groups with perhaps one-quarter of their members being Movement supporters.[189]

The emergence of the Industrial Groups posed enormous problems for some communist union officials. Unlike the leadership of the CPA they faced regular elections in which they had to justify their actions to their membership. In many instances, it was not until the appointment of communists as union secretaries that union members were allowed the right to vote on a regular basis for all their union officials.[190] For example, shortly after he was appointed state secretary of the Victorian branch of the ARU, J.J. Brown introduced triennial elections for the position. Previously the appointment was for life.[191] After gaining the position of state secretary of the Victorian Tramways Union, in February 1947, Clarrie O'Shea introduced similar changes to the union's constitution [192] Such changes were generally introduced at the height of the CPA's popularity. Communist union officials believed that their ability to deliver

improved pay and working conditions would translate into support for the broader political program of the CPA. However, as the anti-communist tide started to ripple through the union movement some communist union activists started to retreat from publicly identifying with the CPA and its aims. This retreat occurred in two closely related areas. First, particularly after the defeat of the coal strike, there was a tendency to de-emphasise strikes as a means through which workers could be politically educated about their historic role in destroying capitalism. In future strikes in communist-led unions would take place with little, if any, political content. Second, there was a retreat from raising political issues in the trade unions and the concentration almost entirely on economic-related issues. It was hoped this would have helped avoid a potential conflict with an increasingly conservative workforce. Communist union activists then came under sustained criticism from the party hierarchy, as we shall see below, for abandoning their role as Marxist revolutionaries in the trade unions.

Communist union officials and the party

The 1947 CPA Sydney district conference elected 'six leading trade unionists' to the district committee.[193] As E.F. Hill, the Victorian party secretary from the late 1940s later explained, it was almost automatic that once a communist was elected to a leading trade union position they were placed on the central committee and, within the states, were elected to the equivalent state committee.[194] This placed communist union officials on the party committees that determined the policies they were bound by Leninist discipline to implement. While these communist unionist activists may have had a numerical majority on these party committees, the real power on the committees was held by the party's functionaries, L.L. Sharkey and Richard Dixon. In March 1953, shortly after Stalin died, Bill Gollan was directed to address a meeting of school teachers 'on the greatness of Stalin'. With some reluctance he carried out his party task. At the time Gollan was an activist in the NSW Teacher's Federation and the CPA's main cadre in the peace movement.[195] As a long-standing member of the central committee, Gollan felt he had particular obligations to suppress any personal qualms he may have had on party policy and loyally carry out any tasks he was assigned.[196] Gollan's actions in suppressing doubts about aspects of party policy were not necessarily unusual, as many other union activists followed a similar course of action and argued for policies they may have privately disagreed with.

Despite lacking the confidence to challenge the party hierarchy on policy issues Gollan on occasions displayed considerable political courage. As a candidate in the 1949 Federal elections he was pelted with eggs and flour eggs and flour in Ganmain, a small town near Wagga Wagga in rural New South Wales. After escaping the town

and reaching Coolamon, the car in which he was travelling was attacked by an angry crowd and its windscreen was broken.[197] In 1948, Gollan took part in a public debate with the Catholic activist Father Ryan about Communism.[198] Such public debates were not uncommon in the late 1940s as the CPA came under increasing attack for its links with the Soviet Union. In response the party sought to publicly defend its policies. Rather than use leading party functionaries in such debates the party often assigned some of its leading trade union activists to represent the party. In May 1946, after J.J. Maloney, the former Australian minister to the Soviet Union, denounced the Soviet Union on the national radio station, Ernie Thornton challenged him to a public debate. The debate was broadcast nationally and Thornton vigorously defended the Soviet Union and its policies.[199] A heated debate that threatened to erupt into physical confrontation occurred at the Richmond Town Hall on 21 July 1946, between Bert Flanagan, Victorian FIA state secretary, and Stan Keon, the recently elected MLA for Richmond, a fervent anti-communist and a strong supporter of the Santamaria-led Movement. Around 5000 people who attended the debate packed into the town hall and surrounding streets.[200] Shortly before his public debate with Gollan, Father Ryan had debated Edgar Ross, the editor of the Miners' Federation newspaper *Common Cause* in front of a crowd of 30,000 people at Sydney's Rushcutters Bay Stadium.[201]

As well as engaging in formal public debates communist union officials often spoke out on political issues or appeared on CPA platforms to support campaigns that the party was helping to organise. On the October 1, 1945, Jim Coull spoke at a public meeting in Melbourne comprising 1000 people in support of Indonesian independence and was followed by an unplanned march through the streets of Melbourne.[202] Coull was also a regular Sunday speaker at the Yarra Bank, where he defended party policy with a mixture of humour and powerful oratory.[203] Similarly, George Seelaf, the state secretary of the Meatworker's Union, spoke regularly from the Yarra Bank stump on the last Sunday of the month for many years.[204] During the 1949 elections communist union officials were drawn into the campaign to defend party policy. For example, Don Thompson, federal secretary of the Operative Painters and Decorators Union and secretary of the Building Trades Federation of Victoria, spoke on 'Trade unions and peace', a key campaign issue for the CPA.[205]

By 1945 the CPA had emerged as a significant force in student politics at Melbourne University. The student party branch would invite leading communist union officials to speak on a range of issues. Just after his return from the United States, Thornton addressed students on his support for the political ideas of Earl Browder, the leader of the CPUSA.[206] Browder had proposed the continuation of the wartime alliance into peacetime and the transformation of communist parties into educational associations.

His views were rejected by the Australian party in August 1945.[207] In the winter of 1947 J.J. Brown addressed the residential conference of the communist-led Labor Club along with Ralph Gibson and independent activists such as Brian Fitzpatrick and Jim Cairns.[208]

In Sydney, Stan Moran, a key communist activist in the WWF spoke every Sunday for 35 years from the CPA platform at the Domain. This was despite being frequently fined for speaking or using obscene language, and then being subsequently jailed after he refused on principle to pay the fine.[209] In Perth, in the late 1940s, communist union activists such as Ron Hurd, secretary of the Seamen's Union, Paddy Troy, Jack Marks, and others, had to contend with virulent and aggressive anti-communists as well repressive local laws when they tried to speak at the Perth Esplanade.[210] A similar situation existed in Adelaide where local councils attempted to suppress virtually all forms of public activity by the party. As well as barring access to municipal halls when the party attempted to conduct street meetings, its members also faced arrest. In 1949 Geoff Wills, acting secretary of the Seamen's Union, was arrested in Rosewater at such a meeting.[211] After the Port Adelaide Council refused to hire the town hall to the CPA, Newell Carruthers, secretary of the Gas Employees' Union, was one of the many communists who addressed a protest crowd at a street meeting of 400 people.[212]

From the late 1940s onwards it was common practice for CPA leaders to make a presentation known as 'The Report' to important party meetings. The speech covered an analysis of the international and national political developments before then moving on to state and local issues. This was then used to establish the political work for the party in the coming period.[213] These reports supplied a model which some communist union officials attempted to apply in their own unions. In 1942 Jack Hughes became secretary of the NSW Federated Clerks' Union which was then communist-led.[214] As the CPA moved towards establishing a peace movement in the late 1940s Hughes gave regular reports to the union's central council calling on union members to support the movement.[215] At the monthly meetings of the Victorian branch of the Liquor Trades Union, the state secretary Jim Coull delivered a 'Political Report' with the aim of increasing the social and political awareness of union members.[216] Each morning Paddy Troy would listen to a range of radio stations and then carefully read the newspaper. He would then proceed to the casual pick-up yard where he would address the assembled workers on the possible impacts on their lives of recent developments both in Australia and overseas.[217]

Many communist union officials therefore clearly identified themselves, publicly, with the CPA and its political gaols. On occasions this involved the risk of physical assault as anti-communist elements attempted to close down meetings where

communists spoke. Within the trade unions an open identification with the CPA was often a contributing factor in the loss of union leadership positions.[218] Yet, despite this relatively widespread political activity by communist union officials, from the late 1940s they started to come under sustained attack from party leaders for 'economism'. For the party hierarchy the theoretical weakness of some of its trade union cadres was revealed when factory branches resisted discussing political questions at branch meetings limiting their discussions to trade union related issues. It meant that they were not functioning as communist organisations but were 'liquidating' into narrow trade union politics.[219] The conflict between communist union officials and the party leadership was often sharp and bitter. The criticism was directed as we shall see, at prominent union officials who faced constant attacks in the mass media for their party membership. They were also long-standing party members who had endured much to help build the party from the Depression era onwards. Despite these criticisms the officials remained in the party and attempted in their own way to advance its interests.

Despite the prominent role of communist union activists in the postwar strike wave they faced increasing criticism from the CPA leadership. For the party hierarchy, the failure of communist union activists to sufficiently politicise the strikes they were involved was their most glaring deficiency. In his report to the 1948 congress, Richard Dixon said that strikes fought on a purely economic basis including those led by communists, were 'most unsatisfactory'.[220] The following year an article in *Communist Review* argued that the lack of an ideological struggle during strikes even when successful had strengthened illusions in reformism. The only way to overcome this problem was the constant struggle for Marxist- Leninist politics.[221] Party education was often crucial in making individual communist workers aware of their expected role as communist militants. It was not until a factory worker who had led a long strike attended a party school that he finally understood how communists should function during strikes.[222] The party believed that the aim of all strikes had to be the political education of workers followed by their recruitment to the CPA. When CPA union activists failed to do this they faced sharp criticism by CPA functionaries. For example, the failure of communist union activists to respond quickly to the police bashing of Fred Paterson was condemned by Dixon. Their bureaucratic approach had blocked any effective action by interstate workers in support of the striking Queensland rail workers. The correct approach would have been to have directly appealed to workplaces and encouraged 'action from below' and not relied on the union bureaucracies to lead the campaign.[223]

During the period of the 'left turn' between 1948 and 1952 communist union officials had a difficult time in the CPA. Whatever they did never seemed to satisfy the demands made on them by the party leadership. Yet they continued to remain in the

party and endure the criticisms when the easier course might have been to quietly resign. Many of them would have survived in their union positions had they done so. There were a few defections in this era as there had been by a number of union officials at the start of World War II. It's a clear indication that many communist union officials continued to publicly identify with the CPA and its program and were determined to remain members.

Communist unionists and Browderism

For the party hierarchy the essential theoretical weakness of many communist union activists was revealed when a number of them supported the political ideas of Earl Browder. The most prominent of these, as noted above, was Ernie Thornton.[224] Within the CPA and the trade union movement Thornton was a consistent advocate of Browder's policies.[225] In South Australia, Tom Garland, president of the United Trades and Labor Council, was expelled from the party in 1945 for his support for Common Cause, a liberal bourgeois organisation.[226] Before the party finally rejected Browder's ideas there was serious consideration given to the abolition of factory branches.[227]

Thornton had also shown other signs of theoretical heresy. After the publication of Sharkey's *The Trade Unions* he had argued with Sharkey that the advocacy skills of communist union officials could bring major gains within the arbitration system.[228] The entire thrust of the booklet rejected this outlook. It stressed that the role of communist union activists was to use mass mobilisations of workers to demand the abolition of the arbitration system. In this way the political consciousness of the majority of workers would be raised.[229] Within his union Thornton attempted to introduce Browder's key ideas of class collaboration and for an end to industrial conflict.[230] The rejection of Browder's views by the CPA ended the possibility of these ideas being accepted as party policy. The CPA published an article by French Communist Party leader Jacques Duclos, denouncing Browder in *Communist Review* in July 1945.[231] The following month Sharkey also condemned Browder's views.[232] A front-page article in *Tribune* headlined the US party's expulsion of Browder and repudiation of his ideas.[233] Party members could be under no illusions about where the party stood on the issue and by mid-1945 Thornton had fallen into line with the new position.[234] Yet, only a few years before his support for Browderism Thornton's role as a union official had been praised by Sharkey in the first edition of his booklet. He had gone on to describe the FIA newspaper, *The Ironworker*, as a model union for its combination of articles on industrial and political issues.[235]

Other communist union officials were not immune from abandoning revolutionary politics and adapting to the environment where they worked. This was clearly shown

in the first year of World War II when a number of leading communist union officials resigned or were expelled from the party after rejecting its anti-war policies. In the Miners' Federation Charlie Nelson, the general president, and Jock Kellock, president of the NSW Northern District, advocated the need for national unity and the abandonment of strikes for the duration of the war.[236] Lloyd Ross, state secretary of the NSW ARU,[237] and ARU organiser Jack Ferguson who was shortly to replace Ross as state secretary moved from the CPA to the ALP in a short space of time.[238] There were some similar defections at the end of the war; the most prominent was Harold Wells, who had replaced Nelson as general president of the Miners' Federation and suddenly resigned from both the Federation and the CPA to work as a real estate agent and an activist with the Rotary Clubs.[239]

These developments reinforced the determination of the party leadership to subordinate communist union officials to party direction. Paradoxically the election of a communist to a leading union position had on occasions weakened party organisation in the union concerned rather than strengthened it as might be expected. Those elected often concentrated on narrow trade union issues and lost sight of their role as 'tribunes of the people, masters of Marxist-Leninism in theory and practice'.[240] The election of communists as union officials was dependent on their ability to win improvements in pay and working conditions. Only when they made some progress in these areas was it possible for communist activists to win a wider hearing for the political causes they supported. It was not until Jim Healy, Ted Roach and Norm Docker started to win significant improvements that waterside workers were prepared to listen and act on political issues supported by the leadership.[241]

The re-election of numerous communist union officials during the early Cold War can be taken as an indication of their success on these issues. However, in some unions their re-election often indicated, at best, toleration and not an endorsement of their wider political agenda by a significant section of their membership. For example, shortly before the Korean War broke out in June 1950, there was a proposal to establish a triple alliance between the Miners' Union, the Seamen's Union and the WWF. Such an alliance had the potential industrial power to block any Australian involvement in the war. This was well understood by the CPA which had developed the proposal. The possible revolutionary implications were obvious to everyone including members of the unions concerned. In a series of meetings members of the Miners' and Seamen's Unions voted against the proposal. At the same time union members continued to oppose Australian involvement in the war but were clearly not prepared to move beyond limited protest action.[242] This led to a situation where some communist union officials were to show considerable hesitancy in advocating a wider

political role for their unions for fear of losing their official union positions. The party leadership responded to this development by directing an escalating barrage of criticism at those communist union officials who were not fulfilling party requirements and raising political issues as part of their daily activity.

Economism

The mounting criticism of communist union officials paralleled the determination of the party leadership to develop the CPA as a clear political alternative to the ALP. The policy started to develop in late 1947 and was to reach its peak over the next three years. As the challenge to communist influence in the trade unions increased, the fight for control of key industrial unions became prolonged and bitter. When communist-led unions such as the FIA and the WWF established broad committees to defend the existing leadership against the Industrial Groups' challenge, the CPA leadership had clear expectations of their role. It was the task of these committees to develop trade unions as 'schools of struggle against capitalism and for the building of socialism'.[243] The committees should not limit themselves to a passive defence of the existing leadership but also had to develop a series of economic and political demands that would challenge and defeat the reactionary forces and open the way to further growth of the revolutionary movement.[244]

The CPA leadership increasingly believed that many of its trade union members were not fulfilling this role and meeting their obligations as party members. The leadership position was vigorously put at Central Committee meetings, State Conferences, as well as through numerous articles in *Communist Review*. The public nature of many of the criticisms is an indication of the determination of the leadership to impose its will on party union officials. Communist union officials were not totally passive or subservient in the face of criticisms from their party leadership. At the 15th Congress both E.V. Elliott and E. Thornton spoke out on the issue. While Thornton conceded that some union officials were being 'economist', he opposed the blanket condemnation of all union officials which he considered to be 'disruptive'.[245]

Despite Thornton's response the criticisms of communist union officials had a long history. At the 1946 West Australian CPA state conference J.B. Miles, then national secretary, said in reply to Paddy Troy: 'Comrade Troy, you referred to the Bolsheviks in Western Australia. Let me tell you Comrade Troy there is no such thing as a communist or Bolshevik in Western Australia'.[246] At this time Paddy Troy was not only the leading party union activist in the state, had been a member for many years, and had been jailed for three months in 1940 for what was, in effect, party membership.[247] At a Victorian State Committee meeting in 1950 Jack Blake allegedly

told Clarrie O'Shea, secretary of the Tramways Union, that he was unfit to be in the party because of his political backwardness.[248]

At the conclusion of the discussion at the January 10, 1948 political committee meeting Sharkey escalated the attack on some of the leading communist union officials. Sharkey demanded that Tom Wright spend more time and effort addressing political issues in his union. Sharkey's comments followed Wright's admission that communist activists needed to move from the economic struggles currently taking place and start to devote more time to raising political issues as part of their activity.[249] Wright, a former general secretary of the party in the mid-1920s, had lost most his influence in the party in 1929, for his slowness to respond the political changes that the new Stalinist leadership in the Soviet Union were imposing on the Comintern.[250] Despite this humiliation Wright remained in the party and thereafter accepted every new political line that emerged from the Soviet Union in the following decades.[251] Yet, those who had contact with Wright in this era, including his political opponents, have described him as humane, pleasant or reserved: an image that contrasts sharply with the usual designation of communist union leaders.[252]

Wright had been elected as NSW state secretary of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union (SMWU) in 1936.[253] Within the SMWU Wright had widespread support and the Industrial Group in the union was unable to remove him from his position.[254] However, Wright was never in a position where he could impose his policies on his union membership. In NSW the union leadership was built around an alliance that included Jack Heffernan, an active left-wing ALP member. The union's policies were determined at the regular monthly meetings of the union.[255] While the union was industrially militant it lacked the strong political traditions of other communist-led unions such as the Miners' Federation, the Seamen's Union and the WWF. That, as well the need to maintain alliances within the union, may have moderated Wright's political stance, but did not end it. In particular, Wright had a long standing commitment to Aboriginal issues dating back at least to 1934 when he organised a protest meeting to support Northern Territory Aboriginals facing murder charges after a clash with Japanese pearlers.[256] Wright was a frequent commenter on Aboriginal issues for the CPA and helped draft some of their documents on the issue. The era was one in which few unionists showed any concern or interest in Aboriginal issues. The SMWU would have had few Aborigines as members and Wright's commitment to the issue could not have brought him any gains from his union members. His support for the issue can therefore be seen as indication that Wright was not averse to raising at least one political issue that had no immediate impact on his members.

At its May 1948 national congress, the CPA adopted a policy of building a broad-

based peace movement as a priority for its political work.[257] The party leadership became increasingly critical of many of its trade unionists whom it believed were not committed to implementing or fully understanding the new policy. It felt that the trade union cadres often looked at the issue through the narrow perspective of trade union activists rather than, as it demanded, as communist activists. For example, Sharkey viewed the imposition of trade union bans on the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range as a 'mistake' imposed without consultation with the relevant party committees.[258] Similarly, after the Korean War broke out, Jack Blake criticised communist trade union activists who saw 'advanced actions through top trade union bodies' as the effective way of opposing the war rather then the mass mobilisation built around the peace petition against the atomic bomb.[259] Union bans on the transport of war material also ran the risk of isolating militant workers from the rest of the movement which may have not been ready to accept such actions.[260]

There were other similar criticisms that party leaders directed towards what it considered to the failure of its trade union members to adequately pursue the peace issue. Audrey Blake, who was heavily involved in the peace movement, gave a number of instances where she considered that party cadres had failed to give political leadership to their co-workers after the outbreak of the Korean War.[261] It was the task of communist trade union officials to take charge of organising the collection of signatures against the atom bomb in their unions and workplaces as a means of raising the political consciousness of their members.[262] However, there was a tendency to retreat from the need to challenge reformist ideology into either sectarian or right-opportunist attitudes.[263] Even on the central committee there were trade union officials who either opposed the peace policy or who failed initially to implement it.[264] For the party leadership it was the failure of the party union activists to fully understand and apply Marxism in their political activity that was the major cause of their mistakes.

The task of attracting significant trade union support for the peace movement was made more difficult, after the ALP federal executive declared the APC to be a 'subsidiary of the Communist Party' and adding that no members of the ALP could retain membership if they supported the APC.[265] This may have been one of the factors that led some communist union officials not to become fully involved in the peace movement due to the difficulties of building a viable movement. The problem was compounded by the extreme hostility displayed by the CPA towards the ALP between 1948 and 1951. This policy then ebbed and the CPA started to return to its practice of working with elements of the ALP. At its 16th Congress in 1951 it was calling for the building of a united front between the CPA and the ALP.[266]

In April 1958, at the 18th Congress, Sharkey's report called on the ALP to make

some concessions and exchange preferences with the DLP in the approaching federal election. The emphasis was on the need to defeat the Menzies government by a united front of all working-class parties. However this must not involve a capitulation to the 'reactionary, semi-fascist outlook and policies' of the DLP.[267] The congress resolution also recognised the importance of including in the united front those workers 'misled' by Industrial Group misleaders.[268] The resolution also emphasised that 'profound changes' had taken place in the ALP which had now returned to some of its more progressive traditions.[269] The shift in policy was aimed at rebuilding party influence in the trade unions which had been weakened during the 'left turn' period and the activities of the Industrial Groups.

Conclusion

This chapter has given a broad outline of CPA trade union activity in the period covered by this book. This activity was both intensive and wide ranging particularly in the late 1940s when the party attempted to challenge the ALP for the leadership of the Australian working class. As a self-proclaimed Leninist organisation the party placed enormous importance on the need for its trade union cadre to be well versed in Marxist theory in preparation for the anti-capitalist revolution which they believed was imminent. It followed that many of its members regularly attended educational classes to prepare them for this role. The impact of this activity varied. Some fully accepted and absorbed Marxist theory and consciously attempted to integrate into their trade union activity. Others were far more hesitant, seeing the CPA as a vehicle for militant trade unionism rather than as a revolutionary political party committed to the destruction of capitalism.

During the period of the 'left turn' the party leadership was critical of its trade unionists who failed to pursue a wider political role for trade unions. However, party trade unionists could not impose these policies on the trade unions as the party leadership expected them to. Apart from the difficulties created by the Cold War, and the hesitancy of some communist union activists , communists were never in full control of the unions they led. Their influence often rested on maintaining fragile alliances with independents who were willing to work with them. In this situation some activists choose the path of least resistance and started to deemphasise the wider aspects of party policy. However, others did raise and seek support for political issues from their co-workers. There was relatively wide involvement by trade unions in political issues such as the peace movement, Aboriginal human rights, and migrant issues. This activity was often the result of initiatives by communist union activists. This activity will be examined in detail in the following chapters. ■

3. Peace Is Union Business: The CPA and Peace Activism in the Early Cold War

Introduction

This chapter examines CPA political peace activism in the trade unions during the early Cold War. It opens with a brief historical review of political peace activism within the Australian trade unions prior to the formation of the CPA in 1920. This activism became well-established and an important part of the Australian radical tradition. The CPA was thus the inheritor of political peace activism within the trade unions, and not its creator. This allowed it to claim that its advocacy of peace issues during the Cold War was consistent with earlier traditions. The chapter draws on a variety of sources, including union records, personal memoirs and communist publications, to argue that peace-movement activity was often a central feature of the political work of communists in the trade unions in the early Cold War. As the previous chapter outlined, at its 1948 congress the CPA had adopted the Cominform call for the construction of broad-based peace movements to challenge the drift towards a new world war. This was to taint the CPA's support for a peace movement with the not totally unjustified accusation that it was acting solely at the behest of the Soviet Union. Once the party had endorsed the peace issue as a major campaign many, but not all, communist trade union activists accepted party discipline and attempted to raise the peace issue in their trade unions and workplaces.

In communist-led unions such as the Seamen's Union and the WWF, which had long traditions of internationalist solidarity, communists were able to attract a wider level of support for the peace movement which drew on these same traditions. In other communist-led unions such as the Victorian branch of the ARU and the BWIU, communist activists frequently raised the peace issue in union journals, workplaces,

annual conferences and in resolutions on union executives but were never able to generate the same degree of support. The members of these unions generally continued to support communists as union officials on the basis of their ability to win improvements in wages and working conditions while at the same time rejecting their political views. The presence of communist union officials was often a crucial factor in generating or maintaining peace activity within particular unions. It gave them a greater ability to influence the political direction of the union as well as access to union journals through which they could promote the peace movement However, where CPA union officials attempted to impose their policies on a hostile membership it was one of the factors that contributed to the loss of their union positions.

This chapter will demonstrate that despite the difficulties created by the prevailing political atmosphere and the potential risk to their union positions posed by their peace movement activities, there was widespread activity by CPA members in the trade unions in support of the peace movement. This activity occurred in a variety of unions in all Australian states. It is an indication of the degree to which party members accepted the obligations of party membership, which included raising political questions in the trade unions. The challenge that faced these activists in gaining support was that the peace movement was widely seen as an instrument of the Soviet Union and not consistent with traditional Australian union concerns about peace. It was a view that communist trade union peace activists rejected.

Trade unions and 19th-century wars

One of the first expressions of an internationalist outlook backed by industrial action displayed by a section of Australian waterside workers occurred in January 1865. Port Phillip stevedores refused to supply labour to the American Confederate cruiser *Shenandoah* and followed this with a noisy demonstration in the city.[1] It was a tradition that was to find consistent expression in some form over the following decades. When the Sudan War broke out in 1885 and New South Wales sent 700 troops, one of the centres of antiwar opposition could be found in the trade unions in the northern coal towns.[2] More importantly, the radical section of the labour movement argued that, since the Sudanese were fighting to regain control of their country, the British deserved to be defeated.[3] Thus the charges of disloyalty and active support for Australia's enemies that were to be levelled against the CPA during the Cold War were an echo from an earlier period.

When the Boer War broke out, amongst the first groups to organise against it were some trade unions and the small socialist parties.[4] Even the conservative Australian Workers' Union (AWU) demonstrated some limited opposition to Australian

involvement in the war.[5] This was a reflection of the reality that the Australian working class of the era had the largest numbers of individuals of any group opposed to imperialism and its impact around the world.[6] Similarly, when the Spanish-American War commenced the radical Melbourne-based paper *Tocsin* denounced the American actions as the work of thieves who were determined to steal Cuba for their own benefit.[7] Thus, in the latter part of the 19th century, a period of growing inter-imperialist rivalry and colonial expansion, numerous Australian trade unions were actively opposed to the resultant wars. This opposition was expressed even when there was no direct involvement of Australian troops.

However, as well as the radical expression of trade union opposition to imperialist wars, there were also strong and often dominant traditions of loyalty to the British Empire and its defence. In February 1900, after members of the Amalgamated Miners' Association at a conference in Zeehan, Tasmania, heard of a major British victory in the Boer War they applauded and stood up to sing 'God save the Queen'.[8] Similarly, after the Victorian Trades Hall Council president announced that he had attended a dinner in honour of the departing Boer War troops, his action was endorsed by a narrow majority.[9] In South Australia, the ALP switched from an almost indifferent attitude toward the war to one of full support, once it appeared that Britain might lose. It believed a defeat posed a serious threat to Australia.[10] Thus, there were differences in the Australian labour movement over what attitudes should be taken to Australian involvement in overseas wars well before the formation of the CPA. These differences ranged from empire loyalty to various forms of socialist internationalism. These were to be replicated after the formation of the CPA.

World War I and the birth of the CPA

As Europe in July 1914 moved towards an unavoidable war, Australia was in the midst of a federal election campaign. On July 31, at an election meeting in Colac, the federal ALP opposition leader, Andrew Fisher, called on Australians to defend Britain 'to our last man and our last shilling'.[11] The call was to sweep the ALP into federal political power as the party best equipped to deal with the looming war.[12] It was a reversal of previously held positions. As late as 1912 the Federal ALP conference had sent greet-ings to the German social democrats, and one Victorian delegate had expressed the view that the unity of German and French workers displayed at socialist congresses had helped to maintain world peace.[13] In supporting World War I, the ALP had followed the example of its European social democrat counterparts who had sup-ported the war aims of their own capitalist class. For revolutionary internationalist socialists around the world this was an abject betrayal of everything the socialist move-

ment stood for. At the 1907 Second International Congress (the worldwide organisation of social-democratic or labour parties), a motion was passed calling on all the parties to oppose war, and if one broke out, social-democratic parties were to use the subsequent political crisis to launch the abolition of capitalism.[14] Similar motions were passed at the 1910 and 1912 congresses.[15] The aftermath of this process was to harden into a permanent rupture the division between the revolutionary and reformist wings of both the Australian and international working-class movement.

After the Bolshevik seizure of power in November 1917 there was a new centre for revolutionary socialist ideas. As they consolidated their political power in Russia, the Bolsheviks set out to consolidate this with a new international of revolutionary workers. In order to avoid what they considered to be the betrayals of the Second International, a highly centralised form of organisation was proposed, to be backed up by a stringent list of 21 conditions that all parties wishing to join the new international had to support fully. These conditions were to have a profound impact on those Australian socialists who rallied to the cause of the Russian revolution and the construction of a new revolutionary international.

These developments were to shape the direction of all communist parties, including the Australian, over the next decades and into the Cold War. Australian communist links with this new centre were to lead to persistent claims that their policies were dictated from Moscow. In reality, the CPA's policies were often a complex mixture that incorporated both Australian radical traditions and the Russian Bolshevik experience. Despite the formal dissolution of the Comintern in May 1943 by Stalin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union continued its leading role in the world movement.[16] More importantly, as international tensions increased the Comintern was to be effectively reborn as the Cominform in September 1947. Despite the lack of formal membership of the majority of the world's communist parties, the organisation was a channel by which Russian policy could be transmitted to communists around the world.

The most important of the 21 conditions that can be related to the peace movement were the requirements that communists had to defend the Soviet Union unconditionally and support the colonial independence movement.[17] These were to become key issues in the unfolding Cold War. For communists the Cold War was seen as a continuation of the unrelenting hostility (except for the period of the World War II) to the Soviet Union and a possible prelude to an attack on it and the new socialist states. World War II had also unleashed a series of colonial freedom struggles which were determined to resist the returning European colonial powers. When the peace movement emerged in the late 1940s, these two areas of conflict became important focal points of activity.

The 21 conditions also required the newly formed communist parties to conduct systematic revolutionary work inside the trade unions, to remove all reformist union officials from their positions, and to make all communist trade union cadres subject to party direction.[18] In reality, the CPA hierarchy was never to exercise the total control over its trade union cadres, as was claimed by its numerous opponents, or that were clearly implied by these conditions. However, these conditions gave every encouragement to communist trade union cadres to pursue a wider agenda than one limited to wages and working conditions or policies acceptable to the ALP. A significant number of them believed that peace issues were a legitimate concern for trade unionists, and attempted to build support for the movement, both in their individual workplaces and within union structures.

The Cold War

In March 1947 President Truman announced the new doctrine of the United States to help countries resist 'attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures'.[19] It was the final step towards the formal declaration of the Cold War that was to see the world divided into two hostile camps. In the late 1940s, amid a welter of proposals and counter-proposals, all attempts to either abolish nuclear weapons or impose a form of international control and inspection broke down amid bitter accusations from both camps. Once the Soviet Union successfully detonated its own atomic bomb in 1949 the world appeared to hover on the brink of destruction. Isaac Deutscher accurately described the situation as one which 'delivers us immediately to the moral holocaust; it aims immediately at the destruction and mutilation not of our bodies but of our minds; its weapons are the myths and legends of propaganda'.[20]

This heated atmosphere made it extremely difficult for the CPA to win a wider hearing for its peace activities. Its actions and policies were viewed through the prism of a deep-seated anti-Sovietism that precluded any reasonable discussion or consideration of its program. The CPA was widely regarded, not as a genuine Australian party, but as the direct representative of the Soviet Union. This attitude shaped the activities of anti-communist groups in the labour movement, who organised effectively to block the peace movement from gaining significant support.[21] The close connection that had existed between unions and peace-related issues was weakened for several years. It was not until the 1959 Peace Congress that this linkage was restored to some extent.[22]

The CPA's links with and admiration for the Soviet Union were strong and undeniable. This was displayed, not just by the party's functionaries, but also by its trade union members, many of whom were involved in the peace movement. This

trend had been deepened by the experiences of World War II. The Soviet Army had inflicted the vast majority of casualties suffered by the German Army during the war.[23] In the process it suffered perhaps as many as 25 million dead and, in the areas that had been occupied by the German Army, there was almost total destruction of industry, infrastructure and agriculture.[24] At the end of the war, millions of people around the world expressed the hope that, after all the deaths and destruction, a new and better world would emerge.

The Soviet Army had played a critical role in the defeat of fascism, and from the viewpoint of communists around the world this had earned the Soviet Union an honoured role in any postwar settlement. In the face of what appeared to many communists to be an increasingly belligerent attitude by Western powers, which sought to deny the Soviet Union this role, communists turned towards the construction of a peace movement to stop the drift towards a new war. With the advent of nuclear weapons, such a war not only threatened the destruction of the Soviet Union, but also posed a grave threat to the future of all humanity. This meant that the building of a peace movement became an urgent necessity for many communist trade unionists.

The Australian Peace Council

The Australian Peace Council (APC) was established on July 1, 1949 at the house of the Rev. Victor James in East Melbourne. Also present were two other 'peace parsons': Alf Dickie and Frank Hartley.[25] The trio were to become the most prominent representatives of the peace movement during the early Cold War. Robert Menzies, the newly elected prime minister, feared that the consolidation of a powerful peace movement could impede the mobilisation of the resources necessary to fight any future wars.[26] The presence of a number of prominent communists, mainly intellectuals, opened the APC to accusations that that it was nothing more than a 'communist front'.[27]

This lack of trade union leaders in the central leadership positions led Davidson, in his pioneer history of the CPA, to argue that it was the party intellectuals who carried the bulk of peace movement work, and that trade unionists in Victoria and Queensland in particular tended to neglect the peace movement in favour of the Democratic Rights Council (DRC).[28] In fact, the DRC involved many of the same people who were active in the APC, and as well as addressing the increased threats to civil liberties, it often raised issues related to the peace movement. Even if a communist unionist's entire political work were directed through the DRC, the peace issue was still being addressed in one form or another. More importantly, in a movement that emerged as a genuine mass movement, to use Davidson's description, it would be surprising if

there were not a sizeable trade union sector involved.[29] Historically, the Australian peace movements have characteristically been alliances between middle-class activists, often intellectuals or Christian pacifists, and radical socialist or trade union groups.[30] In the early Cold War the CPA was the only significant force within the trade unions prepared to raise the peace issue, and the presence of unionists was largely due to the party's support for the peace movement as well as the small numbers of individual unionists willing to work with it.

The peace movement and the trade unions

In an introduction to an article written for the *Building Worker*, in November 1949, Frank Hartley stated that he was convinced that 'the opinion of the trade unionists is of paramount importance for the future of the world'.[31] At a memorial meeting following his death, Dorothy Gibson, an executive member of the APC, explained that Hartley had 'always sought, and never refused, to speak to the workers', and that one of his consistent themes was for the need of unity between 'Church and the trade unions'[32]. Hartley's outlook towards the trade union movement was also shared by the two other key religious peace activists. Victor James previously had links with the mining areas of Wales before becoming a minister; Alf Dickie had been an industrial worker.[33] These backgrounds gave all three an understanding of the key role that trade unions could play in the peace movement. In the case of Hartley this was extended to the CPA.[34] To help build the first APC Congress in April 1950, Dickie and Hartley addressed factory meetings five days a week.[35] By this time the ALP leadership was hostile towards the peace movement, and it is certain that the majority of these meetings were organised by CPA members or by individuals close to the party.

Other non-communist peace movement leaders displayed the same degree of support for the trade union movement involvement in the peace movement. In 1954, Bill Morrow was appointed secretary of the New South Wales Peace Council.[36] Morrow was the only prominent member of the ALP to speak at the inaugural congress of the APC, for which he came under sustained attack particularly from the new Liberal government.[37] His support for the peace movement and the militant traditions of the Australian labour movement was eventually to lead to his loss of endorsement as a Tasmanian senator, and after standing as an Independent Labor candidate, he was expelled from the ALP.[38] As a former secretary of the Queensland and Tasmanian ARU branches, his extensive union contacts were to prove invaluable to the APC. For example, during a tour of Queensland from June to October 1954, on behalf of the APC, support was received from unions such as the ARU, the WWF, the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), and from meat industry workers.[39] All these unions had a

significant number of communist activists, particularly in the far north of Queensland.

Communist intellectuals active in the peace movement were also supportive of trade union activity in the peace movement. Those who had remained in the party at the end of the war agreed with its revolutionary goals for the transformation of Australian society, and the central role assigned to the working class in this revolution. After his removal as the first APC secretary, Ian Turner went to work as a carriage cleaner on the Victorian Railways, despite his previous university education. After two years as an active unionist, Turner was sacked in what appeared to him to be a clear case of victimisation, although he was unable to convince the Arbitration Court of the merits of his argument.[40] In New Zealand, Cecil Holmes joined the recently established National Film Unit and became a shop steward and active member of the Public Service Association.[41] Amid claims of communist subversion made after publication of some of his stolen correspondence, Holmes was dismissed from his job, but was able to reverse this after a long court case.[42] On his arrival in Australia, as well as working at Goodyear, where again he was sacked for his union activity, Holmes became secretary of the NSW Peace Council.[43] Holmes' background as an active unionist and his sympathy for unionism was undoubtedly of assistance when the peace movement attempted to establish links with the union movement.

Their identity as trade union activists, rather than as communists, proved beneficial when joining sections of a peace movement from which they might otherwise have been excluded. At the first Melbourne meeting called to plan the 1953 Convention on Peace and War, it was announced that in order to avoid being labelled with the communist-front tag, no communist had been invited to the meeting and not one was present.[44] When a young man announced that he was, in fact, a communist but was present at the meeting representing his union, he was allowed to stay in that capacity.[45] Eventually, J. Owen, one of the main organisers of the convention, later accepted the presence of communists and he found their behaviour to be 'impeccable'.[46] Like his counterparts in the APC, Owen and other organisers sought to address meetings of workers.[47] In the end 232 out of the 939 delegates who attended the convention were trade union delegates, an indication of the continued weight of the trade unions in the peace movement.[48]

A key factor in this trade union involvement was the active encouragement by both the CPA hierarchy and the non-communist leaders of the APC for the formation of workplace-based peace auxiliaries. The formation of auxiliaries helped provide the foundation by which the peace movement could carry out its mass campaigns, such as the peace ballot and also provide a forum for the discussion of peace related issues.[49] In October 1949, *Tribune* had urged its readers to establish hundreds of peace auxiliaries

based on special interest groups such as students, workers, scientists and artists, as an effective way of building the movement.[50] By November 1949, there were approximately 150 locality and workplace auxiliaries around Australia.[51] In an era where many people lived and worked in the same suburb, the auxiliaries in working-class areas often had links with local factories.

Even before the formal establishment of the peace movement there were signs that some communist trade union cadres were starting to raise the peace issue and seek support from other workers. In February 1949, the annual conference of the Victorian Provincial Trades Hall Council had passed a motion which called for 'a reduction in armaments', and the 'outlawing of atomic weapons'. It also urged the federal government to accept the Soviet peace proposals.[52] This reflected the significant communist representation on a number of the provincial councils. For example, of the five delegates from the Bendigo Trades and Labor Council to the 1948 Provincial Annual Conference, the majority were acknowledged communists.[53] Similarly, the Ballarat Trades and Labor Council endorsed the APC soon after its establishment, another indication of a communist influence.[54] The impetus for endorsement was undoubtedly provided by the adoption the previous year of a commitment to build a peace campaign by the 1948 congress of the CPA.

The formation of a peace auxiliary in the Jolimont Railway workshops was announced in the *Guardian* in November 1949.[55] The auxiliaries based at the various workshops of the Victorian Railways were amongst the most active of all the workplace-based peace auxiliaries. At the Newport Workshops the auxiliary had 30 members, and included many ex-servicemen. The auxiliary was able to sell 200 badges and also convinced 240 of their fellow workers to vote in the 'Peace Ballot', one of the first APC campaigns.[56]

Communist influence in the ARU grew in the 1930s with the building of shop committees in the workshops, and consolidated with the election of the communist, J.J. Brown, as Victorian secretary, in 1942.[57] Despite claims of total communist control, the new leadership was a diverse one and contained individuals of various left-wing views.[58] However, the presence of a left-wing or communist leadership was of enormous assistance to the peace auxiliary, as many official union bodies endorsed the aims of the peace movement. For example, a meeting of the Newport Workshops' Combined Shop Committee in October 1949, called on the Chifley government to support Russia's proposals for the banning of atomic weapons.[59] At the APC Congress, Dave Stephens, president of the Newport Railway Workshops Committee, spoke and declared that young people would 'never fight the Malayan people'.[60] Without the participation and encouragement of CPA union officials, it is unlikely there would

have been the same level of ARU activity in the peace movement.

The thrust of CPA activity was to attempt to link the economic and political problems of workers and stress the common roots of these problems could be traced to the capitalist system. It advanced the argument that military spending diverted money away from wages and the provision of social services. It was an idea that was expressed in a range of party publications, including job bulletins that were circulated directly to workers.[61] At the June 1950 meeting of the NSW Peace Council, J.R. Hughes, in his trade union report, emphasised the need to link the fight for improvements in wages and conditions with the struggle to build the peace movement.[62] His comments repeated the CPA's view that trade unionists had a vital role to play in the building of a peace movement.

In the lead-up to the April 1950 congress special efforts were made to appeal directly to factory workers to attend.[63] Despite the extreme hostility that a considerable portion of the media displayed to the congress and its keynote speaker, Rev. Hewlett Johnson, the Dean of Canterbury, the CPA achieved some success in this campaign.[64] An indication of the depth of union representation at the congress can be gauged from a report, 'The Report of the Congress', written after the conclusion of the congress.[65] It revealed that the president and secretary of the Queensland Trades and Labour Council had attended, and the Darwin Council had announced that it was sending representatives down by air.[66] The Seamen's Union acted to ensure that every ship was in port at the time of the congress had sent a delegate.[67] The hostility of the Grouper-led NSW ARU leadership had not prevented workers at the Eveleigh Workshops donating money to send delegates to the congress.[68] The BWIU indicated that, as well as its allocated delegates, it would also send delegates from 30 building sites.[69] While many of these delegates came from unions or TLC's that were communist-led (but not controlled), it is clear from the depth of representation that the CPA was able to generate support for the peace campaign that went beyond its immediate ranks.

The CPA and peace

From 1950 onwards, as the Cold War intensified and threatened to escalate into a real war, the CPA placed increased emphasis on the need to build a broad based peace movement.[70] Their views had been shaped by policy adopted at the founding conference of the Cominform. At an initial meeting called to organise the founding conference, Andrei Zhdanov, a Soviet politburo member called on communist parties around the world to build peace movements to meet the threat of a new war. The world had now divided into two camps: 'the imperialist and anti-democratic camp, on one hand,

and the anti-imperialist and democratic camp on the other'.[71] All communist parties were now required to build broad based peace movements to challenge the threats of a new war posed by this new international situation.[72] In 1948 this analysis was adopted by the CPA at its 15th National Congress, and it was stressed that the campaign should be a priority for party members.[73]

The adoption of this policy was the key reason was CPA members started to build the peace movement. In a party that was overwhelmingly proletarian in composition and outlook, this activity would have reflected through the trade unions. One of the difficulties in tracing this activity was that much of it was not easily visible. Trade union peace activity in this period was often limited to resolutions moved at all levels within trade union structures, articles in union publications, financial donations to the peace movement, and workplace meetings where peace activists could speak. These actions are not the traditional forms of militant trade unionism, such as strikes, pickets and demonstrations. For example, during the period of the Korean War, there appears to have been only a small number of demonstrations. On June 29, 1950, William George Smith, a communist and a union organiser, was arrested at a small APC protest outside the Melbourne US consulate, for holding a placard opposing American action in Korea.[74] In Sydney, on February 14, 1951, 32 alleged 'communists' were arrested during violent clashes during a protest against the visit of John Foster Dulles, President Truman's special envoy.[75]

Whatever the limitations of a peace-movement that was largely confined to propaganda activities, rather than militant demonstrations or direct trade union action, it helped sustain the peace movement in difficult times. In particular, workplace meetings and the articles in union journals allowed the peace movement to reach a relatively large number of individuals when many other avenues were closed off due to the prevailing Cold War atmosphere. The activity also reflected the nature of the peace movement as a whole. Alec Robertson, a communist and the second secretary of the APC, later explained that the peace movement of this era was one that was limited to semi-regular peace congresses, local meetings and petitioning campaigns.[76]

The CPA was also aware of the limitations on its activity in the APC and the need to maintain the alliance with non-communist activists. It discouraged its members from selling party publications or distributing party propaganda at peace meetings.[77] The CPA rejected imposing a revolutionary analysis of the causes of war on the APC, and any militant methods of achieving the movement's aims.[78] However, the critical point was that many of the non-communist leaders of the APC welcomed and actively sought support for the peace movement from trade unionists. This proved to be of great assistance as communist activists pursued the peace issue in the trade unions.

Labor Party and the peace movement

The ability of the CPA to build support for the peace movement in the wider labour movement in the early Cold War was significantly weakened by the ALP leadership's extreme hostility to the emerging movement. W. Gollan, who was the party's main activist in the NSW peace movement, and a member of the Teachers' Federation, attributed this development to the influence of the right-wing Catholic group that had emerged as the dominant group in the ALP leadership.[79] This was to culminate in the ALP federal executive declaring the APC to be a 'subsidiary of the Communist Party', and adding that no members of the ALP could retain membership if they supported the APC.[80] A few months later, the federal executive again attacked the state APC branches as 'instruments of Russian imperialism' and warned against any ALP member being involved in organisations or campaigns that exploited the 'desire for peace in the interests of Russian plans'.[81]

Once these resolutions became official ALP policy, many difficulties were created for the APC and the CPA in gaining union support for the peace campaign. This was acknowledged in a letter Rev. Frank Hartley wrote in his capacity as APC secretary to Frederic Joliot-Curie, president of the World Peace Council. Hartley explained that any ALP member who gave support to the APC in any form was expelled from the party, and had no opportunity to defend himself.[82] Hartley also noted that the numerous struggles between left and right for control of the trade unions were really a 'struggle for peace', and had to be fought until the peace forces were 'victorious'. However, these battles consumed both the time and resources of CPA union activists which might otherwise have been directed to the peace movement.[83] These internal union battles required the full-time attention and effort of communist union activists, and may explain some of the apparent hesitations of some communists to fully immerse themselves in the peace movement. Yet, despite these problems many communist union activists did play an active role in the peace movement despite the risks this posed to their positions within the trade unions.

Individual ALP members faced the difficulty of having to choose between peace movement political activities, or maintaining their ALP membership and cease any involvement with the peace movement. Undoubtedly many withdrew unwillingly from the peace movement both because of this hostility from the ALP hierarchy and to avoid being smeared with the communist brush. Others made an alternative choice. In South Australia, Joe Drummond, the secretary of the ARU, was expelled from the ALP after he refused to end his involvement in the peace movement.[84] Under his leadership, the peace movement continued to find a reflection in the union. In May 1950, the union's journal, the *Railway Review,* published the decisions of the APC, as

well as the submission by Rev. Frank Hartley and others protesting the attempt to ban the CPA by the Menzies government.[85] J.F. Chapple, the general secretary of the ARU, wrote some introductory comments on the submission, which is an indication there was, at times, a degree of support for the peace movement and democratic rights in the ARU, which existed beyond the membership of the CPA.[86]

In 1950, Walter McLeod, a BWIU organiser and a leading member of the Bulli-Woonona branch on the South coast of New South Wales, attended the Melbourne Peace Conference as a representative of his union. The NSW ALP state executive, then under the control of the anti-communist Groupers, expelled him, and his subsequent appeal to the State Conference failed to achieve his reinstatement.[87] The repercussions of this expulsion became apparent the following year when 114 members of the branch, mostly members of the the Miners' Federation, declined to renew their ALP membership.[88] The expulsion confirmed Hartley's claim that any ALP member, even in their capacity as a union representative who supported the peace movement, placed their membership at risk. The rigid application of the rules barring any participation by ALP members in the APC by Grouper-dominated executives, caused a great deal of resentment in left-wing circles.[89] This resentment became apparent when McLeod was elected president of the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC) shortly after his expulsion from the ALP.[90]

Unlike many other peak councils, communist-influenced unions such as the Miners' Federation, WWF, AEU, and the FIA (until 1952) were the dominant forces shaping SCLC policy. In contrast, in other peak councils it was the smaller craft unions, usually Grouper-led, which determined policies.[91] The presence of these communist-led unions was a key factor in the involvement in the peace movement throughout the 1950s by the SCLC, with the secretary reporting in 1961 that the council had been 'actively interested' in the peace committee.[92] There were also strong local traditions of unity between communists and left ALP members.[93] These traditions assisted CPA union cadres in generating wider support for the peace movement because their actions and policies were not in conflict with local traditions, as was the situation in many other centres.

In large measure the ALP had been formed as the political voice of the trade union movement. Historically, trade unions exercised the right to determine their activities without any direct interference from the ALP hierarchy. When the Industrial Groups were first established their major aim was the removal of every single communist from their union positions. However, as the power and influence of the Groups increased they began to target other individuals who did not share their overall political philosophy. This was to generate enormous resentment among many ALP activists

who saw the Groups threatening traditional ALP values. For example, in South Australia, after a Group supporter in the WWF ran against an official of the union who was an ALP member, Clyde Cameron, the president of the state ALP, ensured that official recognition was withdrawn from the Groups. An additional factor was the rejection of the ALP's socialist objective by Group supporters in the Clare sub-branch.[94] In Victoria, the formation of an Industrial Group in the Clothing Trades Union, which had no communist officials, seemed to indicate that the Groups wanted total control of the labour movement.[95]

The conflict between the Groupers and their opponents led eventually to the ALP split of 1954-1955. The ending of the influence of the Groupers on ALP policy was to open up, as we shall see in the next chapter, new possibilities for the CPA in building support for the peace movement in the trade unions. In the meantime both the APC and the CPA had to deal with the reality of a frequently hostile environment. When it wanted to conduct a meeting at a factory or workplace, wherever possible the APC attempted to get the support of the trade union representative, shop committee or social club.[96] In the absence of such support it would conduct a meeting and hope there would be sufficient support to form an auxiliary. If only one or two people were interested, then they would be authorised to act as representatives of the APC, until there was sufficient support to establish an official auxiliary.[97]

A further impediment to communist activity was the adoption by a number of unions of anti-communist clauses, which barred CPA members from holding central positions, thus denying them the opportunity to determine the union's policies. In 1947, after his election as vice-president of West Australian Amalgamated Society of Railway Employees (WAASRE), Thomas Blundell-Wignall was removed from office because of his CPA membership. This followed the WAASRE adopting a policy that barred communists from holding any official position. Without the financial resources to challenge his removal, he had to accept the situation.[98] A similar policy was adopted by the AWU and the Commonwealth Public Clerical Association.[99] Communist activists faced particular problems in Western Australia in reaching out to many trade unionists. The absence of an independent trades and labour council incorporating a full range of political views, similar to what existed in other states, meant that trade unionists' interests were confined within the structures of the ALP. This structure effectively limited CPA members from directly influencing many unionists. The non-representation of communists in the various district peak union ensured that there was no major challenge to existing ALP policy. This had a particular impact on the peace movement whose demands were often an explicit rejection of existing ALP policy. Communists were also barred from attending District Council meetings as

observers even when they were members of an affiliated union.[100] After a protracted struggle an independent Trades and Labour Council open to all unionists, no matter what their political views were, was established in 1962.[101] Once this had occurred the CPA was able to seek wider union endorsement for the peace campaign.

While some unions were successful in barring communists from holding office, similar moves were defeated in other unions. This was true even when there was not a significant communist faction in the union concerned. As with the defeat of the 1951 referendum to ban the CPA, many unionists were prepared to defend the civil liberties of CPA members, including the right to propose policies, while at the same time rejecting these policies. In 1946, the attempt by Geelong sub-branch of the Electrical Trades Union to require all candidates for office to state their political views was overruled by the State Executive.[102] In 1954, the annual conference of the State School Teachers of Western Australia voted 75 to 18 against imposing a ban on communists holding union positions.[103] The left ALP activist Frank Nolan, secretary of the Queensland ARU and vice-president of the Queensland Labour Council, who worked closely with communists in both organisations, denounced the 'Red' scare as an attempt to destroy 'every progressive anti-fascist in the so-called free democracies'.[104]

However, the political atmosphere in the early 1950s was running strongly against the CPA. The defeat of anti-communist clauses in trade unions did not mean endorsement of the party's policies. It was simply a defence of their right to hold office, and in most instances nothing more. This situation imposed on the CPA a policy of constraint in their peace activism. Rather than a general policy of peace activism in all unions, this activity was mostly concentrated either in unions with a significant communist presence or in workplaces with strong militant traditions and communist rank-and-file activists.

Workers and the peace issue

For two groups of workers the question of peace and the threat of another major war was more than a political issue on which they could make a strong stand and express their opposition to Government policies. The issues impacted directly on their working lives in ways that were very different from the majority of other workers. More importantly, these workers would have been expected to perform crucial roles in the event of a new war breaking out. In both areas CPA members actively sought endorsement on peace movement related issues from their co-workers. This led to accusations of communist subversion and disloyalty to Australian interests. In the process one group of workers was able to maintain their organisation as an effective vehicle for their involvement in the peace movement; in the other, the workers wit-

nessed the destruction of their organisation as an alternative voice on peace-related issues.

Seamen's Union

The seamen's basic job of transporting materials to and from Australia and between Australian cities gave them a central role in the Australian economy. For most of the 20th century it was an extremely dangerous job, and the union membership fought numerous long and bitter industrial battles to establish equitable wages and decent working conditions. These struggles helped create a substantial support base within the union for both industrial and political militancy that went far beyond the relatively small number of communists in the union. In May 1941, after a bitterly contested and confused electoral process, the leading communist in the union, Eliot V. Elliott, was declared by the Arbitration Court to have been legitimately elected as general secretary of the union.[105] He was to remain a dominant figure in the union over the next three decades.

During World War II, a total of 386 Australian merchant seamen lost their lives, which meant one in eight Australian merchant seamen had died during the war.[106] The total number of casualties including the unknown number of wounded, it is claimed, was higher in percentage terms than any other section of the Australian forces.[107] This experience convinced many seamen to support the peace movement. In part, this was a response to their experiences in the recent war and its heavy toll on their co-workers.[108] It led to a situation where the proportion of Seamen's Union members actively engaged in the peace movement was almost certainly greater than any other union. It was not unusual for ship crews to elect a representative to attend the peace congresses that were held during the 1950s. For example, Tas Bull, then a communist seaman on the *Karoon*, was elected by his fellow workers to attend the 1953 Convention on Peace and War.[109]

Another key aspect of the union that assisted the CPA in its political campaigning was the heightened sense of internationalism that prevailed within the union. At a time when the majority of Australian workers held racist views, seamen's regular contact with foreign workers gave them a wider perspective of the outside world and helped end the insularity that was common amongst Australian workers. It also made them less likely to view such workers as potential or real enemies and more willing to support their struggles. During World War II, the union had given active support to stranded Chinese and Greek seamen and helped them to win major improvements in wages and conditions.[110]

For communist activist Bert Fagin, these developments led to a workplace where

the political discussion was more extensive than at any other workplace he had worked in.[111] When Roger Wilson went to sea it was the quality of the contributions made by communist activists in these discussions that convinced him to join the CPA rather than the ALP.[112] Seamen were also exposed to a wide range of social and political ideas as well as quality literature by the establishment of libraries on many ships.[113] The political consciousness and interest in political ideas of the average seaman was therefore much higher than that of other workers.[114] In such an environment it was not difficult for the CPA to pursue its political goals and achieve some success. The importance of the peace campaign to the Seamen's Union and the vigour with which the CPA pursued it is demonstrated by the 1952-53 annual report by Elliot. Elliot spent a considerable proportion of his opening remarks condemning capitalism's aggressive wars around the world and stressed continued support for the peace movement and the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).[115]

Australian Association of Scientific Workers

World War II saw the acceleration of the connection between scientific research and the military. The invention and rapid introduction of radar, sonar, the proximity fuse and the atomic bomb clearly demonstrates this connection.[116] In future, wars would be fought and won not just by front line troops, but by the country which could effectively apply advancements in scientific knowledge to military purposes. The world was moving towards a situation where about half of all scientists would work at least part-time for the military.[117] This placed them almost at the centre of any future war preparations, a role that was acknowledged by Prime Minister J.B. Chifley when he announced the development of the Woomera rocket range.[118]

What was needed now from scientists was absolute commitment and loyalty to the defence policies of the government, which were directly linked to the Western Alliance against the Soviet Union. Scientists had to accept that their research could now be applied for military purposes despite their possible objections. However, a group of scientists emerged who started to challenge what they considered the misuse of scientific research and to offer a different perspective. They linked this campaign directly to the necessity of building a peaceful world.

The Australian Association of Scientific Workers (AASW) had been established in July 1939 to unite all scientists no matter what their professional standing was, and at its peak one-third of all Australian scientists were members.[119] When the AASW failed in its application to be recognised as a trade union, the Federation of Scientific and Technical Workers was formed, which was able to gain registration.[120] Despite this lack of formal recognition, the AASW remained the main organisation through

which scientists as workers could express their views on a range of political and social questions.

The number of communists in the AASW remains unknown and subject to debate. In March 1948 F.J. Harrison, the deputy leader of the Federal Opposition, accused the AASW along with other communist-led unions of planning a general strike, which would followed by a revolution.[121] There were also other attacks on the AASW in an attempt to silence any scientist who expressed doubts about government policies. William Wentworth accused the Soviet Union of using 'her influence' in the association to advance her progress towards the atomic bomb.[122] Jack Lang denounced the AASW as 'communist controlled' and demanded that the federal government acted to ensure that scholarship holders had no links with communist organisations.[123] John Dedman, the minister of defence, was attacked for allowing alleged communists to work at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. It was claimed that his inaction threatened Australia's defence.[124] Despite this enormous pressure from powerful anti-communist forces, communist scientists within AASW continued to raise important political issues.

The claims of communist domination of AASW repeated similar claims made against other trade unions where communists were active. One estimate that AASW's communist membership ranged between 'a few' to 'no more than 10%' seems reasonable.[125] Whatever figure is accepted, communists were in an obvious minority within the organisation. What is clear is that many scientists were willing to express their concerns about the threat of nuclear war and the increasing restrictions on the exchange of scientific knowledge and research between the world's scientists. These were key issues for the peace movement. At the 1947 AASW annual general meeting the outgoing president, T.Y. Harris, read out statements by several international scientists calling for control of nuclear weapons, and went on to add that the misuse of science meant that scientists now faced the 'greatest responsibility we have ever known'.[126]

The affiliation of the Australian association to the World Federation of Scientific Workers (WFSW) increased the fears of communist influence amongst scientists. At the time the CPA was also actively supporting the affiliation of the Australian trade union movement to the communist-led World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), and its success in both areas was, for anti-communists, confirmation of communist dominance. The interim WFSW president was the French scientist, Frederic Joliot-Curie, an acknowledged communist, and the vice-presidents were the Soviet scientist, N.N. Semenov, and the British scientist and communist, J.D. Bernal.[127] Despite this strong communist influence, the WFSW at first avoided taking a firm pro-Soviet position. However, at its founding conference, its adoption of pro-Soviet positions, its

links with the WFTU, and its later association with the peace movement meant it was viewed as yet another 'front' association.[128] The AASW was guilty by association.

Perhaps the most explicit sign of communist influence in the AASW was its defence of Alan Nunn May, who had been convicted of passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union and jailed for ten years. In June 1946, a special meeting of the NSW branch passed a motion calling for his release and an end to the restrictions to international collaboration of scientists.[129] The association was also actively involved, as we shall see later, in the campaign against the Woomera Rocket Range. These actions were seen as a direct threat to Australia's security interests and confirmation that the AASW was 'communist controlled'. A sustained attack was launched against the AASW and the communist influence within it. Those who chose to remain members became tainted with Communism and risked their livelihood and careers.[130] Under these circumstances the AASW could not function as a viable organisation and its remaining members voted to disband in July 1949.[131] Communist scientists and the small number of non-communist scientists willing to work with them had lost the only organisation through which they could collectively protest as scientists against the prevailing Cold War politics. The destruction of the AASW was a direct result of the activity of communist scientists within the organisation and the fears generated that they might be able to gain wider support for their policies against the further development of nuclear weapons.

Communist-influenced unions turn towards the peace movement

A number of communist trade union cadres were active from the start of the international peace movement as it started to emerge in the late 1940s. A Second World Peace Congress (WPC) had been called for Sheffield, in Great Britain, but after the British government refused to issue visas to a large number of the delegates the conference was shifted to Warsaw in November 1950.[132] The WPC had been launched by the Soviet Union and communist parties around the world as a means to mobilise public opinion to counter what they considered to be an increased threat of another world war. In its resolution the congress, attended by 2000 delegates, condemned American actions in Korea, and called for an international commission to investigate possible war crimes. The congress also called for the banning of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.[133]

The importance that the CPA placed on the congress, and the links between the peace movement and the union movement, is indicated by the presence at the congress of a number of communist trade union activists who were representing their unions.

Jack Hughes, a member of the CPA central committee[134] and New South Wales secretary of the Federated Clerks' Union, attended as a representative of his union.[135] After winning a competition on the Melbourne waterfront that involved workers from a number of unions, Roger Wilson, a young communist supporter active in the Seamen's Union, also attended the congress as an Australian trade union representative.[136] The FIA sent four rank-and-file delegates, and on their return published a pamphlet which detailed not only their experiences at the congress, but also their subsequent tours around the new socialist states of Eastern Europe.[137]

The presence of such a relatively large number of Australian union activists at an international gathering which had adopted policies that explicitly reflected those of the Soviet Union was a matter of considerable concern. The undoubted fear was, in the event of deterioration in the international situation, these links could be mobilised to impede or totally block any military preparations of the Western powers. One indication of this came when the Menzies' government contacted the British authorities to ask them to seize the passports (which under new regulations were barred for travel to Central Europe without government permission) of the Australian delegates, including that of Jim Healy, federal secretary of the WWF, who had also attended the congress. It also ordered Australian immigration authorities to seize the passports when the delegates managed to return to Australia.[138]

The involvement of communist trade union activists from the Clerks' and the FIA was an act of either political courage or perhaps a serious underestimation of the forces ranged against them. The communist leaderships in both unions already faced a major challenge by anti-communist forces. Neither union had a long history of communist leadership or even militant traditions. Within a few years both leaderships were to be swept from office, and a critical factor in the process had been the promotion of political issues such as the peace movement through the respective union structures. Hughes was removed from office in July 1952,[139] and in a series of elections in the FIA, every communist official was removed from office by the end of 1952.[140]

Once the communists were removed from power in these two unions, it effectively ended the union involvement in the peace movement or any other expression of radical politics. The CPA had been totally unable to create any substantial base of support on these issues, even at the rank-and-file level. Only a short time before its total defeat the FIA had endorsed the 1952 Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship.[141] The union had made its hall available for an art exhibition of over 100 paintings held in conjunction with the Youth Festival.[142] One of the first acts of the new leadership was to publish in *Labor News*, the union's newspaper, a critical article on the 1952 Berlin Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship as well as a hostile description of a trip

through the Soviet Union and China by an ironworker.[143] The rigid and bureaucratic control that the communist leadership had imposed on the union meant that the radical shift in policy met with little protest from the union membership.

During the early part of 1950, communist union activists in the BWIU pursued an aggressive stance on peace-related issues. When Tom McDonald was appointed an organiser in 1950, one of the tasks he was given, in addition to the usual union roles of recruiting new members and improving conditions on building sites, was to collect signatures for the Peace Council's petition against the A-bomb.[144] In Victoria, shortly after the Korean War broke out, CPA functionaries, Flo Russell and Frank Johnson, called together a meeting of all available party union officials to discuss what the party's attitude should be towards the war. The meeting resolved that its union officials should hold meetings of workers to condemn American aggression and to totally oppose any Australian involvement in the war.[145] When Geoff McDonald, a BWIU organiser, attempted to implement the policy at the normally militant maintenance section in Myer's store, the hostile reaction he received was the first step that led him to question and then finally to leave the CPA.[146]

The BWIU had been federally deregistered in 1948 after the union refused to end industrial action in a Victorian dispute over award conditions.[147] At the time the CPA welcomed the move which could be used to expose the ALP, and it instructed its members to accept the decision.[148] The union's involvement in the peace movement added fuel to the growing anti-communist fire. A rival union, the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, was established to offer alternative industrial and political strategies, and with support from other conservative unions was allowed to affiliate to state labour councils.[149] Ironically, this action may have helped the left leadership survive as the new union would have removed the bulk of anti-communist workers, who in other unions had often provided the base for successful challenges to their communist union leaderships. Peace issues and other international relation issues continued to be an important part of the union's overall activities throughout the 1950s.[150] However, despite the leadership's support for these issues, there was sometimes little support in the union ranks. After six months intensive campaigning Tom McDonald recalled he was able to obtain only 33 signatures on his Ban the Bomb petitions.[151]

The Miners' Federation was another communist-led union consistently involved in the peace movement.[152] The preamble to the union's constitution declared that its goal was the destruction of capitalism by 'revolutionary political and industrial action'.[153] Implicit in the preamble was the idea that the union's role could not be limited to advancing the economic interests of miners; it also had to address broader political

issues. This helped to give some legitimacy to the CPA's attempt to build union support for the peace movement, a process assisted by the high interest in politics displayed by many miners. In his 1940s survey of Cessnock miners Alan Walker found that 73% had a consistent interest in political questions.[154] In 1942, even after the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, 41% of Cessnock miners believed the war to be the result of an imperialist clash.[155]

While this indicates that the Cessnock miners had not fully accepted either the government's or the CPA's pro-war positions, support for the party remained high on the coalfields. The situation was such that in this region the ALP was the conservative party, the CPA the radical party.[156] The South Maitland coalfields were one of the few areas in Australia where the ALP faced a genuine challenge from the left.[157] When Prime Minister Chifley visited Cessnock and Kurri Kurri in 1948 he warned the miners against being influenced by communists who were 'fools and traitors to democracy'.[158] This coincided with the time the CPA was moving toward a direct challenge to the ALP's economic and foreign policies and, despite these warnings from Chifley, miners in many regions went on to play an active role in the peace movement. Wonthaggi miners opposed the Korean War when it broke out resolving that they would resist the drive to 'regiment the coal industry to further war plans of the Menzies-Fadden government'.[159]

All levels of the union were represented at all the peace conferences of the 1950s.[160] In 1951 the Bulli, Corrimal and Helensburgh lodges, with the support of their Women's Auxiliaries, raised funds to send a delegate to the Berlin Festival of Youth for Students and Peace.[161] Similarly the Abedare, Bellbird, Stockrington and Hebburn No. 1 lodges endorsed the Sydney 1952 Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship.[162] Queensland miners sent a delegation of 12 young miners to the festival.[163] There were other indications of strong rank-and-file support by miners for the peace movement. In 1952, Collinsville miners condemned the Menzies government's refusal to issue passports to Australian delegates who wished to attend a peace conference in Peking.[164] The following year the same miners endorsed a levy of 6d per pay to support the local peace committee.[165]

The most explicit indication of CPA peace activity in the Miners' Federation can be found in its newspaper *Common Cause*. Its editor, Edgar Ross, was also a member of both the CPA's political committee and central committee. These powerful committees stood at the apex of a hierarchical party and were responsible for setting the political direction of the party and, members' activities. Ross thus provided a direct link between the union and the CPA. His position as party leader gave him a particular responsibility in promoting CPA policies whenever possible. Under his editorship the newspaper

proved to be an invaluable tool in which articles appeared frequently on a range of political issues that were in conformity with overall CPA views. In a discussion on the paper's role by the union's central council in 1948 Ross explained that *Common Cause* 'had a responsibility to deal with big national and international issues affecting the whole labour movement, including mineworkers'.[166] This view was reflected in its pages of the paper over the next decade.

In January 1948 *Common Cause* called for increased activity against the 'Wall Street interventionists' who were threatening a new war against the Soviet Union and the new states of Eastern Europe.[167] The Federation's support for the Soviet Union and its policies was unequivocal, and even with the onset of the Cold War it refused to retreat from this position. An editorial declared, 'We were with the Bolsheviks in 1917. We have been by the side of the Soviet Union ever since'.[168] Support for the Soviet Union had been perfectly acceptable during World War II, but as the international and national situations continued to deteriorate this view was now an isolated and minority outlook. Yet despite this hostile environment from 1948 onwards *Common Cause* coverage focused on presenting an alternative view of the Western powers' actions and policies.

In 1948, Ross called on the Australian labour movement to support the Malayan anti-colonial struggle in the same way as they had assisted the Indonesian struggle for independence against the Dutch.[169] The reference to Indonesia may well indicate that the CPA was interested in developing a similar campaign against the British role in Malaya. Ross used his regular column to frequently raise peace-related issues that reflected the CPA position. A series of articles in 1949 condemned what Ross considered to be attempts to surround the Soviet Union with a ring of hostile powers.[170] These articles appeared soon after the 1948 national congress of the CPA had endorsed the building of a peace movement as a priority for the party, and indicates that Ross took his obligations as a party member seriously.

As the peace movement developed in late 1949 it received extensive coverage in *Common Cause*.[171] The paper also attacked the NSW ALP Executive for instructing its members not to become involved in the APC until the executive had 'investigated the council's connections'.[172] It warned the ALP that it would isolate itself from 'one of the most impressive broad mass movements ever built in this country'.[173] In the aftermath of the 1949 coal strike, the divisions between the ALP and CPA were unbridgeable, and the differences over the peace movement exemplified the bitter divisions between the two parties.

The Victorian branch of the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union (AMIEU) was also actively involved in the peace movement. George Seelaf, the union secretary

since 1948, had widespread support among the union's membership either being elected unopposed, or when faced with an election being returned with a 2 to 1 majority.[174] In his memoirs R.J. Hawke, who first met Seelaf in 1958, described him as an 'authentic working-class man, with a passionate commitment to workers in general and the underprivileged in particular'.[175] Throughout the 1950s, Seelaf openly identified with the CPA by appearing on its platform at the Yarra Bank on the last Sunday of the month.[176] This action would have required Seelaf to speak on and defend all aspects of all aspects of party policy, including the peace movement. He was later to explain he 'never apologised for his party membership'.[177]

The union's involvement in the peace movement can be traced through an examination of the committee of management (COM) minutes from this period. They reveal not only an endorsement of the movement but also a constant attempt to draw rank-and-file members into active participation in the movement. The union was involved in the peace movement from its inception, sending two delegates to an APC meeting and a conference both held in September 1949.[178] As the April 1950 congress approached, the COM supported the election of delegates from the Angliss, Borthwicks, Sims Cooper, Smorgans, and City Abattoirs to attend as representatives of the union.[179] After the publication of the proceedings of the congress, the COM voted to purchase 600 copies of the APC journal *Peace*, for distribution to its membership.[180]

In November 1950 the COM endorsed the five-point peace program of the APC.[181] It voted May 1951 to circulate its membership with the APC petition calling for a five-power peace pact.[182] In October 1951, it framed a resolution to be sent to the union's state conference, claiming the federal government's foreign policy was a 'grave threat to our living standards', and called for a rejection of the proposed 'Jap treaty' and repeated the call for the five great powers to hold a conference to sign a peace pact.[183] Seelaf reported to the COM in November 1951, that 10 delegates had been elected by the workers at the City Abattoirs to represent them at next year's Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship and the other sheds were in the process of electing delegates.[184]

The framework of the union involvement in the peace movement was based on a formal endorsement by the union leadership and persistent attempts to draw into peace movement activities as many rank-and-file workers as possible. The AMIEU leadership also collaborated with other communist-led or influenced unions to promote the peace movement. For example, after the FIA delegate, W. O'Brian, returned from the Warsaw Peace Congress he spoke to the COM and received a vote of thanks by 'acclamation'.[185] It also organised workplace meetings for J.J. Brown, the ARU state secretary, on his return from an overseas trip to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.[186]

Brown later delivered greetings from trade union organisations in Romania and the Soviet Union, to the 16th CPA Congress.[187]

From the mid-1940s onwards there was a harsh and unrelenting struggle fought for control of the Victorian branch of the Australian Tramway and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association (Tramways Union). In the annual elections between 1945 and 1949, control of the union leadership switched between the 'moderate' ALP forces and a communist-led militant group.[188] J.L. Cousland, a disillusioned former militant, was instrumental in the establishment of the Industrial Groups by the ALP in 1946.[189] Frank Cooney, who became secretary of the Industrial Group, believed that the CPA was a 'serious threat to our freedom' and became determined to stop it.[190] Similarly, the first issue of *Tramways News*, the official journal of the Group, declared that its aim was, 'to prevent the Australian Communist Party from imposing a dictatorship upon the Australian Trade Union Movement'.[191]

The main target of these attacks was C.L. (Clarrie) O'Shea, the union secretary from 1947. It was O'Shea who introduced regular elections for the position when previously it had been a lifetime position.[192] Like many of his communist counterparts in other unions, O'Shea commanded enormous respect from his membership and was never defeated in any election. Union elections regularly witnessed 90% of the membership voting which indicated a high degree of interest in union affairs.[193] As Cooney acknowledged, it was the 'pig-headed attitude' of management that convinced many tram workers to support militant industrial tactics.[194] The challenge that faced O'Shea and the CPA was to translate this undoubted support for militant industrial tactics into broader support for political campaigns, including the peace movement.

In February 1950, the union executive rejected a call from the Victorian ALP that all affiliated unions suspend involvement with the APC until the ALP central executive had fully investigated APC activities. It then proceeded to send a letter to the central executive informing them that the union supported the APC.[195] As O'Shea explained the membership response to the peace movement varied from one where there was a significant participation to one of where there was little response to the movement.[196] The union's involvement in the peace movement and the financial donations that it made were the subject of constant attacks by the Industrial Group.[197] It made no difference as the Militant Group emerged to become the dominant force in the union in the 1950s. Many members were prepared to vote for a leadership that was successful in improving wages and working conditions while at the same time not completely accepting the political outlook of that leadership.

Despite the formal endorsement of the peace movement by the union leadership there was not the same degree of activity as in other communist-led unions. The

union's journal, the *Tramway Record*, seldom provided any coverage of peace-movement related issues. Each depot appointed a 'depot scribe' to write a column. However these writings consist almost entirely of information about the lives of depot workers; marriages, births, deaths, and amusing incidents that had happened at work rather than any overt political coverage. Since the *Record* only appeared quarterly there was not the same opportunity to provide coverage of the peace movement as other unions whose publications appeared regularly.

The union also had to face the problem of a hostile management that was opposed to political campaigning in the depots. A letter in January 1949, from the secretary of the Tramways Board, demanded the union give advance notice of any planned depot meeting, what the purpose of the meeting was, and stressed that under no circumstances would political meetings be allowed in the workplace.[198] The union leadership was forced to accept the situation rather than risk a confrontation it could not win. The nature of the industry with its shift work and the requirement that services be maintained at all times meant that the entire workforce could never be present at a meeting which placed limitations on the ability of the union leadership to mobilise the full strength of the membership.

The union role in the peace movement was reduced to one of making financial donations, distributing information and sending delegates to peace conferences. The union executive voted to send two delegates, including O'Shea, to the September meeting of the APC.[199] In October 1949 the union purchased 200 peace badges for sell to the membership.[200] From late February 1950 to mid-April 1950 union members were engaged in an extremely bitter strike.[201] The strike did not prevent the union from appointing four delegates to attend the congress.[202] That they did so in the middle of a prolonged dispute is an indication that communists in the union accepted the requirements of their party membership to raise the peace issue in their unions whenever possible. Support for the peace movement continued after the congress with the union purchasing 1000 copies of Hewlett-Johnson's speeches to distribute to the membership.[203] Despite having to face numerous problems communist activists within the union were able to sustain a relatively high degree of peace activism.

Communist activity in the Victorian branch of the ARU was organised and maintained through the influence of the enormously popular union secretary J.J. Brown.[204] In October 1946, a nine-day strike of transport unions had forced the recently elected minority Cain Labor government to offer major improvements in conditions after months of previously failed negotiations.[205] Following the end of the strike there was a sharp escalation in the coverage of political issues in the ARU newspaper, the *Railway Union Gazette* on issues that may not have interested the majority of the

membership.[206] Communist activists had assumed that the majority support for militant industrial campaigns had now been extended into acceptance for other aspects of the CPA program. The union newspaper became the means through which the CPA could speak to thousands of workers. It performed a very similar role to that of *Common Cause* and aggressively criticised the foreign policy decisions of the government and called on rail workers to support the peace movement. Both newspapers observed the demand of the General Secretary of the CPA, L.L. Sharkey, that union newspapers contain both industrial and political coverage in order to raise the political consciousness of workers.[207]

An editorial in the June 1947 *Gazette* repeated the CPA's denials that it was organising a union campaign to block the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range.[208] The following month the editorial condemned the Chifley government's successful introduction of a bill which contained heavy penalties for any individual or organisation who interfered with the operation of any approved defence project.[209] Even before the establishment of the APC, the union newspaper was warning against the threat of a new world war.[210] After the APC had been formed the *Gazette* carried extensive articles and called on union members to support its activities.[211] With the union leadership already under challenge from a well organised and powerful anti-communist Industrial Group, the persistence and vigour with which communist activists supported the peace movement despite the risks to their leadership positions is one indication of their commitment to the issue.

Wherever possible communist activists sought union endorsement of their political program and achieved some success. In January 1949 the *Gazette* reported on the decisions of the recent Australian council meeting. The council condemned the growing threat to the Soviet Union by the 'Wall Street warmongers', and in a second motion adopted the 'two camp' theory that had been endorsed at the founding conference of the Cominform a few months earlier.[212] The motion was seconded by Frank Nolan, the Queensland ARU secretary who was an ALP member[213] In June 1950 the Victorian ARU State Conference opposed any Australian involvement in the British attempt to crush a growing colonial revolt in Malaya.[214] In August 1950 the state council voted 37 to 10 on a motion moved by Brown to condemn what it called American aggression in Korea.[215]

In the New South Wales branch of the ARU the CPA faced difficulties in gaining support for the peace movement. The state secretary, Lloyd Ross, had been appointed in August 1952 and was pledged to end all communist influence in the union.[216] Ross had been expelled from the CPA in September 1940 for opposing the CPA's strident anti-war policy which turned him into a virulent opponent of the party.[217] In particular

Ross was a consistent and public enemy of the peace movement. In April 1950 during the first APC Congress, Ross attacked the Dean of Canterbury, Rev. Hewlett Johnson, for participating in a communist-controlled movement.[218] Similarly, at the ACTU Congress in 1959, Ross attacked the Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament.[219] Such permanent enmity from significant sections of the ARU leadership helped thwart the CPA the opportunity of building mass support for the peace movement in the union.

Patrick (Paddy) Troy secretary of the Western Australian Coastal, Docks, Rivers and Harbour Workers Union (CDRHWU) faced similar challenges as other communist union secretaries. As a union secretary he was held in high regard by union members but this did not extend to support for his political outlook.[220] Despite his reputation as a principled and effective unionist, every time he stood as a parliamentary candidate in state seats he lost his deposit, even though the seats had a high proportion of working-class voters.[221] These setbacks did not prevent Troy persisting with the campaign to politically educate his members and draw them into peace movement activity.

Troy accepted the CPA view that union activity could not be confined to economic issues only but also had to address all issues that impacted on the daily lives of workers.[222] After the party had adopted the peace movement as a priority, it became part of his overall political activity. Most mornings he spoke to workers at the casual pick-up yard on a range of national and international issues.[223] Similarly at the annual stop-work meeting his report would end with a call for his members to fight for peace and socialism.[224] The union would also make donations to the Peace Council.[225] In 1959 Troy explained the union involvement in the peace movement by explaining, 'Workers in the unions have the greatest stake in peace. Truly, peace is union business!'[226]

This activity did not go unchallenged. In 1951 when the West Australian secretary of the Peace Council was invited to address a union committee three members were given permission to withdraw from the meeting.[227] Communists were a clear minority on the union executive and persuading the majority to listen to alternative views was often the first step in convincing them of the merits of CPA policies. Within the union there was a degree of acceptance of these policies. The union made donations to the Eureka Youth League and the Peace Council both of which had strong links with the CPA.[228] The union also gave leave of absence for Troy to attend the 1945 and 1948 national congresses of the CPA.[229] In a union with strong democratic traditions, through the force of his personality, research, speaking and writing skills, Troy had reached out and convinced some of his members of the CPA peace policies.

In many ways Troy represented the typical communist union activist. In 1956, he accepted as did many other communist unionists, the necessity of the Soviet Union's

crushing of the Hungarian Revolution.[230] These attitudes were based on an unflinching and uncritical support for the Soviet Union combined with a deep and abiding hatred of war and the capitalist system that believed that caused it. Despite the contradictions implied in these conflicting outlooks it was sufficient to sustain the wide range of activities described.

Communist-influenced workplaces

Communist peace activism was not confined to passing motions on union executives or writing articles for union journals. Wherever possible the peace issue was taken directly into the workplaces where communists had some influence or there were long standing militant traditions. In these workplaces communists could speak directly to thousands of Australian workers and seek to convince them about communist policies.

Jack Coleman, a communist for over 60 years, and for 25 years a shop steward at the Midland workshops, explained that it was 'a very serious business being a communist in those days' and added you often 'daren't put your head up'.[231] John Gandini, who joined the CPA in 1946 and was also active in the Midland workshops, gives a somewhat different, and perhaps more accurate, description of communist activity from this period. By the late 1940s the party had been reduced to a hard core, and those who remained could be considered to be 'fanatics to a degree'.[232] For communists of this era this meant the building of a broad-based peace movement with significant working-class support. In many instances this meant frequently sticking your head up and proselytising your fellow workers about the dangers of a new war. Rod Quinn, who spent six years at the workshops during his apprenticeship training in the early 1950s, later described the period as 'the birth of my activism'.[233] Quinn's contact with the communists in the workplace had obviously convinced him about their overall policies, because he would chalk in Russian slogans such as, 'Stalin the teacher' and 'other absurdities' on the side of wagons.[234]

During the 1950s the CPA waged many struggles to defend the right to invite peace movement speakers into the workplaces, where the CPA had some influence. In a number of workplaces or industries there were well established traditions of lunchtime political meetings. However, in the charged political climate of the Cold War it often became more difficult to convince unionists to support such meetings. For example, an Industrial Group at the NSW Eveleigh workshops mobilised resentment at such meetings to win a bitterly contested election in 1953.[235] However, unionists were prepared to respond on occasions if they considered their rights had been infringed. In March 1949 a public meeting organised by the Wonthaggi Miners' Federation to

hear John Rodgers, the director of Australia- Soviet House, speak on his recent tour of the Soviet Union and the need to maintain the wartime alliance, was closed down by hundreds of organised disrupters. In response, the following day, Wonthaggi miners held a stop-work to ensure that their rights to hear an alternative viewpoint were maintained.[236] This was just one of numerous examples of the 'political stridency' displayed by the Wonthaggi miners, which involved an active commitment to the peace movement throughout the 1950s.[237]

Similar actions occurred in other workplaces as unionists sought to hear alternative views that the mainstream media often ignored. When an employer threatened to sack a delegate elected to attend the 1950 APC Congress, his co-workers threatened to walk out if this happened.[238] Throughout the Cold War, Angliss meatworks in Melbourne's western suburbs, had a significant core of militant workers, although Lester Allen, an active communist and unionist, considered that many of them had 'no politics at all but they were agin (sic) the bosses'.[239] It was a workplace where management seldom attempted to prevent lunch-time meetings, as long as they did not interfere with production. When management did attempt to prevent the Church of England Minister, Rev. Glover, speaking on the peace movement, the Shop Committee successfully led all the workers out of the plant to hear him speak.[240]

However, not all CPA peace activity in the trade unions developed the same degree of conflict. At the basic level the activity consisted of circulating enormous amounts of peace movement propaganda to trade unionists.[241] It was this basic activity by communist activists that helped to sustain the peace movement in what were very difficult times. Under the influence of communist Flo Davis, the Hotel, Club and Restaurant Employees Union (HCRU) opposed the Korean War and was an active supporter of the NSW Peace Council.[242] In a union that faced resistance from employers to its campaign to improve wages and conditions as well as some successful attempts by the rival Liquor Trades Union to recruit its members this stance was one of considerable political courage.[243] With most of the union's members working in small workplaces and without a militant tradition, most of the HCRU support for the peace movement was confined to distributing propaganda to build support for the movement amongst its members. This activity continued throughout the 1950s. When 19-year-old communist Audrey Petrie (later McDonald) was appointed organiser for the union in 1956, she spent part of her time talking to workers about the peace movement.[244]

At the workplace level individual communists could, and sometimes did, have some success in convincing workers to support the peace movement's overall aims. In mid-1950, despite the outbreak of the Korean War and a sharp escalation in anti-Communism, 'every girl' at the ICI factory in Ascot Vale, Melbourne, had signed the peace petition.[245]

This success can be attributed to the presence of CPA member Thelma Prior who started work at the factory in 1949.[246] Prior came from a working-class background, joined the CPA in 1945, and her activism led to her being blacklisted from the textile industry after her involvement in a campaign for improvements in junior wages.[247]

In 1950 with the support of her fellow workers Prior went as a delegate to the Second World Peace Congress.[248] This support had come from women who apparently understood the peace issue because many of them had lost relatives in the war.[249] These attitudes confirm Alec Robertson's description of the antiwar movement as one that lacked a revolutionary analysis of the causes of war or a militant means of achieving its aims.[250] Yet even a movement built on a general hatred of war could pose a serious political problem for the government in the event of war breaking out. During the Korean War public opinion was overwhelmingly opposed to the use of nuclear weapons.[251] This may have been due in part to the activities of the APC in opposing the use of nuclear weapons.

As the only communist in her factory, and with the defeat of the communist leadership of her union the FIA, Prior's opportunities to sustain peace movement activity were limited. Despite problems she faced in her working life she never felt isolated because outside work the network of party comrades would offer advice and support when needed.[252] For most of her time in the factory Prior never publicly admitted her party membership.[253] Yet this did not prevent her taking her membership seriously and taking the peace issue to her co-workers.

On the Victorian Railways one important area of communist influence was the Newport workshops. Communist activists such as Alf Leno helped the shop committee introduce weekly Friday lunchtime meetings in which speakers addressed workers on a range of issues, including the peace movement.[254] If management blocked access to the site the shop committee would lead the workers to the back gate where they could listen to the address.[255] The increased influence of communists in the union had prompted Catholic-influenced workers at Newport (and later throughout the union) to organise the first anti-communist group in the union as early as 1941.[256] The basis of anti-communist groups which were to emerge in strength from 1946 onwards to challenge communist union leadership, was their claim that communists were using the unions to advance the CPA's political program.[257]

Shortly after his removal as the first APC secretary Ian Turner commenced work as a carriage cleaner at the West Melbourne depot.[258] Within a year he was holding important union positions including chairman of the local shop committee as well being responsible for the overall organisation of CPA activity in the union.[259] Turner's observation that his fellow communists were 'militant unionists first and communists

second' generally understates the full range of communist activity in the union.[260] The evidence for this activity can be found in the minutes of the state branch executive from the mid-1940s onwards. A constant flow of motions was sent by the Rolling Stock Division (RSD), an area where there was considerable communist influence, to the branch executive for endorsement. As the threats of a third world war escalated many of these motions raised the peace issue and sought union support for a peace campaign.

As early as 1946 a motion from the RSD called for anti-war slogans to be placed on all union leaflets and the *Gazette*.[261] In April 1948, a motion from the Suburban Guards Section called for a telegram to be sent to the prime minister demanding that the Australian delegation to the United Nations support calls to outlaw war propaganda and nuclear weapons.[262] A motion from the RSD in July 1948 condemned the Chifley government's support for Britain and the United States over the Berlin crisis.[263] This steady flow of motions over many years (there were numerous others) allowed the union leadership to argue that its support for the peace movement was responding to member concerns. This activity occurred well before Turner entered the industry clearly indicating that communist activists were already raising the peace issue well before his arrival in the workplace.

In the 1950s, the Eveleigh Railway workshops employed about 3270 workers and were at the heart of the NSW transport system.[264] Such a concentration of workers had an enormous potential economic and political power if it could be organised. In 1926, the first workshops committee was established at Eveleigh and the mid-1940s had expanded to all the railway workshops.[265] A central council of Railway Shop Committees was established and in the 1940s, Stan Jones, the leading communist in the workshops was secretary of the council.[266] The workshop committees provided the means by which political issues could be brought into the workplace. The practice of lunch-time political meetings at Eveleigh was established in the 1930s. In 1934 during his tumultuous tour of Australia Egon Kisch had spoken at such a meeting.[267] This tradition was maintained from then onwards. By 1951 (as described above) it became increasingly difficult to conduct such meetings. What had been a relatively strong base of support for communist unionism now changed almost into its opposite. The election of anti-communists to the local union leadership meant that communist activists no longer had the authority to invite speakers into the workplace. Under these circumstances their role was reduced to a propaganda one, such as distributing leaflets and collecting signatures on the 'Ban the Bomb' petitions.

The ARU communist activists also faced the problem of a central leadership that was strongly anti-communist. In 1945, Jack Ferguson, the state secretary, stated that

'communism, as a political belief, possess much that is acceptable, and in this organisation communists can be numbered among our union builders'.[268] A year later at the June 1946 ALP Conference Ferguson moved the motion that declared 'the Communist Party is a danger to Australian democracy and a permanent foe of the Australian Labor Party'[269] The combination of an entrenched anti-communist leadership and a well-organised Industrial Group in the workshops denied the CPA any real opportunity to build significant support for the peace movement in the NSW ARU.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the nature and extent of communist peace activism in the early 1950s. Australian labour movement involvement in peace movement activities predated the formation of the CPA. Thus, when the CPA turned towards building a new peace movement in the late 1940s it could, with justification, claim its actions were consistent with these traditions. Its advocacy of tactics such as peace congresses, demonstrations, propaganda activities and rank-and file unionist involvement in the peace movement had all been features of earlier peace movements. The CPA's turn towards the peace movement flowed directly from the Cominform's decision in 1947 that the international communist movement immediately adopt a policy of building broad-based peace movements in every country. The CPA adopted this policy at its 1948 congress. Thus, right from the onset, the CPA's support for the peace movement was linked directly to its support for the Soviet Union and its foreign policy decisions. This, was to break for a number of years, the previously close connection between the labour and peace movements.

A variety of different activities were undertaken by communist union activists once the party had adopted the peace issue as a priority campaign for members. These included workplace meetings, sending union delegations to peace congresses, resolutions in support of the peace movement at all levels within union structures, articles in union journals and newspapers and financial donations by unions. All these helped sustain a movement that offered an alternative to the prevailing Cold War ideology. The peace movement offered CPA union activists a number of important opportunities. By actively supporting the peace movement communist trade union activists could demonstrate their loyalty both to the CPA, and to the Soviet Union which, to many, was their spiritual homeland. This was a generation that was shaped by the experiences of two world wars and the bitter memories of the Great Depression. These were individuals that sought not just economic justice for workers but a radical transformation of Australian society in the mirror image of the Soviet Union and the 'peoples' democracies' of Eastern Europe. By the onset of the Cold War most of those

individuals in the party who did not share this outlook had left, those who remained were committed to the goals of the CPA.

The often-rigid discipline that the party imposed was voluntarily accepted by many of its members, imposed on others. The extensive peace activity described in this chapter indicates that many of its members accepted party direction and attempted, as best they could, to implement the party's peace policies. This activity was understandably concentrated in unions that were communist-led and had militant and/or internationalist traditions, such as the Miners' Federation, the Seamen's Union and the WWF. It is in these unions that the CPA drew the greatest response. In other communist-led unions, such as the BWIU, the Victorian branches of the ARU and the AMIEU, there was extensive peace activity but often drew only a limited response from union members. But as we have seen, with the example of Prior, a response could sometimes be found in what appeared to be the most unlikely workplaces. This helped convince many communist union activists to persist with their peace movement activities.

To a significant extent the scope and range of this union peace activism has not been previously acknowledged in the relevant literature. This can be explained by a number of different reasons. First, the peace movement and the associated union activism was a movement that ebbed and flowed. The movement would reach a peak when peace congresses were held, and then retreat to a situation where distributing propaganda or organising petitions against nuclear weapons became the main activity. Second, the union journals, in which communists wrote numerous articles on the peace movement, circulated only to union members, and even then were probably unread by many members. Third, the myriad of workplace meetings that communists organised to build support for peace movement were occasionally reported in union journals, but otherwise usually failed to gain any other public recognition. All this meant that the peace movement was very much a minority current within the trade unions and had only a limited impact on public debate.

The prevailing political climate also imposed on the CPA a severe limitation on the range of tactics the party could use to support its peace policies. The peace movement along with the CPA was reduced, as this chapter has shown, to nothing more than a routine propaganda campaign against the Western Alliance which was believed to threaten the Soviet Union. Yet without this activity and support it would have been difficult for the peace movement to survive. However, orthodox Leninism required trade unions to be actively involved in political and industrial campaigns against capitalism including the threat of new wars. It was through such actions that the CPA believed unionists would develop a higher level of political consciousness and move

towards the overthrow of the capitalist system. The absence of a clearly visible and militant challenge to Cold War policies, consistent with Leninist policies, limited the ability of unionists to develop this greater political understanding. Yet as we shall see in the next chapter, when the CPA attempted to move beyond a propaganda campaign and combine political activity with industrial action on peace-related issues to prevent any Australian involvement in the Western alliance against the Soviet Union, it would suffer major defeats. ■

4. Industrial Action For Peace: The CPA Escalates the Campaign

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the overall activities of CPA trade union activists in support of the peace movement. This activity focused almost exclusively on educational and propaganda campaigns. Trade union members through the medium of union journals, workplace meetings on peace and factory bulletins were exposed to a range of ideas that challenged the prevailing Cold War ideology. Additionally, workplaces that were affiliated with peace movement organisations received a steady flow of information about movement activities. However, the impact of this campaigning was limited: only a relatively modest number of trade union members, apart from party members, became convinced and became involved in the peace movement.

The CPA emphasised the central role that the working class through their trade unions should play in the peace movement. The struggle for peace was as important to trade unionists as was the struggle for improved pay and better working conditions. Central to the party's approach was the view that trade unions had every right to use their industrial strength to pursue a range of political issues. In effect, this meant that trade union support for the peace movement should not be limited to an educational and propaganda role, but where possible it should include the use of traditional trade union tactics, such as strikes, bans and boycotts. In the postwar period, with the apparent imminent threat of World War III, there were new opportunities to implement this policy.

The CPA was able to draw on a number of historical precedents, internationally and in Australia, where trade unionists had used their industrial strength to challenge the war plans of various governments. In 1920, a united British working class used the threat of a general strike to defeat the Conservative government's plan to declare war on the Soviet Union during the Soviet-Polish war. The NSW Labor Council, led by the

'Trades Hall Reds', who were supporters of the nascent CPA, spearheaded Australian labour movement support for the British workers. In 1938, Australian maritime unions with newly elected communist officials led a largely successful campaign to block the supply of potential war materials to Japan. These two campaigns provided the historical and political justification, in the postwar period, for the CPA to use similar tactics in support of the emerging peace movement.

However, when communist-led building unions attempted to impose bans on the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range in 1947 they were forced to make a quick retreat. This was largely due to the Chifley government passing legalisation that barred virtually all forms of industrial action at defence projects. The central party leadership later denied having any role in developing the suggested union bans. While peak union organisations such as the ACTU condemned the legalisation they refused to initiate a campaign that would have ensured its repeal. In June 1950, when communist-led unions attempted to organise widespread union opposition to Australian involvement in the Korean War, they were forced into a similar retreat. Even in unions with long-established traditions of militant political action, such as the Miners' Federation, the Seamen's Union and the WWF, the majority of members were not prepared to support their leaderships call for strike action. Union opposition to the Korean War was therefore limited to the propaganda level only.

These reverses convinced the CPA leadership to abandon any perspective of organising widespread militant union industrial action in support of the peace movement. While individual unions like the Seamen's Union and the WWF were able to impose selective and episodic bans on peace-related issues there were no attempts to extend the campaign beyond these unions. This position was clearly revealed at the 1959 Australian and New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament. At the trade union session of the conference, communist union leaders Jim Healy and Alec McDonald, united with Jim Kenny, the conservative secretary of NSW Labor Council, to successfully defeat calls for union strike action the next time the French conducted a Pacific nuclear test. In effect, in order to maintain a broader-based peace movement the CPA was willing to reject the essence of revolutionary trade unionism. It was a marked shift from its previous support of earlier traditions of radical trade unionism in support of peace.

The Soviet-Polish War

In May 1920 the beleaguered Bolshevik regime faced a new and serious threat to its existence. The outbreak of a war between Soviet Russia and Poland threatened to provide new avenues for western military intervention against the world's first social-

ist state. The intervention had the potential not only to destroy the socialist experiment but also the hopes of millions of workers around the world who had rallied to support the new government and its revolutionary program. This threat was countered by widespread protests, particularly in Great Britain, with the expressed aim of preventing any new military involvement by the capitalist powers.

On May 10, 1920 London dockers refused to coal the *Jolly George* which was loaded with munitions for the Polish government.[1] Harry Pollitt, the future Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) leader, played a crucial role in the dispute. He explained that a small 'Hands off Russia' sticker placed on the side of a box of unloaded munitions was 'big enough to be read all over the world'.[2] Another key role was played by Ernest Bevin, who became foreign secretary in 1945. In 1919 he argued that the labour movement was justified in using 'any weapon' to secure its goals.[3] It was an argument that was later to be central to the CPA's actions in the immediate post-World War II period.

In August 1920 with Soviet troops marching on Warsaw the British government threatened to declare war on the Soviet Union. With the active support of the British Labour Party 350 Councils of Action were established across Britain to coordinate a general strike if the government proceeded with its plans.[4] Bevin warned the government that if it persisted a revolutionary situation could rapidly develop.[5] British workers gained support from workers around the world. Trade unions affiliated with the Second International called on their members to block military supplies to the Polish government.[6] In Australia, all the major Trades Hall Councils led by the NSW Council, offered their support including, if necessary, the use of industrial action. They were joined by the New South Wales branch of the ALP which sent a telegram of support to the British workers.[7] Rather than directly confront this mass movement the British government retreated and abandoned its plans for military intervention.[8]

In 1949, with a new world war appearing almost imminent, Jack Blake acknowledged the crucial role played by British workers in preventing an imperialist war against the Soviet Union.[9] However, what was different in the immediate World War II period was that any residual ALP support for the Soviet Union had long since evaporated and the party was fiercely anti-communist.[10] As Blake explained this would mean that once workers understood their own strength and used it, 'the war plans of the imperialists and their labor (sic) henchmen will be smashed.'[11] This attitude would lead, as we shall see, to a confrontation with the Chifley government and its plan to integrate Australia into the western military alliance against the Soviet Union.

Union action against Japanese militarism

From the mid-1930s onwards communists started to gain wider acceptance in the trade unions and were elected to central union leadership positions in a number of large industrial unions. This gave them the opportunity to put into practice their understanding that trade unions had a role in the wider political process. In particular, trade unions had a legitimate right to use their industrial strength to challenge the increased military power of Japan and its aggression against the Chinese people. The key unions in this process were the Seamen's Union, and the WWF.

In October 1937, Newcastle maritime unions refused to supply labour to the Japanese owned *SS Silksworth* after its predominantly Chinese crew had complained to local communists about poor conditions on the ship and that the ship was transporting war materials to Manchuria. The dispute was therefore seen as making an important contribution to the 'Hands off China' campaign that the CPA had launched as a protest against Japanese actions in China. The maritime unions received considerable support from the trade union movement and this forced the federal government to abandon initial plans to bring charges against the seamen under the Navigation Act and allow the crew to be repatriated to China.[12] After the 1937 ACTU Congress had condemned Japanese actions in China, waterside workers around the country imposed a series of bans on Japanese ships. The ports involved included Fremantle, Geelong, Melbourne and Sydney.[13] In November 1938, after Port Kembla wharfies refused to load pig-iron onto the *SS Dalfram* bound for Japan, a bitter confrontation erupted between the workers and the Lyons government.[14] For nine weeks the workers defied all attempts to convince them to drop the ban including the declaration by Robert Menzies, the Commonwealth attorney-general, of the Transport Workers Act.[15] The dispute ended when the government agreed to revoke the declaration of the Transport Workers Act and that no additional pig-iron would be exported once existing contracts were honoured. In return the Port Kembla wharfies agreed to load the *Dalfram*.[16]

An important feature of the dispute was that it was initiated and led by Ted Roach, the recently elected communist secretary of the Port Kembla WWF branch, rather than by Jim Healy, the leading communist in the union.[17] It formed part of a pattern where Healy was either hesitant about the ability of the union's members to win such disputes, or concerned about increased government attacks on the union as a result of their involvement.[18] A situation was established where rank-and-file communists were often more aggressive in attempting to implement the party's wider political agenda in the unions than communist union officials. In the post-World War II period CPA leaders were often critical of the failure of many leading communist union activists to raise the party's peace campaign in their unions.[19] The ALP opposed the union's

involvement in the Port Kembla dispute with John Curtin, the federal leader, allegedly telling Roach that under a Labor government, workers would have to load the pig-iron.[20]

The success of the campaign against Japanese militarism helped to reinforce the CPA's support for political trade unionism. It showed in practice that many workers could be convinced to use their industrial strength to support political issues not normally the concern of trade unionists. For nine weeks a group of workers had remained united in defence of their right to determine how their labour was used. At the same time they were able to generate widespread community support for their stance. It augured well for the future success of similar campaigns. However, in the post-World War II period the CPA was to encounter very different circumstances. The threat of Japanese militarism (and German fascism) to working class interests was apparent to many workers, and this enabled the CPA to build broad-based campaigns against it, that included industrial action. This was not the situation after World War II. The onset of the Cold War meant that the Soviet Union was now the enemy, and the CPA was widely regarded as acting in its interests. When the CPA attempted to impose construction bans on the building of the Woomera Rocket Range, the Chifley administration demonstrated that it would not tolerate any challenge to its policies.

The campaign against the Woomera Rocket Range

In June 1946 the Chifley government secretly agreed in principle with a British request to develop a rocket testing facility in Australia.[21] Subsequently, in the federal election later that year, Prime Minister Ben Chifley announced that his government was seeking to develop 'a gigantic industrial project for the production of guided projectiles'.[22] The project was often shrouded in secrecy and when critics of the project raised potential problems they were dismissed as either 'oversights' or 'readily solvable'.[23]

The Woomera Rocket Range project was an essential feature of the Chifley's Government's postwar defence strategy. When news of the atomic bomb became public knowledge John Dedman, the minister of defence, wanted Australia to acquire its own atomic bomb and the Woomera project would have been seen as the first step towards this.[24] In 1947, Australia's membership of the United Nations Security Council led to Evatt's appointment as the first chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority. This enhanced his determination to promote the Chifley government's policy of developing a British Commonwealth nuclear club and Australia's own nuclear technology.[25] The project would also give a boost to the planned industrial expansion and place Australia 'in the very forefront of the most modern developments in defence science'.[26]

In 1947, the American and British governments voiced their concerns about the

possible leakage of secret information from the Woomera project to the Soviet Union.[27] In Canada, a Royal Commission established after Igor Gouzenko, a Russian cipher clerk, defected in September 1945, discovered evidence of extensive Soviet spying.[28] By this time it was clear that the wartime alliance between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union had irretrievably broken down and that a new world conflict was starting to emerge. In Australia, the goodwill that the CPA had gained due to its wartime collaboration with the Labor government had evaporated and its actions were now viewed with deep hostility. In March 1947, at its annual state conference, the Victorian branch of the party denounced as 'lying propaganda' claims that it was involved in spy plots to deliver rocket research to the Soviet Union.[29] The party's opposition to Woomera was therefore seen as part of a global offensive by communist parties to thwart the necessary defence preparations to meet the perceived threat from the Soviet Union.

The anti-Woomera campaign was therefore one of the few times prior to the formation of the APC that the CPA actively involved itself in a peace related issue.[30] It occurred almost simultaneously with the decision by the world communist movement to establish broad-based peace movements to prevent what they considered to be a drift towards another world war. This meant whatever concerns the CPA had about the impact of the proposed rocket range on Aborigines, was nearly always overridden by the suspicion that it was acting solely on behalf of the Soviet Union to prevent a vital defence project. In a pamphlet specifically written to deal with a proposed union boycott, H.V. Evatt, the federal attorney-general, stated that such claims were a 'smokescreen' and those who had originally supported it were misled 'as most have since realised.'[31] Evatt also called the attempted union boycott an 'ugly incident' and added that the whole situation called for 'vigilance and scepticism concerning propaganda emanating from communist sources … especially if they relate to defence and foreign policy'.[32]

The campaign did involve two sometimes conflicting issues: the right of Aboriginal people to full control of their reserves without outside interference, and questions of defence policy. In Melbourne, this resulted in tensions on occasions between the various groups and individuals involved in the campaign.[33] While some of the individuals involved in the campaign were solely or primarily concerned with the possible impact of the proposed rocket range on Aborigines, the CPA opposition was based on both grounds. Alf Watt, the South Australian CPA state secretary, addressed both issues in his pamphlet, *Rocket Range Threatens Australia*.[34] Watt supported the recommendations of Dr Donald Thomson, an anthropologist, that the reserves be 'absolutely inviolable' and that tribal aborigines should be 'absolutely segregated' so

that their 'social organisation, institutions and culture be preserved intact'.[35] He then supported the Soviet Union's peace proposals, attacked the proposed rocket range as a preparation for war as well as calling for a rejection of the Bretton Woods Agreement.[36] The communist-led Eureka Youth League was also active in the campaign. It contrasted government expenditure on Woomera with the limited facilities provided to young people.[37]

The prominent role of the CPA in the campaign limited the support it was able to attract.[38] For some independent activists this involvement meant that the issue of civil rights for Aborigines was lost amid the increasing anti-communist atmosphere.[39] In November 1946, the party was criticised by S.R. Russell, of the Army General Staff, for 'inciting and using the protest for their ends' and that 'public opposition should be viewed with this in mind.'[40] However, the government was embarrassed by what appeared to be a mounting opposition and called upon the support of anthropologist A.P. Elkin to undermine it. Elkin willingly agreed. He believed that the objections were 'quite groundless',[41] maintaining that the rocket range should be supported as it was an empire decision and called on people 'not to waste energy in futile protests or abstract announcements'.[42] Those who formed the campaign were also called a 'motley crew' that included 'pacifists, daydreamers and humanitarians' supported by the 'directing hands of communists'.[43]

In August 1946 the Port Augusta CPA branch was the first unit of the party to issue a public statement opposing the rocket range.[44] Later that year a conference of the northern branches of the CPA in South Australia, comprising branches from Iron Knob, Kimba, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Quorn and Whyalla, strongly criticised the proposal and the infrastructure developments that were associated with it.[45] A significant proportion of those attending would have been industrial workers. Whyalla's 'best known' communist, Joe Brazel, was also secretary of the Port Pirie-Whyalla branch of the FIA and the only full-time union official in Whyalla.[46] In Adelaide, the CPA had a strong influence in a number of unions including the FIA, the Tramways Union, Boilermakers, Builders Labourers, Gasworkers, Clerks, Shop Assistants, several building unions and the WWF.[47] The influence of the party was seen when the United Trades and Labour Council voted 57 to 49 on March 14, 1947 and called on the ACTU to ban the project.[48]

The argument for a union ban appeared strengthened when in April 1947, *The Beacon*, the journal of the Unitarian Church, supported the call for a union ban on the project.[49] Within two years the Unitarian Church and Victor James, the new minister, became an important component of the APC, the main conduit of CPA peace activity.[50] The Presbyterian Board of Missions had earlier in February 1947 raised the possibility

of union action over the development.[51] With the Chifley government determined to proceed with the project, there was clearly support from outside the traditional CPA networks for a wider union involvement in the campaign, including if necessary the use of industrial action.

Around the country unions started to get involved in the campaign. In Darwin, E.J. Walker, the communist secretary of the North Australian Workers' Union (NAWU) used the impetus created by the campaign to support calls for a national conference to discuss the repeal of all racially discriminatory laws and to support granting Aborigines wider civil liberties including political rights.[52] The AASW was vocal in its opposition to Woomera.[53] Its opposition to the jailing of Dr Alan Nunn May heightened fears of a 'communist plot' to undermine Australian security.[54] In Sydney the campaign was dominated by active trade unionists.[55] Flo Davis, the communist secretary of the Hotel Club and Restaurant Workers Union (HCRU), was instrumental in convincing her union executive to support the campaign.[56] In January 1947 the *Maritime Worker* reported that protests against the rocket range had been sent to Prime Minister Chifley from the Boilermakers, BWIU, WWF, SMWU, Nurses Association and the HCRU.[57] The Bendigo and Bogong branches of the CPA also sent protest letters.[58] In February 1947, in a report to the Central Committee, Tom Wright called on the party to continue with its agitation against the development even though the government had already made its decision.[59] In May 1947 Wright called for the testing site to be shifted because of its potential impact on the Aborigines living in the area.[60]

In Melbourne the Rocket Range Protest Committee was established with representatives of more than 40 organisations to coordinate the campaign against the rocket range.[61] Despite calls to exclude CPA members the committee refused arguing that it was wrong in principle to exclude anyone who supported the committee's aims.[62] Victorian-based communist union officials started to emerge as the key opponents of the rocket range. Evatt, who as attorney-general was to introduce legalisation to break a threatened union ban, believed that Melbourne's communists were particularly active on the issue.[63] The strong position adopted by the Victorian branch of the party was almost certainly related to its emerging differences with the national leadership. The Victorian branch was calling for a more explicit challenge to the policies of the Chifley government, a position the national leadership was resisting.[64] The proposed ban on Woomera provided an avenue by which the Victorian leadership of the party could place additional pressure on the national leadership for a more confrontational policy towards the Chifley government.

When initial construction work started at the site there was almost constant disruption to work which was linked to the communist leadership of the building

unions and their opposition to the project.[65] In March 1947 the triennial meeting of the Federal Council of the Operative Painters and Decorators Union called on its branches to enforce a ban on Woomera.[66] By this time CPA members were either an absolute majority of delegates, or close to it.[67] By early May 1947 the Victorian Building Trades Federation was calling for a total union ban on Woomera.[68] The call for the ban was endorsed by the South Australian building unions.[69] Don Thomson, the federation's secretary justified the imposition of bans using the arguments that Alf Watt had used in his pamphlet; that is the threat to world peace by the further development of rocket technology and the violation of the Aboriginal reserve.[70]

The attempt to impose a ban on Woomera was quickly defeated. Percy Clarey, the ACTU president, called on unions to ignore the ban.[71] It was also immediately condemned by right-wing unions who claimed the ban was imposed at the behest of the Soviet Union.[72] The former NSW Premier, Jack Lang, made similar claims.[73] With the active support of the Industrial Groups, the ACTU rejected the call for a boycott effectively ending any chance of an effective ban on the project.[74] The ALP Federal Executive unanimously carried a motion congratulating the Chifley government on its 'firm stand … against the proposed ban on the rocket range'.[75] Evatt's firm opposition to the proposed bans helped to remove the suspicions held by ALP right-wing groups about his political outlook, after he had made 'a large number of leftist appointments to the External Affairs Department'.[76] In the ALP federal caucus, Evatt claimed that while there was 'no evidence that the Soviet government has issued any instructions to the Communist Party', the communist parties were acting 'in the interests of the Soviet in Canada, America and Australia'.[77] After Evatt had successfully steered through parliament legalisation to deal with the threatened ban, caucus defeated an attempt by Senator Bill Morrow to limit its application to Woomera.[78]

In the face of this widespread criticism the CPA made a rapid retreat and abandoned all attempts to impose union bans on Woomera. The party's central committee issued a statement that the party was not opposed to the defence of Australia,[79] The Victorian State Conference of the party had now rejected the call for a union ban.[80] Tom Wright commented that 'left wing union leaders must support proper measures for the defence of Australia, including knowledge and possession of rocket weapons'.[81] An editorial in the Victorian Railways *Union Gazette* adopted a different position. It explained that 'Workers who have studied the progress of fascism are always sceptical of plans to develop and extend armaments'.[82] The editorial repeated the denials of any direct Communist Party involvement in the proposed bans and explained that the protests had 'actually originated in South Australia over 12 months ago'.[83] In August 1947 Wright again stressed that the CPA had never supported the suggested ban on

Woomera.[84] At the party congress the following year, L.L. Sharkey conceded that the proposed ban had created 'difficulties' for the party and stressed the need for 'collective discussion, thorough reporting and careful working out of campaigns', in future to avoid similar mistakes.[85] Ralph Gibson, a key Victorian party leader, later stated that he believed the Victorian leadership of this period had made a number of 'leftist' errors.[86] The evolution of the CPA's policy on Woomera clearly indicates that the power to make decisions ultimately resided with the party leadership, not the state branches. In 1947, the party hierarchy was not prepared to make the final break with the Chifley government, and as a result used its authority to ensure that the proposed bans were withdrawn.

Despite the withdrawal of the proposed ban, Evatt successfully steered the Approved Defence Projects Protection Act (ADPPA) through Parliament. The act provided for fines up to £500 or imprisonment for 12 months for any person who by 'speech or writing advocates or encourages the prevention, hindrance, or obstruction of the carrying out of an approved defence project'.[87] The act had the full support of the opposition parties. However, Menzies contrasted the Chifley government's tacit acceptance of the maritime unions' bans on Dutch shipping, with its determination to act against similar bans on Woomera.[88] The ADPPA clearly indicated that the Chifley government would not tolerate any direct challenge by communist-led unions to its policies and would, if necessary, introduce new legalisation to defeat such challenges. The CPA responded by explaining that Evatt had 'taken his place among the world's reactionaries' and that the Australian labour movement should contain 'no place for Dr H.V. Evatt.'[89] Don Thomson demanded the repeal of the act and stated it was 'anti-working class and in the tradition of the Crimes Act'.[90] The Painter's Union claimed that the Act was fascist in its application against working-class organisations'.[91] Despite its non-communist leadership, the Victorian state executive of the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen also opposed the Act, claiming that it was unnecessary.[92]

Other groups and individuals also expressed their concerns that the ADPPA undermined many civil liberties. Eleanor Moore, a life-long pacifist, who had often been critical of the CPA, was infuriated by this attempt to silence critics of the Chifley government.[93] The Unitarian Church denounced the Act as a 'Black Bill' and said that democracy had received a 'slap in the face'.[94] It also sent a resolution to Ben Chifley detailing its opposition.[95] The Australian Council of Civil Liberties expressed its view that the Act threatened both free speech and the right of trade unionists to withdraw their labour.[96] The 1947 ACTU Congress called for the 'immediate repeal' of the ADPPA.[97] However, while ACTU officials did have at least one meeting with Dr Evatt

to discuss their concerns about the Act, they refused to organise a broad-based union campaign that could have led to its repeal or substantial amendment.[98] Both the Geelong[99] and the Bendigo[100] Trades Hall Councils called for the repeal of the ADPPA. However, after initially opposing the Act, the Canberra Trades and Labour Council reversed its decision.[101] In March 1948, a mass meeting of 500 Sydney metal industry shop stewards issued another call for the Act to be repealed.[102] Despite these relatively widespread calls for either the repeal of the Act or its amendment, the Act remained unchanged and ready to be used, if necessary, to defeat the next challenge by communist-led unions.

The Korean War and the CPA

In April 1950 the Australian Peace Council (APC) held its first national congress in Melbourne. The CPA influence in the APC was significant, shaping both its overall political outlook as well as providing many of the organisation's activists.[103] Despite the increasingly adverse political climate 10,000 people attended its opening session.[104] The congress provided a new opportunity for the CPA to propagandise its policies on peace to a wider audience. Its influence on the Trade Union Commission of the congress was obvious. The resolution of the commission resolved to 'take every action within our power, including industrial action, where necessary against war and intervention'. The resolution also called for 'no intervention in Malaya or any other country in South-East Asia'.[105] At the session, Jim Healy called on Australian trade unions 'to take a lead in preventing any mad adventure in Malaya as they had done over pig-iron for Japan and arms for the Dutch'.[106] For Healy, this was a significant shift away from his normal cautious approach to the use of industrial action by trade unions to support the CPA peace policies. On behalf of the CPA delegation, J.D. Blake told the congress that 'We are determined that our people will never go to war against the socialist Soviet Union — or against any other country'.[107] The role of the CPA at the congress gave a clear indication that the party was fully committed to using its leadership of key industrial unions to oppose any war in which Australia might be involved. Within a few weeks of the congress, the outbreak of the Korean War gave the CPA a fresh opportunity to implement this policy.

When the Australian government announced in July 1950 that Australian troops would be joining the United Nation forces in Korea it had the support of 71% of those surveyed, while only 20% opposed the commitment.[108] This substantial support for Australian involvement in the war did not deter the CPA from its strident opposition to the war. Two months earlier the Communist Party Dissolution Bill had been introduced into federal Parliament on 27 April 1950. Its purpose was not only to

declare the CPA an illegal organisation; the bill also sought to bar known communists from holding union positions in major industrial unions.[109] In September 1950, Menzies claimed that the emerging Australian peace movement was 'just as authentic and deadly as the communists' campaign in Korea'.[110] The active participation of not only the CPA, but communist-led unions in the campaign against Australia's involvement in the war deepened the growing anti-communist atmosphere. For example, during the 1951 referendum Menzies claimed that communist union officials made frequent trips to the Soviet Union to present reports and receive orders.[111] The proposed union bans on the transport of war materials seemed to confirm the government's claims that the CPA was a 'fifth column' acting to protect the interests of the Soviet Union.[112] The campaign against the war also strengthened the determination of the government to proceed with its anti-communist legalisation.[113]

In April 1950, a *Tribune* editorial denounced a suggestion by Lord Mancroft, a British Conservative peer, that Australian troops be sent to Malaya to assist the British attempt to suppress a colonial revolt.[114] With the Menzies government seriously considering the proposal, *Tribune* demanded that 'Not a Man or a Gun for Monopoly's War Against Malaya'.[115] The endorsement of this policy by the APC Congress would have encouraged the CPA to proceed to implement the policy. L.L. Sharkey had earlier stressed that 'every progressive must support Malaya and the other Asiatic wars of liberation against the imperialists of whatever nationality'.[116] *Tribune* linked the attempt to suppress the CPA and curb trade union militancy with opposition to any Australian involvement in suppressing the Malayan insurgency.[117] When the Korean War commenced the CPA responded in the same way as it had to the outbreak of the Malayan emergency.

The party's response to the outbreak of the Korean War was swift and consistent. It had none of the doubts or the rapid shifts in political analysis that were a feature of its initial response to the outbreak of World War II.[118] At the conclusion of the war the North Korean regime had been established with strong support from the Soviet Union. It had immediately commenced the destruction of feudalism and the construction of a political and economic system modelled on the Soviet Union. The defence of North Korea was therefore of paramount importance to the CPA. For the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution Australian forces were directly involved in a war that threatened to destroy the existence of a state in which workers ostensibly held political power. The responsibility of the international communist movement was to respond as they had 30 years earlier to the Bolshevik Revolution, and do all that was in their power to block the intervention.

A few days after the outbreak of the war *Tribune* claimed: 'Peace-lovers throughout

the world are rejoicing at the resounding defeats being inflicted by the Korean people on American imperialism's war plans'.[119] When the North Korean ministry of the interior issued a communiqué, claiming that the war was a result of an invasion of North Korea by South Korea, *Tribune* gave it prominent coverage.[120] A statement issued by the central committee condemned American intervention in Korea as a 'flagrant act of aggression, a breach of international peace and a gross violation of the United Nations Charter'.[121] The party demanded that 'Not a Man, Not a Ship, Not a Plane, Not a Gun' be sent to Korea' — the same demands it had made for Malaya.[122] In 1920, the British labour movement had raised a similar demand when the Conservative government threatened war against the Soviet Union during the Soviet-Polish crisis.[123] After the Menzies government committed air and naval forces to the conflict the paper accused the Australian forces of 'already killing Koreans in a filthy war of imperialist intervention'.[124]

The ALP gave the Menzies government complete support over its Korean policy and its commitment of Australian forces.[125] This was despite Chifley conceding that American policy in Asia often meant support for 'corrupt and reactionary governments' which meant that communists were handed a 'propaganda feast on a platter'.[126] Despite the overwhelming anti-communist atmosphere there were other critics of the war. By the end of 1950, some officials in 'high circles', believed that that the commitment 'should never have taken place' and that Australia should have been 'more sensitive to Oriental and world opinion'.[127] Despite this criticism, the CPA was almost totally isolated in the Australian political culture. In May 1950, 80% of those surveyed supported the suppression of the CPA.[128] The ALP support for the war meant that the CPA faced enormous difficulties when it tried to develop union opposition to the war.

The CPA stridently criticised the ALP position, claiming that 'Rightwing labor [sic] leaders have once again shown that they stand on the side of monopoly capitalism, of imperialism, against the interests of the working class' by supporting the Menzies government's policy.[129] Chifley also faced criticism from *News Weekly* because his support for the war was based not on opposition to Communism, but because it was based on the fact that the war was a result of the invasion of South Korea by North Korea.[130] In Australia, as a direct result of what appeared to be the relentless surge of Communism in Asia, the anti-communist Movement gained new strength.[131] B.A. Santamaria and the Movement reversed their previous opposition to the Menzies legalisation, on the basis that in the event of the Korean War escalating to a new world war against the Soviet Union, the CPA would use its leadership of key industrial unions for subversive activities.[132] The trade unions became an intense battleground

where the issue of the Korean War and the attitude that workers should take towards it was fought out between communists and anti-communists.[133]

The immediate impact of this development was that in August 1950 the right-wing controlled Melbourne Trades Hall Council voted to call upon the ACTU to reconsider its opposition to the bill.[134] In contrast, J. Ferguson, president of the NSW ALP and a former CPA member, rejected this saying it was 'wrong to use the Korean War as a smokescreen to push through the Communist Party Dissolution Bill'.[135] The AFULE was also an opponent of the attempt to suppress the CPA despite its support for the war.[136] However, the CPA's strong opposition to the Korean War, including, as we shall see, attempts to impose union bans on the supply of war materials to Korea, often undermined its campaign to defend its legal existence. Despite this the party continued with its union-based campaign against the war.

In Melbourne, the party functionaries responsible for trade union work, Flo Russell and Frank Johnson, organised a meeting of communist union officials to discuss the Korean situation shortly after the war started. After an extensive discussion the union officials were directed to hold workplace meetings and denounce American and Australian involvement in the war.[137] When Geoff McDonald attempted to carry out the party directive at the normally militant maintenance carpenter's shop at Myers he received a hostile reception.[138] As a result McDonald went to the next party trade union meeting and argued that the party should moderate its position and concentrate its activities on proposals to end the war, not on routine denouncements of imperialism. Despite his claims of similar negative experiences by other union officials he received no support.[139] Russell and Johnson argued that party union officials had to 'battle out politics with the workers', despite the adverse consequences this might have.[140] In an organisation that was increasingly hierarchal and determined to present a united face to Australian society, communist union officials were expected to accept party directions no matter what the consequences were. In April 1951, the central committee initiated a 'verification of members' campaign whose aim was to ensure that the party was 'the leading force in the fight for peace'. Individuals who failed to meet the requirements that were implied in this campaign faced the perspective of being dropped from membership.[141]

The CPA advocated that the peace movement should also adopt a policy of opposition to Australian involvement in the war, rather than simply calling for peace. In NSW, the APC called for an immediate halt to the 'United States intervention in the Korean civil war' and said that its actions 'gravely increased the danger of a world war'.[142] Amirah Inglis recounts the long discussions that occurred at her home and at party headquarters when the Korean War broke out. Ian Turner, as secretary of the

Australian Student Labour Federation, was willing to argue the party position that the war was a result of American aggression. However, as secretary of the APC, Turner felt it was important that the peace movement seek an end to the conflict without taking sides. The party leadership demanded that he put the party position.[143] At a Melbourne Town Hall meeting called to discuss the Korean War, Turner 'did what he had to do', abided by party discipline, and put the party line.[144] The national executive of the APC later issued a statement calling on Australians 'to oppose with all their strength and courage, before it is to late, the present illegal, aggressive policies of their government'.[145]

Thus, in each of its spheres of activity the student movement, the peace movement and in the trade unions, the CPA argued consistently that the Americans (and Australians) were the aggressors in Korea. The party understood and was prepared to accept that there would be some deleterious consequences for adopting this unpopular position. In the APC the majority of the executive was unhappy with the decision but remained with the organisation, although there some individual resignations.[146] In Victoria, the BWIU lost some members to the rival right-wing led Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners as a direct result of the branch's leadership opposition to the Korean War. The branch leadership also decided to abandon mailing the union journal, the *Building Worker*, directly to union members due to the hostile reactions provoked by its anti-war policies.[147] These reverses did not appear to have a significant impact, at least initially, on the CPA's determination to pursue its antiwar campaign in the trade unions.

Communist-led union opposition to the Korean War

Around Australia many CPA members accepted the obligations of party membership and raised the Korean War issue in their unions and their workplaces. This activity usually centred on routine propaganda work that sought to convince other workers of the party's position on the war. On the Hobart waterfront, Tas Bull joined the CPA as a result of his involvement in the No campaign during the referendum to ban the party and being further politicised by the intense and bitter debates generated by the war.[148] Bull was also impressed with the many communist seamen, both union officials and rank-and-file activists he had previously encountered when he had gone to sea.[149] Many of these communist Seamen's Union activists were to play a key role in their union's attempt to impose a black ban on the transport of war materials to Korea.

Other communist-led unions also opposed the war. However, unlike the Miners' Federation, the Seamen's Union and the WWF, these unions had no direct connection

with the production or transport of war materials. Therefore, the unions concerned were not in a position to utilise their industrial strength, even if they wished to, to support their anti-war policies. Their activity was confined to denouncements of the war and Australia's role in it. This activity seldom had a significant impact but there were undercurrents of resistance to attempts to militarise Australian society. When the management at the Angliss abattoirs organised a meeting to encourage recruitment only two workers responded and joined the army. This was a reflection of the left's strength in the workplace which continued to exist throughout the war.[150] At the 1951 ACTU Congress, an amendment moved by Miners' Federation delegates ensured that the union movement maintained its traditional opposition to conscription.[151] However, this traditional working class resistance to conscription seldom moved towards active opposition to the Korean War. On this issue the CPA continued to be isolated from the majority of trade unionists.

Over the last four months of 1950, the radical Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett toured most states addressing meetings on world politics and in opposition to the Menzies government's plans to suppress the CPA. The meetings he found difficult initially were factory-gate meetings where there were often debates with workers on these issues.[152] Burchett's recollections capture some of the intensity of these debates that erupted in the working class movement of this era as opponents and supporters of the Korean War sought support for their policies. Where possible communist-influenced peak union bodies passed motions opposing the Korean War. In July 1950, the South Coast Labor Council, unanimously carried a resolution claiming that the Korean War was a result of 'American inspired provocation and attack on Northern Korea' and called for the immediate withdrawal of Australian and United States of America forces.[153] Similarly, the Ballarat Trades and Labor Council rejected the call to offer 'whole-hearted support to democratic-free countries opposing aggression' in Korea and instead opted to call for a ceasefire and negotiated settlement.[154] In contrast, Charles Anderson, president of the right-wing led NSW Labor Council, condemned any suggestion of plans by waterfront unions to block war supplies to Korea.[155]

Communist-led unions also adopted anti-Korean War policies and campaigned strongly against the war. For example, the Victorian ARU's paper, *Railways Union Gazette*, demanded that Australia stay out of the Korean conflict and criticised the ALP for supporting 'America's aggressive war in Korea'.[156] In July the state branch council of the union voted 37 to 10 to brand as 'aggression America's interference in the internal affairs of Korea' and demanded 'in the name of democracy, that the Australian government withdraw all its armed forces from Korea'.[157] The Victorian branch of the Liquor Trades Union deplored 'the civil war in Korea and the intervention of US and

other forces' and went on to call for a referendum on the reintroduction of compulsory military training.[158] In New South Wales, Flo Davies, the communist secretary of the HCRU, led her union's opposition to the war and had earlier had been a delegate to the meeting that had established the NSW Peace Council.[159] The Sydney District Committee of the AEU also opposed the war and called for the withdrawal of Australian forces.[160]

In Darwin there was an intense debate in the North Australian Workers' Union after the Northern Standard, the union's newspaper printed an article critical of the UN intervention in Korea.[161] A revolt of rank-and-file members led by the hospital branch failed to overturn the decision.[162] Despite the vocal opposition from some delegates the union's annual conference in September 1950 supported the union executive's opposition to the UN actions in Korea.[163] Other communist-led unions adopted a similar position of opposition to the war. On July 4, 1950, the Mackay branch of the WWF claimed that the United States government was 'guilty of the crime of incitement for a third world war' and that the Australian government by supporting such aggression had 'become an accomplice in this crime against humanity'.[164] The WWF's newspaper repeated the CPA's claim that the war was a result of an attack on North Korea by the United States backed South Korean government.[165] In June 1950, the federal executive of the Seamen's Union condemned the USA in for its blatant interference in the domestic affairs of the Korean people.[166] The similarity of the positions adopted by the three unions, all of which were in conformity with the CPA's outlook, is a clear indication that these policies were being shaped by communist activists.

Despite the significant defeat in the 1949 strike, communist activists in the Miners' Federation continued to raise political issues in the union. The union was an active participant in the peace movement with many of its lodges establishing peace committees and sending representatives to the first APC Congress.[167] This established a pattern where throughout the 1950s the union was often well represented at the various peace movement conferences.[168] In the aftermath of the coal strike and amid the bitter divisions produced by the Cold War, the CPA often had only a small majority on the union's central council in support of its political positions, such as its opposition to Australian involvement in Malaya and the Korean War.[169] At the district and local bodies of the union it was sometimes easier for the party to gain support. For example, in Victoria the Wonthaggi miners also opposed the Korean War and the branch was affiliated with the APC with regular meetings being held on peace movement issues at the Union Theatre.[170]

During World War II the Collinsville State mine was Queensland's biggest colliery

with more than 500 miners.[171] From the mid 1930s onwards the CPA had a strong presence in Collinsville and there were four CPA branches to only one ALP branch.[172] When Fred Paterson was elected to the Queensland state Parliament there were 85 party members in the town.[173] In a town where there was only one industry this CPA influence was reflected in the decisions of the local Miners' Federation branch. As John Currie, the branch chairman throughout the 1950s explained, the branch responded 'to everything that happened on the left of the Australian scene'.[174] In common with other communist-led unions the branch opposed Australian involvement in both Malaya and Korea. Since attendance at branch meetings was compulsory the protest almost certainly reflects the general sentiment that existed amongst the majority of Collinsville miners.[175]

In September and October 1953 a dispute broke out at the mine over plans to introduce increased mechanisation so that a contract to supply coal to the American army in South Korea could be fulfilled.[176] In May when the contract was first announced Jim Nisbet, the branch secretary and a CPA member, had written to the Mines Minister Riordon informing him that the monthly union branch meeting had opposed coal from the mine being supplied to the American forces.[177] The CPA was therefore seen as the main instigator of the dispute that followed.[178] There were claims in federal Parliament that the dispute was a product of the CPA's opposition to the American involvement in Korea rather than any genuine industrial issue.[179] Since there were other non communist-led unions apart from the Miners' Federation involved in the dispute this claim can be seen as yet another product of Cold War paranoia. The dispute was finally settled after the state government conceded the unions' claims for increased payments to compensate for changed work procedures.[180]

After the Collinsville mine disaster the Shechy Royal Commission reported in 1954 that CPA influence was probably the major cause of the strong antagonism to the Korean contract but 'maybe not a controlling part in the severity of job control and militancy in pursuing objectives'.[181] These findings confirm that CPA union activists had convinced many Collinsville miners of the party's position on the Korean conflict. At the same time there were strong local traditions of industrial militancy that existed independently of the CPA. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that in Collinsville, communist union officials reflected the general industrial and political outlook of the union members they represented, a situation that may not have existed in other communist-led unions.

The Triple Alliance

In June 1950 the leaders of the Miners' Federation, the Seamen's Union and the WWF

met to discuss the threat that the proposed Communist Party Dissolution Bill posed to many of the officials of their respective organisations. They resolved to seek support from their memberships to establish an alliance between the three unions that would 'render mutual assistance of a moral, financial and industrial character, in event of any of the organisations named being involved in struggle against fascist legalisation …'[182] The unions also believed that united action by the union movement would not only defeat the bill but also would bring down the Menzies government.[183] The basic thrust of the proposed alliance at this stage was limited to the defence of trade union rights, but with the implied threat of united action if there were an attempt by the Menzies government to reduce living standards.[184] The three unions had the potential industrial strength to shut down the Australian economy, a feature that was well understood by the unions and their opponents.

The unions also had long established traditions of political and industrial militancy that predated the CPA. More importantly, their membership generally continued to support their communist officials not only as 'trade union workers but as political radicals'.[185] The exclusion of other communist-led unions from the proposed alliance, some with similar traditions, indicates a degree of caution on behalf of the CPA, or a reluctance of some communist union officials to be involved, a feature that was often not evident in other areas of political activity. For example, the BWIU officials almost lost their positions after they attempted to disaffiliate the union from the ALP as a protest against the Chifley government's actions during the coal strike.[186] Similarly, in April 1949 at mass meetings the FIA membership overwhelmingly rejected an executive motion for strike action after J. McPhillips the union's national assistant secretary, had been jailed for one month for contempt of the Arbitration Court.[187] These examples clearly illuminate the limits of the CPA's political influence in the unions they led and help explain the hesitations of other communist union officials to join the alliance.

The outbreak of the Korean War rapidly changed the nature of the proposed alliance. The CPA now called for the alliance to shift from being an essentially defensive strategy to defend communist union officials, into a weapon in which the unions concerned would use their industrial strength to prevent any Australian involvement in the Korean War. In March the International Union of Seamen and Dock Workers, a department of the World Federation of Trade Unions, had called for worldwide bans on the handling of war materials.[188] As we have seen, a few months earlier the APC Congress had endorsed the use of industrial action to prevent any Australian involvement in future wars. However, within a very short period the CPA was forced to retreat and abandon all its plans to use industrial action to oppose the war.

The Miners' Federation

In May 1950, after hearing a report by Councillor Bill Parkinson on the APC Congress, the Miners' Federation central council endorsed its decisions making specific reference to the resolution of the Trade Union Commission.[189] The same council meeting also threatened industrial action 'in the event of any attempt to dispatch arms and troops to Malaya'. As *Common Cause* explained the stand was consistent with long-standing traditions of opposition to colonial oppression and was taken against a background of 'current aggression by imperialism' in the Pacific.[190] Thus, given this background of support for radical socialist politics, when the Korean War commenced the CPA would have been confident that the Miners' Federation members would support both the proposed alliance and industrial action against the war.

Common Cause gave extensive coverage to the Korean War with an analysis that was consistent with CPA policy.[191] Its coverage increasingly stressed the need to strengthen the peace movement and the key role that industrial workers could play in ending the war. On July 8 the paper asked the question, 'But what of action on the industrial front?' as a way in which workers could express their opposition to the war.[192] Two weeks later the paper called on mineworkers to support their opposition to the war with action.[193] The example of the Seamen's Union and the WWF refusal to handle war materials was one that Miners' Federation members should consider when 'digging coal for war purposes'.[194] In the struggle against imperialist war, the protection of democratic rights, the maintenance of living standards, all of which were clearly connected, *Common Cause* pledged that 'the mineworkers of Australia will play their part!'[195] A statement issued by Vice-President Parkinson, drew attention to the Federation's position of support for industrial action on Malaya, and went on to add that since the issues in Korea were similar 'we must take a similar stand on this question'.[196] His comments were later endorsed by Idris Williams, the general president, who stated that while the Federation had not yet discussed Korea, the comments were 'in accordance with Federation policy.[197]

Shortly after war commenced Edgar Ross argued that there was now 'another basis for the triple alliance, another justification for it, another factor emphasising its urgency!'[198] There was clearly an intention, at least on the part of the CPA activists, that the alliance would provide the leadership in the trade union struggle against the war. In support of the alliance Parkinson issued another statement linking its formation with the peace movement, and added it would 'constitute a grave warning to all who would attack the Labor [sic] Movement'.[199] The union's central executive now called on all sections of the union to discuss the proposed triple alliance and make a specific declaration in support. Their statement noted that recent developments including the

Korean War had aggravated 'the threat to democratic liberties, trade union rights and living standards'.[200]

Almost immediately rank-and-file members of the Federation opposed the proposed triple alliance. *Common Cause* explained that there was 'considerable confusion' about the alliance with members feeling they 'were being asked to agree with some sort of automatic action in support of any move to hold up supplies to Korea'.[201] The paper emphasised that the triple alliance was originally proposed as a mutual assistance pact in the event of any one of them being attacked either by the Menzies government or by the employers. Yet with communist activists in the Federation arguing consistently in support of the Seamen's Union and the WWF, it is clear that the majority of Federation members felt they would inevitably be drawn into a major clash with the government on the issue. Against a background of virulent anti-Communism many of the planned national aggregate meetings called to discuss the issue were abandoned.[202]

The issue was finally resolved in August when, after an extensive debate, the Central Council voted to authorise 'the executive to consider discussions with other unions' but 'no formal alliance to be entered into without the submission of the matter to the membership at aggregate meetings'.[203] During the debate Williams, the general president, conceded that while only a minority of the Federation's lodges had voted on the issue, the majority of those had opposed the alliance. Mineworkers in Queensland, northern New South Wales, western New South Wales, Broken Hill and Tasmania voted against the proposed alliance.[204] The opposition to the alliance was led by G.W.S. Grant, the general secretary and a member of the ALP. Grant explained that he had reversed his previous support for the alliance, after he had seen the press statements by Parkinson linking the establishment of the alliance with opposition to the Korean War.[205] Grant also said that while he 'didn't agree with the present situation in Korea', he was 'with the government — any government that puts forward a policy to protect Australia'. He also reminded executive members that 'certain people' — a clear reference to the CPA — had opposed the last war until Russia was attacked.[206]

Grant had a long history of support for militant trade unionism dating back to the 1929 Rothbury demonstration and he had an innate class consciousness.[207] During the 1949 coal strike he had been sentenced to 12 months imprisonment for 'contempt of court' charges for refusing to reveal information to the court about the location of union funds.[208] His opposition to any suggestion of union industrial action to oppose the Korean War shows that it was possible to be industrially militant and politically cautious. There were pockets of support for the alliance from areas where there was a significant communist activity such as Collinsville, Lithgow and Wonthaggi.[209] The

Southern District (NSW) had also voted overwhelmingly is support of the alliance.[210] However, this vote was taken before the start of the Korean War, and the vote may well have been reversed if it had been taken later. However, it was clear that the CPA had failed to convince Federation members about the necessity for industrial action to oppose the war.

The Seamen's Union

In June 1950, the federal executive of the Seamen's Union passed a resolution which declared that, 'Australian merchant seamen are pledged to refuse to handle or transport war supplies and will mobilise opposition to Menzies' aims to make Australia an American colony'.[211] It was the most explicit challenge to the government's Korean policies. Even before the outbreak of the war the union had shown some interest in Korean politics. For example, the *Seamen's Journal* in June 1950 contained a WFTU report on Korea (dated May 10) which criticised America's role in Asia and supported the right of the Korean people to determine their future without outside interference.[212]

There was an almost immediate hostile reaction to the resolution once it became public knowledge about a week later. The fact that E.V. Elliott, the federal secretary, had just returned from a WFTU executive meeting in Budapest, where trade union action on peace-related issues was discussed, heightened the prevailing anti-communist hysteria.[213] *News Weekly* claimed that the union was 'pledged to fifth column activity' and that the 'long awaited clash between the government and the Communist Party looms closer' because of the union's action.[214] The paper also claimed that communist union leaders had received instructions the previous December to block the supply of war materials to Asia.[215] The Returned Servicemen's League also condemned the union's actions calling on the government to take firm action, if necessary, against the union and called on its own Seamen's Union members to assist in the removal of their communist union officials.[216]

It may have been possible for the Seamen's Union leadership to ignore opposition from outside the labour movement and continue with the proposed ban. However, the union was almost totally isolated in the trade union movement on the issue and this made it impossible for the leadership to maintain its support for union action to oppose the war. The rejection of the triple alliance by the Miners' Federation membership meant that in any prolonged dispute with the Government the Seamen's Union would receive little support from one of Australia's strongest and militant unions. More importantly, in September 1950, the ACTU Interstate Executive supported the government's Korean policies and branded North Korea as the aggressor.[217] In

response to the ACTU leadership, Elliott alleged that 'seamen have seen their mates die agonising deaths and will actively oppose today's Australian youth suffering the same fate'.[218] *Tribune* accused the ACTU leadership of rushing in to 'play copper' and added that they had exposed themselves as 'traitors to the Labor movement and Australia's great traditions of opposition to unjust war.'[219]

The union came under a sustained attack front a diverse range of sources. At the July NSW ALP conference Chifley attacked the ban and called on the government to use the Crimes Act Act to defeat it.[220] A short while later the Commonwealth Police raided the union office as a possible prelude to the laying of charges under the Crimes Act.[221] Percy Spender, the minister for external affairs, referred the issue to the federal attorney-general for investigation for possible treason charges.[222] Elliott then instructed all officials not to make statements to the police or the security service.[223] The union leadership then faced claims that they were traitors to Australia. In rejecting the claim Elliott said that Australians should 'look at the kind of war the Menzies government aided by the right wing inside the Labor movement want to drag us into'.[224] Elliott also pointed out that all seven members of the union's Federal management committee, which had unanimously endorsed the ban, were veterans of the First or Second World Wars.[225] *Tribune* welcomed the Seamen's Union decision describing it as an example of 'selfless loyalty and devotion to Australia'.[226]

The unrelenting attacks on the Seamen's Union started to cause divisions in the union. Reginald Franklin, the federal president, and the only non-communist member of the federal executive, denied he had been consulted about the issue — a claim rejected by the Seamen's Union official historians.[227] In response to mainstream media reports about divisions in the union, *Tribune* claimed that the majority of union members supported the decision.[228] Whatever possible distortions there may have been in the mainstream press coverage it is clear that was significant opposition to the attempt to impose bans. For example, in Sydney the crew of the *Macedon* condemned the executive resolution and demanded an immediate special stopwork meeting to discuss the issue.[229] It became increasingly clear to the union leadership that they could no longer maintain its call for transport bans on war materials to Korea.

Mass meetings of the union's members were then held around Australia. They voted 929 to 814 to support an executive recommendation that condemned Australian involvement in the Korean War, but made no mention of imposing bans on the supply of war materials.[230] The rejection of bans by the Seamen's Union rank-and-file ended the union's involvement in the proposed triple alliance. Elliott was to claim later that 'many seamen succumbed to this capitalist propaganda' and that 'the action of the Federal Executive and its decision were correct'.[231] John Brennan, a CPA member

and a Newcastle branch official from 1953, later explained that the rejection occurred because members 'weren't educated' on the issue.[232] Yet, despite the virulent anti-communist campaign, a narrow majority of the Seamen's Union members had voted to oppose the war. The issue for many of them was not so much opposition to the Korean War, but the attempt by their union leadership to extend this opposition into the industrial arena.

The Waterside Workers' Federation

Of the three unions that were to establish the triple alliance, the WWF was the least active on the Korean War issue. Ted Roach, the assistant secretary of the WWF, maintained that the Federation had previously always given 'full support' to colonial people struggling for independence.[233] In Sydney, a WWF branch official, Ron Maxwell, held what he called 'an extra good meeting' outside the Circular Quay wharf where the war was condemned.[234] *Maritime Worker* did cover the Korean War issue but failed to call specifically for trade union bans on the transport of war materials.[235] The inaction of the federal leadership was in sharp contrast to its actions a few years before, when it took the lead in imposing bans on Dutch shipping in support of Indonesian independence.

The outlook of the federal WWF leadership was shaped by a number of factors. While Healy was widely respected within the union, and repeatedly re-elected to his position, this support did not usually translate into support did not usually translate into support for his political outlook.[236] In July 1950, in the WWF elections, the Industrial Group maintained its control of the Brisbane executive and was successful in defeating Ted Englart, the communist branch secretary.[237] The Melbourne WWF branch was also led by anti-Healy forces.[238] In the event of the federal leadership calling for a boycott, these ports, and others, would have defied the call thus making it ineffective. In August 1950, the Townsville WWF rejected by 299 to 230 a motion to impose bans on war materials.[239] Yet the same branch in June, after hearing a report from their branch delegate to the Melbourne Peace Congress, endorsed its decisions.[240] This again illustrates the sharp distinction that many unionists made between support for the peace movement and its extension to include industrial action.

Despite the rejection of industrial action by the majority of WWF members there were isolated examples of waterside workers refusing to handle war materials. In July two waterside workers and a tally clerk refused to load Mustang engines on the *Changi* which was bound for Korea.[241] The next month, 14 Sydney WWF members were suspended for three days after they refused to load war material onto the *Yunnan*. They were replaced by another work gang whose delegate claimed that 90% of WWF

members supported the war and they would act to ensure that supplies reached Korea.[242] The fact that the local WWF leadership did not try and extend the dispute, which would have often been the normal response, is an indication of their isolation on the issue. The same month after a protest from Jim Healy, shipowners conceded that press reports of WWF work bans on loading ammunition were a total fabrication.[243] Thus, in common with other communist-led unions, the WWF abandoned all attempts to organise industrial action against the war.

The aftermath

The defeat of the proposal to establish a triple alliance was a major blow for the CPA and its attempts to organise widespread industrial action against the Korean War. In their key stronghold unions the membership had acted decisively to reject being drawn into a campaign that would directly challenge the government's Korean War policies. It meant that there would be no generalised industrial action to oppose the war. However, it did not end all industrial action on peace related issues. In April 1954 Sydney WWF members refused to load bombs and arms onto the *Radnor* which was bound for French Indo-China. In response the Menzies government ordered troops to load the ship.[244] Two years earlier, during a strike in Sydney, troops were used to load the *Devonshire* which was bound for Korea.[245] The potential use of troops by the government was therefore always a factor that the WWF had to consider in any industrial dispute.

In the aftermath of the defeat of the triple alliance proposal the CPA began to shift its overall trade union strategy. The first indication of this came when Jack Blake presented a major report on the peace movement to the July central committee meeting. Blake stated that there had been 'a wrong tendency to give the primary direction of party leadership through top strongpoints in trade unions' instead of directing activity through the relevant party organisations.[246] He argued that communist trade union leaders who tried to lead by proclamation would mean that the party would fall into adventurism, and 'unfortunately there has been too much of these methods'.[247] While Blake made no direct reference to the debates that were occurring in the three unions, it is almost certain that he was referring to them. The aim of communist trade union activists, Blake explained, was to lead to a situation where 'the whole struggle is developed on the basis of conscious action below instead of relying on technical points'.[248] The full impact of this analysis was to be felt over the next few years as the CPA sought to rebuild alliances with the mainstream labour movement.

The 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress

From the mid 1950s onwards political developments in Australia and internationally started to have an impact on the Australian peace movement. By removing many of the more conservative forces from the party, the 1955 split in the ALP opened up the possibility of the mainstream labour movement returning to its traditional concerns about peace related issues. In 1956 Khrushchev's denunciation of the crimes of Stalin led to around 2000 resignations from the CPA.[249] However, unlike those who had left the party at the onset of the Cold War, many of these new departures maintained their support for radical politics. These developments meant that for the first time at a peace congress, there was real discussion of minority viewpoints which in the past had been unrepresented.[250]

In September 1959 the ACTU Congress endorsed a resolution on the peace movement. It declared 'That all trade unionists should support to the upmost the ideal of peace' and went on to support the Australian-New Zealand Conference for Disarmament and International Co-operation due to be held in Melbourne in November. Initially ACTU President Albert Monk was to preside at the trade union section of the conference.[251] The state executive of the Victorian ALP agreed to sponsor the conference.[252] A prominent role in the trade union section of the peace conference was played by Grouper supporter Jim Kenny, the ACTU senior vice-president and secretary of the NSW Labor Council.[253] This section was held in the main chamber of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, an indication of how much the complexion of the Grouper stronghold had changed since the 1955 split.[254] In June the council had issued a call for all trade unionists to support the congress.[255]

Despite this wider support there was still continuing opposition to the peace movement from within the labour movement, mainly from forces linked to the Industrial Groups. In a pamphlet issued for the conference, Santamaria criticised Bill O'Brien and Don McSween, both members of the organising committee, as 'two well known "unity ticket" men'.[256] When the ACTU moved to endorse the peace congress, Lloyd Ross was a vocal opponent.[257] When Kenny reported back to the NSW Trades and Labor Council, which endorsed the decisions of the congress, J. Riordan, federal secretary of the Clerk's Union, opposed the adoption of the report.[258] Despite the NSW ALP central executive sending an official observer to the congress, Tom Uren, a left-wing parliamentarian, was told that if he spoke he risked being charged under party rules.[259] The congress was Uren's first direct involvement with the peace movement, and helped to establish a course that was to be followed by numerous other ALP members over the next decade.[260] This continuing enmity and the need to maintain its new alliances meant that the CPA had to pay careful attention to the

tactics it proposed at the congress.

A total of 386 delegates attended the trade union section of the congress.[261] It was therefore one of the biggest and broadest meeting of trade union peace activists of the 1950s. Communist-led unions such as the Seamen's Union sent significant numbers of officials and delegates to the congress.[262] For the first time in years ALP members could talk openly about their participation in a peace movement congress.[263] Despite this more representative nature, nine out of 13 members of the drafting committee were leading trade union functionaries.[264] A number of rank-and-file union delegates criticised the CPA for its passivity and its refusal to support industrial action on peace related issues. For example, Lionel Anets, a Sydney-based Trotskyist, argued that without 'working-class action against nuclear war and capitalism' the peace movement would achieve little.[265] Similarly, George Petersen claimed that the CPA's 'peaceful coexistence class collaborationist line' had been adopted virtually unchallenged.[266]

The determination of the CPA to suppress any mention of industrial action over the peace issue became apparent early in the congress. A worker who intended moving a resolution was warned by the communist federal secretary of his union that he would be branded as a disruptor if he did.[267] On the first day in response to a question, Healy stressed that two million people talking about peace would have a major impact on public opinion. In fact Healy carefully avoided any mention of industrial action, including those previously organised by his own union.[268] It represented a considerable shift away from the policies for which the CPA was arguing a few years previously.

The first speaker the next day was R. Richardson, a boilermaker: he called for a black ban on nuclear tests. He drew attention to the *Jolly George* campaign and the bans that were imposed on Dutch shipping.[269] Another speaker linked the struggle for peace with the fight to establish a socialist society — a position that in theory the CPA adhered to.[270] In the evening there was a call for a 24-hour stoppage the day after the French tested a nuclear bomb in the Sahara. The call was widely applauded and supported by some of the following speakers.[271] A Catholic worker from the Sydney waterfront urged the conference to adopt the slogan 'Down Bomb-Down Tools'.[272] The debate over possible trade union tactics continued on the third day. A FEDFA delegate from Sydney's Cockatoo Dock questioned why so many workers chose to work in the war industries and then called for the progressive closure of all war plants.[273] Finally, E. McCormick, a Melbourne waterside worker, cited the inspiring example of industrial action by Japanese workers, who for 18 months had prevented the use of warheads which had been sent to Japan. McCormick went on to call for a complete ban on the Woomera Rocket Range, something that the CPA had attempted unsuccessfully to achieve 12 years previously.

Despite some indications of support, those calling for militant action were clearly a minority.[274] A combination of ALP and CPA union activists united to defeat all calls for industrial action in support of peace. Jim Healy justified this on the basis that 'there are unions and union leaders who are afraid of such a move. We shouldn't get divided on this question'.[275] Unlike the trade union resolution of first APC Congress, that of the 1959 congress contained no reference to any form of industrial action in support of peace demands.[276]

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the specific application of the CPA's trade union strategy in three areas. In two of them, the Woomera Rocket Range and the Korean War, the party sought to move beyond a propaganda campaign and use its leadership of key industrial unions to support its demands. In each instance it was forced to make a rapid retreat. In the case of Woomera it was due to a combination of two factors. First, the Chifley government, as it would do so two years later during the coal strike, reacted by passing legalisation which imposed heavy penalties on unions taking what it considered to be political rather than industrial action. Second, was the reluctance of the central party leadership to make the final break with the Chifley government. It still hoped to maintain some kind of unofficial alliance with the ALP. It used its authority in the party to compel the party's Victorian trade union leaders, who were the main supporters of the proposed union ban, to fall into line with party policy.

By the time the Korean War commenced the Cold War had reached a fever pitch of intensity. Many Australians saw the war as a possible prelude to the next world war with frightening consequences. Correspondingly, there were deeply entrenched fears of Communism and its threat to Australian society. However much the CPA tried to argue that its opposition to the Korean War was consistent with Australian labour movement traditions, it was simply not believed. Many Australians saw the party as an agent of the Soviet Union operating as a 'fifth column' in Australian society. Thus, when the party moved to establish the triple alliance as a means of escalating its campaign against the war, it ran into immediate problems. Rank-and-file members of the three unions concerned (Miners' Federation, Seamen's Union and WWF), rejected it outright and it died a quick death. However, it should be noted that members of all three unions continued to be active in the peace movement throughout the 1950s, and also continued to re-elect their communist officials. What was at stake for the majority of members of the unions concerned was not so much the issue of the war, or the nature of their communist officials, but the seemingly inappropriate use of industrial action to support unpopular political goals.

By 1959 the Australian political climate was slowly starting to change. It was now possible for the CPA to establish alliances with political forces beyond its immediate periphery. However, in order to maintain these new alliances the CPA had to abandon the revolutionary essence of its proclaimed claimed Marxism. Many of the new supporters of the peace movement were members or supporters of the ALP. Their first loyalty was towards ensuring the election of ALP to government and this meant the complete rejection of any sign of revolutionary politics. The CPA was in fact returning to the 'Popular Front' days of the mid-1930s where the party functioned almost as a left appendage of the ALP. In the process CPA union activists could continue to be involved in the peace movement, but under conditions where the radical rhetoric of the early 1950s had evaporated.

The following two chapters will examine another area in which the CPA pursued its political goals in the trade union movement. The advent of the mass immigration program at the end of World War II challenged the labour movement's long standing hostility to migrants. This was based on the fear that their arrival would erode working conditions. The mixed responses of the CPA to this development will be analysed. Its hostile attitudes to the arrival of East European refugees dovetailed with many of the racist traditions of the Australian labour movement.■

5. Calwell's 'Baltic Fascists' Are Not Welcome: The CPA and East European Migrants

Introduction

There was near unanimity in the Australian labour movement's racist attitude towards migration before World War II. Almost alone in the working class movement at this time the CPA stressed the common interests of all workers in uniting against the common enemies of capitalism, mass unemployment and the rise of fascism. In this period it recruited many foreign-born workers who shared its idealism and its absolute support for the Soviet Union. In contrast, the ALP was fervent in its support of the White Australia Policy, and deeply hostile towards non-Australian-born workers. Similarly, unions such as the AWU barred many foreign-born workers from its ranks. The introduction of the mass migration scheme following World War II and the subsequent arrival of large numbers non-British migrants, posed a significant challenge for the CPA to maintain its internationalist traditions.

Australia's experiences during World War II helped to convince the Labor government that new policies were needed that would both guarantee Australia's post war security and develop Australia's relatively low industrial infrastructure. The government endorsed a policy of rapid population growth, with half of the projected annual increase in population to come from a program of mass immigration. The original intention was that the overwhelming majority of these migrants would come from Britain. Arthur Calwell, Australia's first minister of immigration, argued that the common heritage between Australia and Britain would mean that British migrants could be rapidly assimilated into Australian society without causing social tensions or bitter conflicts. However, when the government failed to attract sufficient numbers of British migrants it was forced to turn to new and non-traditional sources in order to fulfil its ambitious targets.

The war had created an enormous flood of refugees. Many had fled the advancing Soviet armies and made their way towards Western Europe and what they considered to be safety. Some had been active collaborators with the German occupation forces, whilst others had been unwillingly forced into some form of service with the governments that were established by the Germans in Eastern Europe. Both groups feared possible reprisals from the new regimes that would be established by the Soviet forces. Still others had already witnessed the brutal reality of Stalinist rule and were determined not to repeat the experience. When the war ended there were also large numbers of prisoners of war and conscripted labourers in Western Europe who resisted being returned to their homelands which were now under Soviet occupation. As the new regimes in Eastern Europe consolidated themselves they forcibly expelled millions of ethnic Germans. What the majority of the people from these groups had in common was a hardened and persistent anti-communist outlook. Many of Australia's earliest postwar migrants came from the ranks of these refugees.

The issue of mass migration posed a particular dilemma for the CPA. Its internationalist outlook should have made it more receptive to the arrival of workers from other countries. However, it was well aware that many Australian workers, despite the recent war, continued to hold racist attitudes towards potential migrants. There was also a widespread fear that mass migration would be used to drive down wages and working conditions. In the end the party remained formally opposed to mass migration throughout the 1950s and in resolutions repeatedly called for its cessation or a reduction in the annual intake. However, in sharp contrast to many of the historical traditions of the labour movement, the CPA argued that once migrants arrived in Australia they should be fully accepted by the trade unions with the same rights and responsibilities as other Australian workers.

This chapter focuses on the CPA's response and the unions they influenced to the arrival of around 220,000 East European and German refugees from 1948 onwards. It will examine the response to the arrival of migrants from countries such as Greece, Italy and Malta. The East European refugees (or Displaced Persons) were a significant proportion of Australia's initial migrant intake and they arrived just as the former alliance with the Soviet Union was finally breaking down. German migrants started to arrive in 1952 when Cold War tensions were at their peak and war with the Soviet Union seemed imminent. For the CPA, the Cold War and Australia's mass migration program were linked, and Australia's acceptance of these refugees was its contribution to the western alliance against the Soviet Union.

Despite its call that migrants should have equality with Australian-born workers, the CPA reacted differently when East European refugees started to arrive. It waged a

prolonged and bitter campaign against their arrival. Communist-led unions either attempted to prevent their entry into the workforce or ensured that they were placed into jobs with the lowest pay and worse conditions. Entire groups of people were condemned either as 'fascist collaborators', or people who had consciously abandoned the building of socialist societies in their homelands. They were also seen as a potential strikebreakers or an anti-union workforce. The Communist Party's objection to their arrival was clearly based on political grounds, and not on traditional labour movement racism. However it moved considerably in this direction. Its campaign against these migrants consciously drew on the racist traditions of the Australian labour movement to boost support for its campaign. For a period, the CPA press and many trade union journals (not just communist) used the offensive epithet 'Balts' to describe all East European migrants before the term was quietly dropped after the party started to shift its political position. Similarly, when Yugoslavia broke with the Soviet Union in 1948, Yugoslavs still resident in Australia were described as 'fascist agents' before once again the term was abandoned when the political position was changed after 1953.

The mass migration program commenced at a time when Australia faced an acute housing shortage that continued into the mid 1950s. Refugees were accused of receiving favourable housing treatment and living in luxury, while large numbers of Australians were forced to live in crowded and rundown accommodation. The BWIU waged a long-standing public campaign against the construction of migrant hostels claiming that it was diverting resources away from other Australians. Once again the campaign was designed to appeal to the racist traditions of the labour movement. This campaign was to fade away by the 1950s as the housing crisis started to ease and the campaign no longer had a focus.

Pre-World War II migration and the labour movement

In the period before World War I, the IWW was the most consistent opponent of the widespread racism that dominated the Australian labour movement. At a time when many trade unions excluded workers on the basis of their ethnic origin, the Sydney IWW club declared in 1911: 'The IWW knows no distinction of race, creed, or colour. Its policy is one of international working-class solidarity'.[1] Within the IWW there were ethnic networks of Russians, Bulgarians and Italians.[2] The IWW criticised the AWU for its racist policies and their refusal to recruit Asian workers.[3] In short, the IWW attempted to show that it was theoretically possible to build a unified labour movement that would encompass both the Australian-born and migrant worker. Many of the internationalist concepts of the IWW would be taken up by the newly formed CPA in the 1920s.

During the 1920s it was not uncommon for the labour movement to organise campaigns or voice their opposition to migrants, particularly those from a non-Anglo Saxon background. As a result of a World War I agreement between the British and Italian governments, Italians were able to emigrate to Australia.[4] The agreement saw a steady increase in the number of Italians arriving in Australia which rose from 631 in 1920 to a peak of 7884 in 1927.[5] There was widespread opposition from the vast majority of the labour movement to their arrival. In 1925 the *Queensland Worker* claimed that 'Mediterranean scum' were overrunning the country.[6] Their views were repeated by ALP leaders. For example, both Scullin and Chifley criticised the federal government for allowing high levels of migration of Italians which threatened the living standards of Anglo-Saxon Australians.[7] Their comments were supported by Evatt who argued in *Labor Daily* that current scientific knowledge clearly showed that 'certain racial groups' could not be assimilated and were therefore a threat to Australian trade unionists.[8] In the post-World War II period Chifley and Evatt were key members of the Labor government that developed the mass immigration program that was to transform Australia.

The CPA and migrants before World War II

In contrast to the dominant chauvinism of the 1920s labour movement, the CPA almost from its inception was internationalist in outlook and as far as possible in practice. In 1926 the Comintern had called upon the party to establish strong links with foreign-speaking migrants and recruit them to the party.[9] By the late 1920s the Comintern had been successful in imposing a common program on national communist parties. Thus, when migrant communists arrived in Australia they found in the CPA a party with similar ideals and outlook.[10] During the 1920s and 1930s the internationalist stance of the CPA and its strong anti-fascist policies resonated with many migrants and led them to join the CPA.

In the 1920s federal governments developed a program to bring to Australia large numbers of British migrants. It had many similar features to the more extensive program that was to be introduced after the end of World War II.[11] It saw 212,000 out of a total 282,000 British migrants arriving in Australia with government assistance.[12] Among them were Scottish industrial migrants who brought with them strong traditions of socialist ideas and trade unionism. A few were even communists.[13] They joined Scottish communists already in Australia. Tom Wright, an early communist leader, as well as J.B. Miles, who was to replace him as party secretary, came from a Scottish background.[14] Many of the early communist coalminers such as Charlie Nelson, Bill Orr, Jock Lindop, and Jock Jamieson in Lithgow carried strong roots to the Scottish

labour movement.[15] At the time there was often opposition from ALP and trade union leaders to the arrival of British migrants. For example, in 1922 Scullin claimed that immigration led to unemployment and immigrants were forced to live in poor conditions.[16] The ready acceptance by the CPA of British migrants into its ranks was therefore against the prevailing trend in the labour movement. Yet, as we shall see, in the post World War II period, the party would use the anti-British chauvinism of the 1920s as a justification for opposing migration.

Other migrant groups also found close affinity with the CPA. The emergence of fascist or reactionary governments in many countries in Europe from the 1920s onwards forced many left-wing activists into exile. When some of these political refugees arrived in Australia they formed their own organisations that were often linked to the CPA. For example, Croatian migrants established the Borbeni Radnicki Pokiet (Militant Workers Organisation) with branches including Broken Hill, Boulder-Kalgoorlie, Perth, Sydney Melbourne, and in a number of centres in far North Queensland.[17] In Fremantle Paddy Troy established strong links with the Yugoslav community which contained many communists.[18] During World War II the strongly pro-Tito stance of the Yugoslav community further strengthened the ties with the CPA.[19] Thus, the majority of Yugoslav migrants before World War II were left-wing in outlook and supported a unified Yugoslavia. In sharp contrast, those arriving after the war, as we shall see, were often virulently anti-communist and opposed to a unified Yugoslavia. When they arrived in Australia they encountered widespread opposition from the CPA and communist-led unions.

In North Queensland the CPA was able to form strong links with Italian migrants during the six-month strike by sugarcane industry workers in 1935. The hostility of the AWU to migrant workers provided the opening for the party to emerge as the real representative of the workers in the industry.[20] In Kalgoorlie, CPA members took the lead in defending Italian and Yugoslav miners during race riots in 1934.[21] The Western Australian CPA was able to recruit migrant workers such as Lou Nardi who had been a Communist Party member in Italy from 1922 before arriving in Australia in 1928.[22] The CPA's strong opposition to the growth of fascism led to some Jewish migrants establishing Jewish branches of the CPA in Sydney and Melbourne in the 1930s.[23] In 1945 Bernie Taft, a German Jewish migrant, was appointed Victorian director of the Marx School and shortly afterwards was elected to the Victorian state committee of the CPA.[24] His appointment to such prominent positions a few years after arriving in Australia, is an indication that migrants faced no insurmountable problems in rising to the higher levels in the party's organisation.

The CPA in the 1930s became an ethnically diverse organisation.[25] Its ranks were

open to anyone who shared their political goals irrespective of their ethnic origin. At a time when there was often widespread chauvinism in the labour movement the CPA actions offered an alternative course that workers could follow. For example, a Greek branch of the CPA was formed in 1933. This was approximately 30 years before the ALP responded to the postwar migration by establishing ethnically-based branches.[26] Its message was that working-class unity was the only way through which capitalism could be overthrown. However, the CPA was not totally immune from displays of chauvinism. In 1934 the *Workers' Weekly* condemned 'Comrades [who] still use the terms "Pommie", "Dago", "Nigger" and so forth'.[27] The strength of the CPA was that it recognised that such racist language was unacceptable and often took steps to eliminate it from the everyday language of communists. Overt displays of chauvinism were therefore clearly unacceptable to the majority of communists and this was undoubtedly one factor that convinced some migrants to join the CPA. The key to understanding the CPA attitude to migrants in this period was that it was often based on the presumed political orientation of the migrant. Many of the migrants entering Australia from the mid 1920s onwards were fleeing from repressive or fascist regimes and were therefore more receptive to the CPA and its policies. In contrast, many of those arriving after World War II were fleeing from Soviet imposed regimes. This, as we shall see, helped determine the party's attitudes towards them.

The mass migration program

As early as 1943 Prime Minister John Curtin had indicated the necessity of a planned immigration program at the end of the war.[28] The mass migration program introduced by the Chifley government was to have a major impact in transforming Australia's social and industrial structures from the late 1940s onwards. By 1960 over a million migrants had arrived in Australia including 742,000 British, 116,295 Dutch, 204,000 Italians, over 90,000 Germans and Austrians, and 68,000 Greeks.[29] When Calwell had announced that the program was about to proceed he pledged that there would be 10 British migrants for every non-British migrant.[30] His intention was to maintain Australia's 'racial purity' and in the process undermine any opposition to the policy from the trade unions which had a long history of opposing non-British migration.[31]

When the CPA opposed the continuation of the White Australia Policy Calwell saw it as a threat to the government's policy.[32] As Millar points out, the CPA's opposition to the White Australia Policy was regarded by the ALP as a sign of its 'un-Australian' character.[33] The federal ALP secretary, Joe Chamberlain, warned ALP members in 1961 that membership of Immigration Reform Associations was incompatible with ALP membership.[34] The contrast between the two class parties was

clear. It was not until 1965 that the federal ALP finally removed its support for the White Australia Policy from its platform.[35] The difference between the ALP and CPA became apparent in June 1945. After Ernie Thornton, the FIA national secretary, supported the CPA's opposition to the White Australia Policy, the Balmain FIA branch, the centre of growing dissent to the communist-led union leadership, supported Jack Beasley's opposition to Thornton's declaration.[36] Beasley was the local federal member of parliament. At this time the CPA was the only significant Australian party that opposed the White Australia Policy.[37] The opposition from communist-led unions was one of the factors that led to the erosion of wider union support for the policy from the late 1940s onwards.[38] The dominant position of the ALP in the working class has often tended to underestimate the fact that there was consistent opposition from other working-class organisations to working-class chauvinism as displayed by the ALP.[39]

When Calwell could not honour his pledge that the vast majority of migrants would be of British origin he was forced to consider other alternative non-traditional sources so that the program could be implemented. At the end of the war there were around eight to twelve million refugees in Europe and after many had returned to their homelands there were still 1.6 million refugees remaining in camps in Western Europe in 1947.[40] It was from these refugees that the majority of Australia's first postwar migrants came. In June 1947 Calwell signed an agreement with the International Refugee Organisation (IRO) to accept an annual minimum intake of 12,000 people whose fares to Australia would be subsided by the IRO.[41] Australia's intake of 180,000 Displaced Persons after the war was second only to that of the United States.[42] They included approximately 70,000 from Poland, 35,000 from the Baltic States, 25,000 from Yugoslavia with the rest coming mainly from Russia and Hungary.[43] From its inception the mass immigration program was shaped by the tensions generated by the Cold War and the conflict with the Soviet Union.

For the Chifley government the arrival of large numbers of virulent anti-communist refugees was an attractive proposition.[44] It relied heavily on the advice from the IRO about the political reliability of refugees.[45] In Australia, the head of the IRO was Major C.EM. Lloyd whose conservative politics would have assisted the immigration of anti-communist migrants.[46].Australia's role in accepting such large numbers of anti-communist refugees was recognised by the Western powers as an important contribution to the struggle against the Soviet Union.[47] In 1947, H.E. Strakosch, a pre-war Austrian refugee and a Sydney manufacturer, argued that the Eastern European refugees were 'potential soldiers of democracy' and the Western powers could not abandon them, otherwise it would be a repeat of pre-war appeasement polices.[48]

Strakosch continued that while it was not possible to prevent the establishment of Soviet style regimes in Eastern Europe, by providing a home to the millions of refugees the Western powers could send a powerful message of hope to the people resisting the expansion of Soviet power.[49]

Their arrival in Australia coincided with an escalation of the conflict in the trade unions between the CPA and its opponents. Since the overwhelming majority of East European refugees were both Catholic and anti-communist they actively supported the Catholic-influenced Industrial Groups and their campaign to eradicate communist influence in the trade unions.[50] The foreign language newspapers for the Italian, Polish and Russian communities urged their readers to join their respective trade unions and support the anti-communist fight.[51] After the 1955 ALP split East European migrants were more likely than any other migrant group to vote for the Democratic Labor Party.[52] For example during the Warren by-election in Western Australia in 1958 Tony McGillick, a former communist, helped to mobilise East European refugees to vote against the ALP candidate.[53] This entrenched and persistent anti-Communism was the most important factor in the CPA's enduring hostility to the presence of the East European migrants in the workplace.

Calwell understood the need for caution before he proceeded and the necessity of not alienating trade unionists who would be the group most affected by the introduction of tens of thousands of new workers into industry.[54] To achieve this he made a number of crucial concessions which helped to undermine their potential opposition. First, Calwell assured the trade union movement that migrants would not be used to worsen award conditions or be used in industrial disputes, which were the concerns of the majority of trade unionists, not just of the CPA.[55] Other conditions required migrants to work as directed for two years', work in jobs that were often unattractive to Australians particularly those in remote areas: were to be the first to be laid off irrespective of their length of service; and were not to engage in industrial action.[56] Australia was the only country that imposed a two-year indentured work requirement on IRO refugees.[57] If migrants breached any of the conditions they faced possible sanctions such as being sent to worse jobs or, in some circumstances, deported.[58]

Migrants did not start to arrive until all servicemen had returned and full employment had been achieved.[59] In 1945, with uncertainty about economic conditions and possible widespread unemployment, Calwell had rejected a demand from the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the immigration program start immediately.[60] By 1947, there was a severe shortage of labour and this allowed the government to pursue its policy confident that the expanding economy would provide the necessary jobs.[61] With the fear of unemployment clearly a non-issue, potential trade union opposition

was undermined. For most of the 1950s, except during the recession in 1952, the majority of Australians supported the immigration policy. However, opposition was highest among unskilled and semi-skilled workers, a feature which would have assisted the CPA when it started to campaign against the arrival of the Displaced Persons.[62]

In the immediate postwar period the Australian economy's demand was for young and unskilled workers. The mass immigration program was designed to ensure a constant supply of the workers required to meet this demand. Migrants were to play a crucial role in the building of the great industrial infrastructures of the 1950s which underpinned Australia's economic expansion.[63] For example, migrants played a major role in the construction of the Snowy Mountains Scheme.[64] They were employed as railway fettlers often in remote parts of the country.[65] They also entered basic industry in large numbers. The 1961 census showed that 50% of postwar migrants were industrial workers, a rate well above that of the general Australian population.[66] By about 1965, 25-30% of workers at Ford and General Motors were Italian.[67] In 1953 two-thirds of the workforce at the new aluminium plant in Bell Bay, Tasmania were migrant workers.[68] Between 1945 and 1955 three-quarters of the increase in the workforce at Broken Hill Proprietary's (BHP) steelworks in Newcastle and Port Kembla came from migrant workers.[69] The company actively sought to employ migrant workers almost certainly acting on an assumption that many of them would have little knowledge about trade unionism.[70] By 1956, 41% of the workers at Port Kembla were migrant workers.[71]

The Displaced Persons arrived in Australia as a result of their fears of political oppression if they returned to their homelands. They were joined by around 15,000 Hungarian refugees in 1956 after the Soviet Union crushed the reform movement led by Imre Nagy.[72] Pope Pius XII at Christmas that year called for a crusade to meet the threats posed by the expansion of Communism.[73] A statement by Australia's Catholic bishops condemned the opposition by communist trade union leaders to the arrival of the Hungarian refugees.[74] For the CPA such calls would have reinforced the connections between Eastern European migrants, the Catholic Church and anti-Communism. However, after the arrival of the Displaced Persons other migrant groups started to arrive to a far less hostile reaction from the CPA. This was despite the fact that many of them, such as the Italians and the Maltese were Catholics. For some of these migrants there was no contradiction between their being Catholic and supporting communist-led union leaderships.

In Italy there was a surplus of three million workers to economic requirements and this provided compelling reasons for many Italians to emigrate.[75] After Prime Minister Alcide De Gusperi urged Italians to learn a foreign language and emigrate,

20,000 Italians left for Australia between 1947 and 1951.[76] An agreement between the two countries saw the introduction of assisted passages and opened the door to further increases in migration numbers.[77] An important factor in helping to convince the Maltese to emigrate was persistent unemployment; Australia became the favoured destination.[78] Australia had signed an agreement in 1947 that allowed 12,000 Maltese to enter Australia and they were among the first to receive Australian government assistance.[79] By 1961 there were almost 40,000 Maltese migrants in Australia.[80] Around 60% of the migrants were unskilled or semi-skilled workers and about one-third were skilled tradesmen.[81] Some of these migrants brought left-wing politics with them and were therefore more receptive to approaches from communist union activists.[82]

The legacy of the Greek Civil War and the bitter divisions it created in Greek society shaped the decisions of many Greeks to leave their homeland.[83] Many of the Greek migrants who had fought for or supported the communist-led forces during the civil war and were forced to leave Greece considered that they were political refugees.[84] On this issue they had some similarities with the East European migrants, the critical difference being that they were the victims of a reactionary government, the East Europeans being the victims of 'left-wing' governments. This tended to make many Greek migrants supporters of the left which led to their active involvement with the worker's movement.[85] Before they left Greece some migrants already had experiences of activity in trade unions and people's cooperatives.[86] Similarly, many Greek Cypriots had previous contact with British-type trade unionism and they brought this knowledge with them to Australia.[87] Others, such as Demetrius ('Jimmy') Anastassiou, had served with the British forces during World War II. On his arrival in Australia he was drawn into wide-ranging political activity over the following decades, including with the CPA, trade union movement, Greek community and the peace movement.[88]

After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 the British and Soviet governments signed an alliance on July 13, 1941.[89] As a result, Polish prisoners-of-war in the Soviet Union were released and they formed a Polish Army of 70,000 men under the command of General Wladyslaw Anders. The majority of this army refused to fight under Soviet command and were eventually transferred in the summer of 1942 via Iran to the Middle East. In the next three years Polish forces were to play an important role in the battles of Tobruk (1943), Monte Casino (1944), Arnhem (1944), Falaise (1944) and Bologna (1945). At the end of the war around half-a-million million Poles in Western Europe, including around half of those who had served in the armed forces refused to return to Poland and chose to be resettled primarily in Britain, North America or Australia.[90]

Among the Polish migrants were survivors of the 1944 Warsaw uprising against the German occupation forces. The uprising, which resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of Polish citizens, was led by the Polish social democrats rather than bourgeois nationalists, or supporters of the Soviet Union. There is strong historical evidence that the Soviet Army deliberately halted their advance towards Warsaw so that the Germans would undertake the task of destroying one of the major potential working-class opponents of the Communist Party in post-war Poland.[91] Khrushchev later claimed that the Soviet advance had been delayed because of problems of military strategy and that the uprising had been staged in order to have a pro-Western government in place before Soviet troops arrived.[92]

The end result was that when survivors of the uprising arrived in Australia they brought with them an implacable hatred of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War, General Bor-Komorowski, one of the leaders of the uprising emerged as a fierce critic of the new socialist regimes in Eastern Europe.[93] For the Soviet Union and the CPA, his actions would have helped to strengthen their deep seated suspicions of all signs of independent political thought in Eastern Europe. By 1951 almost 69,000 Polish migrants had arrived in Australia, making them the largest group of refugees from Eastern Europe.[94] Despite their role during World War II, when they arrived in Australia the CPA accused them of being 'fascist agents' and sought to limit their entry into many workplaces.

While the majority of Poles left the Soviet Union with General Anders' army, some remained behind due to their sympathy with the Soviet Union. In Poland in August 1945, there were 13,000 Polish Jews who had fought in the Polish pro-Soviet armed forces and had helped liberate their country from the German occupation.[95] Blanka Aiderbaum and her husband Zygmunt Klajnewaig fled to the Soviet Union after the German invasion of Poland. They enlisted in the Soviet Army in 1943 and returned to Warsaw at the end of the war. Their disillusionment with Soviet-style socialism, which they feared would be shortly imposed in Poland, plus widespread anti-Semitism, brought them to Australia.[96] Similarly, after Mendel Factor returned to Poland from the Soviet Union he also experienced instances of virulent anti-Semitism and he emigrated to Australia in March 1947.[97] The impetus to the flight of almost 90,000 Polish Jews leaving Poland for Western Europe by the end of 1946 was the massacre of 44 Jews in Kielce on July 4, 1946.[98] It was a clear indication that that anti-Semitism had not ended with the defeat of fascism. Mendel's brother Saul, who had arrived in Australia before the war, joined the CPA around 1940 and remained a committed and active member of the party.[99] Like many communists, Saul Factor was unwilling or unable to accept the personal stories of anti-Semitism from those who

had direct experience of it in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.[100]

The refusal of the CPA to acknowledge the deep-seated anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was to place an unbreakable barrier between it and East European Jewish migrants. In March 1953 *Communist Review* reprinted a *Pravda* article on the alleged plot by Jewish Doctors to murder Stalin and other Soviet leaders.[101] In addition, party functionary Jack Blake, campaigned actively inside the party in support of the purge trials in Eastern Europe, which had strong anti-Semitic elements.[102] It was not until 1964 that the CPA first started to make a few timid criticisms of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.[103]

A politically biased program

From the inception of the mass immigration program Calwell was determined to exclude any migrant with left-wing views.[104] With the CPA still in a strong position in the trade unions, the Chifley government had no desire to add potential new forces that would strengthen this influence. When he was in Europe in 1947 to arrange the first intake of refugees, Calwell specifically rejected Australia accepting any of the Spanish refugees then living in France. Calwell's justification was that that Australia did not want any individual who had fought in a civil war.[105] The presumed anti-Catholic nature of many Spanish Republicans would have also been a factor in Calwell's decision. Yet, as Hobsbawm points out, World War II was both an international war between nation states and in many countries a civil war between contending political forces.[106] If the same criteria had been applied consistently it is clear that many, if not all, of the Displaced Persons would not have been accepted as migrants. The Spanish refugees can only have been rejected on the basis of their perceived left-wing political outlook. The CPA protested at the exclusion of the Spanish refugees and the government's ready acceptance of 'fascist Balts'.[107] The protest had no impact on government policy. Calwell's policy was continued by the Menzies government that signed an immigration agreement with the Franco regime which did nothing to ease the plight of the plight of the Spanish refugees in France.[108] By 1960 only 2000 Spanish migrants had settled in Australia clearly indicating the continued bias against the Spanish refugees.[109]

This bias against possible left-wing migrants was continued after the defeat of the Chifley government. During a tour of Europe in 1951, R.G. Casey, the minister for external affairs, met with Francisco Dominedo, the Italian under secretary for foreign affairs to discuss the Migration Agreement between the two countries.[110] Dominedo pointed out the difficulties his government faced in sponsoring Italians who wished to emigrate to Australia given the stringent medical and political conditions required by

Australia. Of the 8191 men who were proposed by the Italian government, 1918 remained after the medical examination, and only 62 after political checks were made.[111] The extremely high rejection rate of potential migrants on political grounds shows the determination of the Menzies government to prevent the entry into Australia of any person with known communist links.[112] A similar process was followed in other countries with ASIO working closely with domestic security services in Germany, Greece and Spain to screen out active communists.[113] In Malta the rejection rate of potential migrants was much lower than in Italy, with 148 out of 30,161 applications being rejected on political grounds.[114]

The communist outlook

Almost as soon as the Federal Labor government announced its mass immigration policy the CPA declared its opposition to the government's plan. In July 1945, as a contribution to the CPA's pre-national congress discussion Richard Dixon stated that the party was opposed to 'free and unrestricted' immigration. Dixon went on to demand that immigration be 'vigorously controlled' and that it based on a system of non-discriminatory quotas whose numbers would be determined by the need to maintain living standards of workers and the capacity of the economy to supply jobs and housing for all those wanting to work.[115] Earlier, as the war drew to a close, Dixon had repeated the CPA's total opposition to the continuation of the White Australia Policy and called on the labour movement to abandon its 'imperialist and chauvinistic' outlook.[116] These arguments were later combined in Dixon's pamphlet *Immigration and the 'White Australia' Policy*.[117] At the August 1945 congress, J.B. Miles, then general secretary, declared: 'We want no flood of migrants from any country to provide a reserve labour army for the exploiters'. Miles maintained that with industrial expansion a planned immigration program was possible only as long as workers' living conditions were protected.[118] The congress resolution called for 'Jobs for all' and a non-discriminatory immigration program based on the capacity of the economy to provide employment. It also labelled the White Australia Policy as another version of Hitler's racial theories.[119]

The CPA's policy on mass immigration echoed many of the traditional fears of the Australian labour movement that unemployment was linked to immigration levels and was a threat to the living standards of Australian workers.[120] Dixon's pamphlet described the experiences of British migrants who arrived in Australia on the eve of the Great Depression and their subsequent bitter disillusionment and resentment at the conditions they found on their arrival. Dixon demanded that all migrants be correctly informed about the real economic conditions in Australia.[121] It was a task

that CPA unionists sometimes performed when they visited other countries. In 1952, on his way to the Vienna Peace Congress, Charles D'Aprano addressed meetings of Italian workers and informed them of the economic recession in Australia and that some Italian migrants had committed suicide when promised employment did not eventuate.[122] Over the next decade the CPA continued to oppose the mass immigration polices of successive federal governments. However, as we shall see, the CPA's approach towards migrants once they had arrived in Australia was different from many of the traditional chauvinistic attitudes prevalent within the labour movement.

At the 15th National Congress held in May 1948, one resolution supported immigration as long as the economy could provide housing and jobs.[123] A year later, after Australia had criticised the jailing of the Hungarian Cardinal Josef Mindszenty at the UN General Assembly, the Soviet Union responded by condemning Australia's immigration policy.[124] There is every reason to assume that the attack would have been based on information supplied by the CPA. In 1951, the congress resolution declared that while the CPA was not in principle opposed to people from other countries coming to Australia it could not support mass immigration. It saw the immigration program both as a threat to the living standards of Australian workers and as part of the capitalist drive towards a new world war.[125] In mid-1952, amid signs of increased unemployment the Victorian CPA functionary Ralph Gibson condemned the policy as a 'crime'.[126] A few months later, the campaign against immigration was strengthened when the central committee endorsed a report by Dixon calling for an immediate end to all immigration due to increasing unemployment and the housing shortage.[127] In an address to communist migrant workers Sharkey again restated the CPA's view that mass migration would be used to depress Australian working conditions and demanded an end to immigration.[128] By 1955 the CPA started to shift from its outright opposition to mass immigration after unemployment levels had fallen. The resolution 'welcomed' migrants from overseas but again linked the migration program with the threat to Australian living standards and preparations for a new world war.[129]

In 1957 the Victorian state CPA conference declared its opposition to the mass immigration program, while at the same time it stressed the necessity of building strong links between Australian-born and migrant workers.[130] The following year, at its 18th National Congress held in April 1958, the CPA claimed that Australian economy was entering a period of economic crisis which would see growing unemployment and declining living standards.[131] The CPA therefore called for a significant reduction in migration.[132] At the same time it called on the labour movement to build a united campaign of Australian and migrant workers that would challenge the chauvinism and racial discrimination attitudes that existed in both groups.[133] In 1961 unemployment

started to increase due to the impact of a recession. This became an important issue in the federal election held that year. Laurie Aarons delivered the party's federal election policy speech at a public meeting in Sydney on November 3. He rejected the demand that migrant workers be laid off first but then called for migration to be restricted to fiancées and near relatives of migrants already in Australia.[134]

Thus, for the entire period of the 1950s the CPA remained formally opposed to mass migration. Its views were shaped by a fear of an impending economic crisis and a return to the mass unemployment and sharp decline in living standards of the 1930s. Yet for most of this period Australia, like much of the western world, enjoyed a period of sustained economic growth and full employment. The spectre of mass unemployment had largely disappeared from the Australian economy. There was to be no return to the widespread unemployment that Australian workers had experienced in the Great Depression. Only in 1952 and 1961 did it seem possible that unemployment would return in significant numbers. In response, the CPA sharpened its opposition to immigration and called for a temporary halt to all immigration. However, these recessions were of short duration and the economy quickly recovered and the threat of unemployment receded.

Instead of calling for an end to immigration there were other possible alternatives open to the CPA. In his address to the 1948 congress Sharkey had raised the prospect of unions calling for a six-hour day. There was already an annual demonstration in Sydney on the issue.[135] In the face of growing unemployment the CPA could have resurrected this demand and organised a campaign by communist-led unions to support it. Such a campaign could have united Australian workers and migrants in a struggle around common interests. Instead, calling for a cessation in immigration opened up the possibility of migrants being blamed for the economic crisis and thus becoming the target of working class chauvinism. On this issue, given this danger it was not the CPA's finest hour.

Migrants and the housing crisis

The mass immigration program was introduced at a time when Australia was experiencing a severe housing shortage. At the start of the war there was already a shortage of 120,000 dwellings. This housing crisis deepened during the war as materials and manpower were redirected to the war effort and few houses were built for over six years.[136] By 1945 15 years of depression and war had led to a situation were the housing shortage had increased to at least 300,000 houses.[137] If the planned immigration program went ahead there was clearly going to be a major problem in ensuring that there would be sufficient housing to meet the increased demand.

Even before the end of the war there were protests against the housing shortage. In early 1944 several public meetings were held in Melbourne which demanded that to assist the war effort resources be redirected to ensure that there was sufficient housing for war industry workers. The federal government failed to respond and resentment continued to fester for a long period.[138] The end result was that for many years Australians were forced to live in substandard or crowded accommodation. For example, three thousand people lived in former army huts in Melbourne's Camp Pell. The CPA was particularly active in supporting the residents' demands for improvements in their living conditions.[139] In 1949 the shortage of housing meant that many families were forced to share accommodation with one in five households containing more than one family.[140] In working-class families the ratio was even higher with one in three families sharing a house.[141] The housing shortage continued to at least 1956 when 9% of families were still sharing accommodation.[142]

Arthur Calwell's first statement as minister of immigration pledged that the immigration program would not proceed until there was sufficient housing for all Australians.[143] In 1947, he stated that the acute housing shortage meant that Australia would only accept migrants who already had relatives in Australia to look after them on their arrival.[144] A few months before Calwell had been criticised over an Immigration Department booklet for intending migrants that claimed there was cheap and readily available housing in all major cities.[145] Despite the obvious problems of insufficient housing and Calwell's commitment that migrants needed relatives in Australia, the mass immigration program went ahead without adequate planning to supply the housing necessary to meet the increased demand. The situation led to widespread fears that the sudden arrival of large numbers of migrants would only deepen the housing crisis.[146] The acute housing shortage provided the opportunity for unions such as the BWIU to attempt to organise an anti-migrant campaign based on the claim that the construction of migrant hostels was diverting limited resources away from other Australians. Despite its strong anti-communist outlook, the RSL on occasions gave credence to the anti-migrant campaign by demanding that returned soldiers be given priority in housing over 'Balt' migrants.[147]

Geoff McDonald, who was then a young CPA and BWIU member at the Williamstown Migrant Hostel site in late 1948, later claimed that workers had rejected a call by union officials for strike action and an overtime ban as a way in which the construction of the hostel could be delayed and life made more difficult for migrants.[148] His claims appear to have some validity: after visiting the site in June 1949 John Arrowsmith, the organiser of the Footscray-Williamstown CPA branch, and party candidate for the federal seat of Gellibrand, claimed that workers were working nine

hours a day, six days a week.[149] During the 1949 coal strike 42 building workers walked off the site after Clements Langford, the contractor, attempted to undermine a general industry-wide overtime ban that was imposed to overcome a shortage of building materials.[150] Over the course of 1949 the CPA and the BWIU intensified the campaign against the construction of migrant hostels escalated with frequent claims that it was diverting resources away from housing working class Australians. For example, *Tribune* condemned the construction of what it claimed were 12 luxury migrant hostels in Wollongong.[151] After a visit by Pat Clancy, the NSW BWIU assistant secretary, union members at Broughton House, Burwood which was being converted into a migrant hostel carried a resolution opposing the use of building materials for migrant hostels. A similar resolution was later passed by union members at the Meadowbank site.[152]

In March 1949 the Victorian Building Trades' Federation placed a ban on the construction of accommodation at factories that were to hire migrant workers. Union members were withdrawn from Appleton Docks where it was planned to build migrant barracks. Don Thomson, the Federation's secretary explained that it was a longstanding union principle that workers should live away from their workplace. However, he also repeated the claim that the construction of migrant hostels was channelling resources away from other Australians.[153] In May 1949 the BWIU federal executive declared its opposition to the federal government's immigration policy claiming that migrants were being housed in luxury accommodation whilst hundreds of thousands of Australians were living in substandard housing.[154] After the distribution of 2000 leaflets by the Newcastle CPA branch, seven homeless families were moved into what was planned to be a migrant hostel. Among those involved were Laurie Aarons, secretary of the district committee of the CPA, R.C. Morgan, FIA branch secretary and Alex Dowling, secretary of the Newcastle Trades Hall Council.[155] Support for the action was given by building workers employed at migrant hostel sites, who earlier had given the government 14 days to redirect resources from the hostels to building houses for Australians. A similar resolution was passed by the Newcastle Building Trades Group.[156] The dispute was settled when the Newcastle Council found alternative accommodation for the Australian families.[157] In August 1949 the union again opposed the construction of migrant hostels and condemned the Labor government's mass immigration program as anti-working class.[158]

The BWIU claim that migrant hostels were luxury accommodation is undermined by the testimony of migrants who were forced to live in them, sometimes for prolonged periods. Conditions in the hostels were often harsh, isolated and expensive. Frank Tonon, an Italian migrant, who arrived in Australia in 1951 as a young boy, recalls living at Bonegilla in Nissen huts which were hot in summer and cold in winter. His

father found it impossible to eat the meals of lamb which was always on the menu.[159] Giovanni Sgro, who spent three months at Bonegilla in 1952, described his experience as a tragedy and the worst three months of his life.[160] Bonegilla was a former prisoner-of-war camp and there was a forced separation of married couples in the single sex accommodation that was supplied.[161] Many migrants found the isolation, the forced communal living in poor quality huts, and the inedible food a difficult and painful introduction to their new life in Australia.[162] On their arrival at the Woodside Camp, South Australia, migrants found themselves living in barracks under conditions similar, or worse than they left behind in Germany.[163] After living in the unlined huts with no ceilings, with hanging blankets to divide families from each other and furnished only with camp beds, they petitioned the federal government for improvements in their living conditions.[164] Similarly, in Western Australia, both the metropolitan and rural migrant hostels were ex-military camps, often crowded, in poor condition and expensive.[165] Les Haylen conceded that migrants were living in conditions that no Australians would accept — a sharp contrast to the BWIU's claims that migrants were living in luxury conditions.[166] Thus, the BWIU justification for its ban on the construction of migrant hostels had no basis in reality.

While the hostel campaign was often the main focus of the BWIU anti-migrant campaign there were other expressions of its opposition to the arrival of the East European migrants. As early as August 1946 the NSW BWIU state conference demanded that adequate housing and jobs were available to all intending migrants. It also called on the federal government to discuss with the union the immigration program so that its introduction could take place without disrupting the industry.[167] It was a prelude to what was often an aggressive hostility towards the arrival of East European migrants. The BWIU leadership supported carpenters at a State Rivers and Supply worksite after they demanded that (Baltic) migrants be removed from the site following an onsite confrontation between the two groups of workers.[168] The Building Trades Federation in August 1949 maintained that while it was not opposed to workers from other countries coming to Australia, it was opposed to 'Balts' coming because they were 'anti-union and pro-Nazi in outlook'.[169] It was an outlook that other communist-led unions used to justify their opposition to the arrival of the East European migrants. At its federal conference in 1950 the union called for an end to mass immigration and demanded that any future immigration program had to be based on the capacity of the economy to supply full employment and had to be on a non-racial basis — a clear rejection of the continuation of the White Australia Policy.[170]

In February 1950 the BWIU rejected claims that the union, together with the FIA and the Miners' Federation, had acted to prevent the entry of Displaced Persons into

the industry. E.W. Bulmer, the BWIU president, explained that the union position was that once migrants claiming trade qualifications had satisfactorily passed testing by technical colleges, the union would accept them as members.[171] The difficulty that faced many migrants, particularly those from Eastern Europe, was that apart from the difficulties of learning a new language, many arrived without proper identification making it impossible for them to verify their qualifications. In 1952 the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was re-established by conservative unionists as an alternative to the militantly left-wing BWIU.[172] Its formation would have given the strongly anti-communist East European migrants an avenue through which they could support trade unionism as well as pursue their opposition to communism. While the campaign against the East European migrants had strong elements of racism the BWIU, as we shall see, responded in a positive way when other migrants engaged in militant struggles against the conditions they encountered on arrival in Australia.

Migrants and Woomera

For many CPA union activists, the argument against the East European migrants appeared to be strengthened when many were assigned to the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range.[173] Despite government offers of high wages and free broad and lodging it still found it difficult to attract sufficient workers to the site.[174] The arrival of East European migrants provided a large pool of potential workers. The fact that many refugee migrants appeared to be willing to help in its construction simply confirmed for the CPA what it considered to be the political outlook of the migrants involved. Among those to work there from 1947 onwards were many from the Baltic countries.[175] The demand for workers was often heavy and constant. In July 1948 for example, 120 refugees were directed to work at the range.[176] The vast majority of migrants who worked at Woomera would have been bound by their two year work-as-directed contract and could not have refused, even if they desired to, to work at Woomera. From the government's perspective, the presence of an obviously committed anti-communist workforce would have been an important bonus.

It was the CPA's position that the Woomera Rocket Range was part of the preparations for an attack on the Soviet Union. As a result it must be opposed by the labour movement. A four-state conference of CPA women claimed that the Chifley government was diverting resources to preparations for World War III instead of building urgently needed housing and schools.[177] After the refusal of the United States to share military technology with the Australian government, the CPA claimed that the proposed range could now become a rest home for pro-fascist Balts.[178] An attempt by the CPA to prevent its construction was blocked by strong action by the Chifley

government.[179] However, since a significant proportion of the workforce were anti-communist refugees it is doubtful that the CPA was in a position to challenge effectively Evatt's ADPPA. Party newspapers on occasions linked the issue of the refugees' politics to the Woomera Rocket Range. *Tribune* claimed that some of the workers at the site were wearing Nazi uniforms and had boasted about serving in the German forces during the war.[180]

In August 1948 C.B. McCarthy, chief scientific officer of the Department of Works and Housing, agreed that a delegation of 20 union officials could visit the site.[181] However Senator Nick McKenna, the acting attorney-general, declined to comment on the possible impact of the ADPPA would have on the proposed visit.[182] When only six out of the 13 union officials nominated by the South Australian Building Trades Federation were given permission to visit the site, it cancelled the visit.[183] Bill Riordan, the acting minister for supply and development, explained they had been rejected because of their links to subversive organisations. Among those excluded was Don Thomson.[184] The *Guardian* pointed out that while trade union leaders were banned 'migrants who had fought for Hitler' were welcomed at the range.[185] The refusal of the federal government to allow trade union officials to visit the site was condemned by the national council of the FIA.[186] This propaganda had little impact and the construction work went ahead unhindered by the CPA opposition.

Unions campaign against East European migrants

Shortly after arriving in Adelaide in September 1951 Robert Vilks, a Latvian migrant, started work as a tram conductor for the Metropolitan Tramways Trust.[187] Within a short period of commencing work, Vilks was approached by a number of workers to join the anti-Catholic (anti-Grouper) Group in the union.[188] Some of those who approached him would have been CPA members or supporters as the party had been active in the union since the 1930s.[189] Vilks rejected the approach explaining that because of their experiences migrants rejected any politics that suggested socialism or Marxism.[190] In other workplace discussions Vilks and other migrants, when challenged about their wartime activities, would explain that they at first welcomed the Germans as liberators because they drove out the Russian forces while at the same time they rejected the Nazi Party and the Gestapo.[191]

In 1943 Vilks was forced to join the German Army before eventually fleeing westwards as the Russian Army advanced.[192] After some years in a transit camp Vilks joined the wave of Displaced Persons coming to Australia.

There were similar experiences with other East European migrants. In two short autobiographical books D. Chub, a Ukraine migrant, describes with considerable

accuracy the negative impact of the Soviet Union on the Ukraine the 1930s and also some of his experiences during World War II.[193] However, his wartime history ends with his quick release from a prisoner-of-war camp shortly after the German invasion of the Soviet Union. His silence on what happened afterwards suggests the possibility of collaboration with the German occupation forces. On his arrival in Australia Chub worked in the La Trobe Valley power industry where he would have encountered some communist union activists as the industry was a significant area of communist activity. His open hostility to the Soviet Union and his silence on his activities during the war would have provoked deep hostility from any communists he did encounter. Similarly, in 1944 'Josip' willingly enlisted in the Croatian army to fight against Tito's partisans. He was driven by his support for Croatian independence and a total rejection of a united Yugoslavia.[194] On his arrival in Fremantle in 1951 he encountered opposition from many of the pre-war migrants who were both supporters of a unified Yugoslavia and quite often, communist supporters.[195]

It was encounters such as these that did much to shape the attitudes of communist union activists towards the new arrivals. While these examples may not be fully typical of the range of the political views that migrants brought with them to this country they were common enough to convince the CPA that its characterisation of the Displaced Persons as all being fascists was correct. On his way to Australia in 1949 Michael Cigler, a Czech migrant and a committed anti-communist, discovered that some of the Baltic migrants had served in the German Secret Service during the war.[196] In 1950 Les Haylen, the ALP parliamentarian, claimed that 10% of the IRO refugees were or had been Nazis.[197] Even if this figure was an underestimation of the political outlook of the refugees it is clear that the majority were not committed fascists and that the CPA's campaign was misdirected.

The migrants were entering workplaces where it was not uncommon to find either communist activists or an entrenched communist-led union leadership. Once they started to move into the major cities they lived in working class suburbs where they would have witnessed the public campaigning of the local CPA branch. In 1953 the *Hlas Domova* printed a letter about an encounter between a Czech migrant and a communist newspaper seller in Melbourne. The migrant was offered a bundle of English language newspapers about life in Czechoslovakia and was then offered assistance if he wanted to take advantage of a recent amnesty declared by the Czech government.[198] The refusal of the majority of migrants to accept such offers would have only confirmed for communists their views that the East European migrants were unyielding anti-communists. Vladimir Petrov, the third secretary at the Soviet Embassy, later explained that the amnesty offers were made for propaganda reasons

and to reduce potential political opposition from Russian exiles.[199] Many exiles clearly understood this and it is hardly surprising that only a handful responded to the amnesty offers.

The harsh judgements that the CPA made about some of the Eastern European groups was occasionally shared by others. The 1945 British Trade Union Congress declared its opposition to Polish refugees working in the agricultural and mining industries.[200] At the time the influence of the CPGB within the trade union movement was less than that of the CPA on the Australian trade unions.[201] The decision was supported by the CPGB.[202] This indicates a common approach by the two communist parties on the issue and that appeals to chauvinism could, on occasions, gain wider support. At the 1957 Federal ALP Conference, Evatt criticised the increased numbers of non-British migrants and the federal ALP executive claimed that the majority of New Australians were anti-Labor and their organisations were ultra-rightist.[203] This generality can be explained in part, by Jean Martin's comment that there was 'an ethnic group which is so reactionary that it is damaging to the people belong to it'. It was reference mainly to the activities of the Croatians who were at the time carrying out an aggressive anti-Yugoslav campaign.[204]

The CPA's initial response to the arrival of the East European refugees was a case of history repeating itself. It had many of the features that characterised the CPA's attitudes towards the Japanese during World War II. The language used was often xenophobic and clearly undermined the internationalist ethos that had been a feature of the CPA for most of its existence.[205] The Greek communist activist, George Zangalis, also conceded that the CPA was not immune, as we have seen, to working-class fears that linked migration with unemployment.[206] This outlook resonated at times in sections of the Australian working class. In 1956, the Aboriginal newspaper the *Westralian Aborigine* claimed that the recent arrival of large numbers of migrants who were willing to work for less than award wages, meant that Aborigines were now unemployed. The paper went on to repeat an earlier call for a reduction in migrant numbers and for an improvement in the 'type' of migrants allowed to enter Australia.[207] The comments are a direct reflection of similar comments made by the CPA in its prolonged campaign against the arrival of the East European migrants.

Zangalis also pointed out that the CPA campaigned against discrimination and (genuinely) called for working-class unity.[208] Whilst the original purpose of the campaign against the East European migrants was derived from the presumed political outlook of the refugees, the terms used often appealed to the racist sentiments in the working class.[209] The racist term 'Balts' was widely used, and not just by the CPA to describe Displaced Persons. This was despite the fact that refugees from the Baltic states

constituted only a small proportion of the refugee intake.[210] The campaign distorted the political positions of many of the refugees who were mostly innocent victims of World War Two.[211] Many of the Croatian immigrants for example were closer to the social-democratic ideas of the ALP than they were to the reactionary Ustashi of their home country.[212] Despite leaving their homelands at least some of the refugees were sympathetic to the post-war governments that emerged in the late 1940s.[213] Sophie Maj left Poland in 1958 due to the growth of anti-Semitism but remained a supporter of some aspects of Marxism, was an active trade unionist after arriving in Australia, deeply suspicious of the right-wing nature of Western social-democratic parties and a lifelong opponent of Australian involvement in overseas wars.[214]

Communist-led unions were often at the forefront in the campaign against the introduction of East European migrants into the workplace. At the Bendigo Trades Hall Council meeting on 25 August 1948, Albert Richardson, the communist secretary, supported by George Bryenton from the AEU, called for the deportation of Baltic states migrants on the basis that they were pro-fascist and had attacked a communist-supported peace meeting at Wonthaggi.[215] Communist influence within the council is confirmed by its condemnation of the ALP Industrial Groups after an address by Bert Flanagan, state secretary of the FIA,[216] and a donation that was made to the Eureka Youth League, the communist-led youth organisation.[217]

The NAWU Darwin branch vowed to 'resist by every means possible any attempt to employ displaced persons in the mining industry'.[218] For the first time the union was actively supporting the struggle by Aboriginal workers for equality with their white counterparts.[219] *Maritime Worker*, the journal of the WWF, also joined the campaign against the arrival of the Eastern European migrants with a number of articles often couched in vitriolic and chauvinistic language attacking the 'fascist Balts'.[220] At the same time the journal could report the condemnation by Jack Hooke, a NSW Labor Council official, and by a general meeting of the Clothing Trades Union of anti-Semitic remarks by Henry Gullet, a Liberal MP.[221] The NAWU and the WWF were both communist-led and their support for the campaign against the East European migrants, indicates their willingness to accept CPA policy on the issue.

The first response of the AEU to the arrival of the East European migrants was for the national council to demand that 'no Balts [are] to be employed on work covered by engineering awards'.[222] While the union could claim that it was acting to maintain craft standards, the decision ignored the fact that East European migrants, unlike their British counterparts, could seldom produce convincing evidence of their training. However, within six months the ban was dropped when the national council instructed the Innisfail branch to admit Europeans to the union 'where found on a job'.[223] At the

Midland Railway Workshops in Western Australia in 1959, Jack Marks worked with two migrants from Italy and Yugoslavia to convince other migrants to resign from the anti-communist WAASRE and join the AEU.[224] However, some of the fears of the national council of the AEU about the political orientation of the East European migrants were confirmed when Polish workers in Hobart were organised to challenge communist delegates.[225]

The Miners' Federation and East European migrants

Despite their significant contribution in the defeat of fascism, the CPA regarded the veterans of General Anders Army as 'fascist collaborators' when they arrived in Australia. This echoed charges that the Soviet Union had made during the war. In April 1943, after the bodies of thousands of missing Polish army officers were found in mass graves at Katyn in western Russia, the London based Polish government-in exile called for an international inquiry in order to discover who was responsible for the massacre. The Soviet Union rejected the call and went on to accuse the exiled government of being pro-Nazi and that they were playing Berlin's game.[226] When it appeared likely that veterans of Anders' army would be allowed to emigrate to Australia the CPA accused them of attacking union offices, intimidating trade unionists and carrying out acts of terrorism in Italy where many veterans of them were then resided.[227] As they started to arrive in 1947 they faced a fresh barrage of criticisms from communist union activists. In *Tribune* the communist union journalist, Rupert Lockwood, repeated many of the old Soviet claims.[228] Lockwood also claimed that the 1944 Warsaw uprising by the Polish underground army had been staged with the agreement of the German occupation forces.[229] This repeated Stalin's view that the uprising was a 'criminal act of anti-Soviet policy'.[230]

In a series of articles *Common Cause*, the Miners' Federation newspaper, edited by Edgar Ross, also condemned their arrival. The paper claimed that they were receiving preferential treatment over British ex-servicemen, were a potential threat to miners' conditions and that any Pole leaving Poland was either a fascist or a fascist sympathiser.[231] In 1948 the union's national convention unanimously adopted a resolution that declared its opposition to the entry of 'any national group of workers known to have an outlook and training foreign to the democratic ideals of the Australian working-class movement'[232] The paper reported the concerns of several delegates that the introduction of ex-members of General Anders' army into the mines and who were living in segregated barracks was against the interests of the Federation.[233] In May 1949, the Federation restated its position that no overseas migrant would enter the industry until there was an extensive discussion with the union and that firm

guarantees are given about maintenance of working conditions.[234]

The proposed ban on Displaced Persons drew a strong wave of protest from opponents of the Miners' Federation leadership. *News Weekly* claimed that the union was carrying out Stalin's vengeance and included a point-by-point rebuttal by Arthur Calwell of the Federation's claims about the Poles being fascists, about receiving preferential treatment and about the housing arrangements of the migrant workers. Interestingly, the paper also drew attention to the CPA's campaign to end the White Australia Policy with the claim that it wanted to give preference to immigration from Asia.[235] For the union, these and other similar attacks only confirmed that the entry of 'Balt' and Polish workers constituted a direct threat to the future of the Federation. It denied charges that the union was xenophobic with the claim that the mining industry's workforce was the most 'international' of any industry in Australia.[236] It repeated claims that members of the Anders army were fascists and that there had already been conflicts where these migrant workers had attempted to undermine Australian working class traditions.[237] In January 1950 the paper linked the appearance of anti-Semitic fascist leaflets with the arrival of the East European migrants.[238]

The campaign against the arrival of Displaced Persons continued and was extended to include other nationalities. Again, the CPA's opposition to the arrival of these migrants was based on their presumed political outlook. In March 1950 an editorial attacked the intention of the Immigration Minister Harold Holt to extend the immigration program to Dutch servicemen from newly independent Indonesia.[239] The first Dutch from Indonesia had left Indonesia in 1947 and continued to arrive in Australia until 1956.[240] Since many communist-led unions had given active support to Indonesian independence, the arrival in Australia of some of those who had tried to suppress Indonesian independence would have confirmed for the CPA the reactionary nature of the mass immigration program.[241] The same also editorial claimed that among the 'hundreds of thousands' of 'Balts' there were large numbers of 'ardent fascists'.[242] The editorial's claims were part of a campaign that often used exaggerated claims about the number of Displaced Persons arriving in Australia and on the political outlook of the majority of the Displaced Persons. By 1951 when the program ended about 180,000 refugees from Eastern Europe had arrived in Australia.[243] Ross's claims were clearly designed to appeal to working class fears that the arrival of large numbers of migrants posed a real threat to their living conditions. However, the union's campaign received a boost when an editorial in *Common Cause* was able to draw on the comments of Professor Julius Stone warning about the possible adverse affects of the mass immigration program.[244]

The long and sustained campaign against the introduction of Displaced Persons

achieved most of its aims. The Chifley government abandoned all attempts to introduce Displaced Persons into the black coal mines of NSW.[245] This was despite Calwell saying in June 1949 that he hoped to enter discussions with the Miners' Federation about the employment of the migrants as a means of easing the acute coal shortage.[246] Quite clearly, in the face of a looming coal strike, the government was not prepared to confront the union on any issue that may have gained the Miners' Federation considerable support from the wider labour movement. As late as March 1950 *Common Cause* was able to claim that there were no Displaced Persons working in the industry.[247] However, this claim did not reflect the real situation. Calwell had endorsed an agreement that saw migrants confined to surface jobs, the lowest paid jobs in the industry.[248] At the time there was a severe shortage of labour with the NSW coalfields in mid-1948 being short of twelve hundred underground miners, and faced a constant drift of miners away from the industry to jobs with better working conditions.[249] The success of the Miners' Federation in preventing the employment of significant numbers of East Europeans in the industry against a background of labour shortages bears witness to its determination to pursue the issue despite its adverse impact on workers in the industry.

The Miners' Federation claim, along with other communist-led unions, that the anti-Communism of the Displaced Persons made them inherently anti-union became difficult to sustain. Yet, it was a view that was shared by other non-communist unions. Charlie Oliver, the NSW branch secretary of the AWU believed that many migrants, such as those working on the Snowy Mountain scheme only joined the union because they were required to and were not particularly good unionists.[250] Thus, the CPA position on the East European migrants opened up the possibility of establishing common ground with one of Australia's most conservative unions. The inherent danger of such a position became clear in 1950 when the AWU annual convention opposed a federal government plan to bring 40,000 British migrants to Australia, thus repeating the experiences of the 1920s. The CPA's objection to the arrival of East European migrants was based on political grounds, and not chauvinism, but it reinforced traditional Australian trade union objections to all migrants.

After a difficult period of adjustment to their new country, migrants showed that were prepared, on occasions, to adopt the strike weapon to pursue their economic claims. Against the general tide of anti-Displaced Persons articles, *Tribune* reported on a strike by 'Balt' workers at Glebe Island and cited it as an example for all migrants to follow.[251] The first significant strike that involved large numbers of migrant workers including many East European migrants occurred in August 1964. For six months a united workforce confronted the Queensland government and the owners of Mount

Isa Mines in an ultimately unsuccessful six-months dispute over contract rates.[252] It was the precursor to a wave of migrant involvement in strikes that was to transform the trade union movement from the 1960s onwards.

The ARU and East European migrants

The Victorian ARU endorsed the ACTU support for the mass migration program provided that all migrants would be guaranteed employment and adequate housing.[253] However, when the East European refugees started to enter the Victorian Railways they received a hostile reception from J. J. Brown, the state secretary of the ARU, who shared the CPA's outlook that they had fled from the task of building the new communist societies.[254] This hostility only deepened when they started to play an active role in the union supporting the Grouper opposition to the union leadership.[255] At the time many conservative trade union leaders saw the arrival of the Displaced Persons as adding new forces in the struggle to remove communist union officials.[256] Some of these tensions started to ease after the 1955 ALP split, when refugee migrants in many unions, including the ARU, felt they had been manipulated by the Grouper forces.[257]

Unlike the situation where non-British migrants had to wait five years to gain citizenship and the vote, once migrants joined the union they had an immediate vote and could start to have an impact if they chose.[258] The percentage of migrant workers in the railway workforce started to increase rapidly as the mass immigration program proceeded. By 1956 one in five Victorian railway workers came from a non-British background.[259] In NSW in April 1950 there were around 4000 migrant workers out of a total workforce of 60,000.[260] In 1951, Perth's Midland Railway Workshop management attempted to recruit 355 migrant workers but were generally unsuccessful and the workforce remained predominately of Australian background.[261]

In Victoria the increasing numbers of migrants from countries such as Italy and Greece, who were often left-wing in outlook and consequently supported the union leadership, tended to counter the right-wing attitudes of the East European migrants.[262] However, this did not prevent an often vocal and vehement opposition to the presence of East European migrants. In December 1947 at its monthly meeting the Wireless, Signals & Telegraph division repeated calls that had been made by other communist-led unions that the 'Baltic' migrants be investigated from a 'workers' point of view'.[263] The *Gazette* reported the claims of Mr Stern, the former head of the Jewish Repatriation and Rehabilitation Department in Frankfort-on-Main, that there was overwhelming evidence that the 'Balts' had worked for the Germans and had also betrayed Jewish people to the Germans.[264] Alf Leno, a communist ARU organiser, reported that, while

some alien members of the union were being harassed and threatened with deportation, the federal government was allowing some 'very doubtful types' into the country.[265] The state branch executive also endorsed a motion from the Rolling Stock Division calling on the officers of the Australian Council to lodge a protest against the proposed deportations.[266] Once again CPA union activists had demonstrated their contradictory attitudes towards migrants. They were prepared to actively support those migrants they considered politically reliable, but to oppose those whose political outlook differed markedly from theirs.

A clear indication of the communist activists attitude towards the Displaced Persons came on March 23, 1948 when the state branch executive congratulated the Czech workers for the destruction of capitalist power.[267] The communist takeover in Czechoslovakia was one of the turning points in the unfolding Cold War and it saw a considerable erosion of support for the Soviet Union in the West.[268] The motion can be seen as a clear indication of support for the new regimes of Eastern Europe and a rejection of all those who did not share their views. In March 1949 the ARU declared that it would welcome 'good sons of the English working class in preference to pro-fascist displaced persons who are being brought to this country'.[269]

A few months later Brown supported a call for the ending of all 'Balt' migration and a demand that no further 'Balts' be employed by the Railways Department.[270] The campaign continued. Brown claimed in December 1949 for example, that Displaced Persons were receiving better treatment than other workers.[271] Despite these pressures the Department continued to hire refugee migrants. The union changed its tactics and opened negotiations with the Department to establish the conditions under which refugee migrants could enter the industry. When agreement was reached in January 1950, it included provisions for the removal from the workplace of any Displaced Person who upset any other worker and that no union member be forced to share sleeping accommodation with a Displaced Person at worksites if they had reasonable grounds for doing so.[272] Under any circumstances the agreement was a display of blatant chauvinism and clearly shows the deep-seated hostility of the union leadership to the arrival of the East European migrants. There was no suggestion that the agreement be extended to cover other migrant groups, such as the British who were arriving at the same time. The agreement also required migrants to join the union within a month of starting work.[273] However, the agreement clearly established two classes of membership — one in which one member could decline to work/share accommodation with another worker simply on the basis of their ethnic origin. It thus established two classes of membership.

The FIA and East European migrants

The *Maritime Worker* reported the FIA national council's call for all Displaced Persons arriving in Australia to have 'clean union and anti-fascist records'.[274] It was the same demand that other communist-led unions had made and indicates the determination of the CPA to implement an anti-Displaced Persons policy wherever possible. The leadership of the FIA was dominated by the CPA with all but two officials being members of the CPA. This gave the CPA its biggest opportunity to carry out its aim of limiting the entry of the new migrants into the steelworks.[275] This situation continued until the end of 1952 by which time every CPA union official had been removed from office.[276]

At its national conference in 1947 the FIA had given support to the mass immigration program as long as the living standards of Australian workers were maintained.[277] However, in common with other communist-led unions such as the Miners' Federation and the Victorian ARU, once the Chifley government proposed to introduce Displaced Persons into the steelworks it met mounting opposition from the union. In a letter to Arthur Calwell, Thornton outlined what the union policy was in regard to the entry of the Displaced Persons into the steelworks. These included that migrants were not to be housed in hostels, they integrate into the Australian community and that must have anti-fascist and pro-union views.[278] After an alleged assault by seven East European migrants on a former prisoner-of-war, Bert Flanagan at the Yallourn Power Station called for the removal of all 'Balts' from the workplace. Flanagan also claimed that their arrogant behaviour at local dances was provoking brawls and that British-born workers were planning to 'clean up' the 'Balts' if they remained in the area.[279]

The CPA campaign against the arrival of Displaced Persons carried the danger of triggering a virulent chauvinistic campaign that went beyond the ranks of the CPA. This became increasingly clear as the migrants started to enter the workforce. In February 1948 a meeting of North Queensland canecutters called on the federal government to cease allocating migrant workers to the industry as there was already an oversupply of labour and wages and conditions would be threatened.[280] A few months later it was claimed that the vast majority of migrants were pro-fascist and were being used to undermine long-standing conditions.[281] In February 1950, a meeting of 80 workers at Metal Manufactures in Port Kembla voted unanimously against the Menzies government's immigration policy.[282]

While there is need for some caution in accepting such reports, six months earlier there had been an intense debate in the FIA over an agreement reached between the union leadership and Arthur Calwell. In June 1949 the BHP FIA sub-branch rejected

the agreement citing the lack of housing for workers' families and went on to demand that BHP improve wages and working conditions as a means of overcoming the labour shortage.[283] Two additional meetings of Newcastle FIA members endorsed similar motions.[284] Within the Newcastle FIA branch CPA supporters were a minority and it is clear that the CPA anti-Displaced Persons campaign had appealed to the latent racism of Australian workers.

Under pressure from Calwell, BHP agreed to make further concessions in order to weaken the opposition to the entry of Displaced Person into the steelworks. These included Displaced Persons being employed in the least attractive jobs, compulsory union membership being enforced, barring promotion to non-naturalised migrants and to establishing a tripartite committee to discuss any issues associated with the introduction of migrant labour.[285] It replicated many of the features of the Victorian ARU agreement that confined Displaced Persons to jobs that Australian workers had rejected and then placed barriers to their future advancement. In November 1950 the union broke off discussions with the federal government over the entry of migrant workers into the metal industry claiming that it was not honouring the agreement. It stated that in future individual workshops would regulate how and when migrants would enter their workplaces.[286] Already in Victoria some workplaces insisted that no new migrants be hired until all existing workers could speak English.[287]

The hostility of the FIA towards the entry of the East Europeans into the workplace was based on its realisation that they would join with the existing anti-communist forces in the struggle to remove all communists from their union positions. The revolt against the almost total CPA domination of the union commenced in 1944 and was well under way before the new migrants started to enter the steel industry.[288] In the end the new migrants were an important, but not decisive factor, in the defeat of the communist leadership. However, as their weight increased in the union they became an integral part of the support base of the new anti-communist union leadership.[289] Between 1947 and 1953 almost 10,000 Lithuanian refugees arrived in Australia; with the peak year being 1949 when 5,972 arrived.[290] Four hundred of these migrants were sent to work in the Port Kembla and Newcastle steelworks where there was a severe labour shortage. Some BHP workers claimed that senior staff were saying to them, 'wait until the Balts come here, we will fix you', which can only be understood as a reference to their anti-communist outlook.[291] In common with other refugees, they were threatened with deportation if they failed to honour their two-year work contracts.[292]

The new anti-communist leadership under Laurie Short saw the East European migrants as potential allies in the fight against Communism and encouraged them to

participate in the union.[293] In the 1951 union elections the anti-communist candidates issued campaign material in German in a successful attempt to win the support of migrant workers.[294] However, a number of the migrants were not only anti-communist but they were also anti-union. For example, out of the 774 migrants employed at the Newcastle steelworks were 221 non-union and 301 were unfinancial.[295] Such an outlook would have alienated the East European migrants not only from the communist union activists, but the majority of other Australian workers who were supportive of trade unions.

In 1959 attempts by mainly East European migrants to establish the New Citizens' Council to represent migrant workers was rejected by the NSW Railways Department. The organisation was banned by the NSW Labour Council and condemned by the FIA.[296] At the time, both the Labour Council and the FIA were under the control of conservative union leaders. On this issue there was common ground between the CPA and its union opponents. The union movement as a whole was completely opposed to any attempts by migrants to organise outside the existing union structures. After gaining registration as a trade union in NSW the organisation collapsed after five months almost certainly due to the opposition from a unified union movement.[297] If migrants wanted representation they had to achieve it by conducting their campaigns within existing unions.

Communists rethink the anti-East European migrant campaign

A number of communist union activists later acknowledged that the campaign against the East European migrants was misdirected. An early challenge to the blanket condemnation to the presence East European migrants in the workplace came in the Victorian Painters' Union in early 1950 when Don Thomson, the federal secretary, attempted to modify the harsh approach. His attempt was rejected at a special general meeting where the opposition was led by other communist activists in the union. The union maintained its hardline stance through the early 1950s.[298] Don Thomson's action was part of a pattern which saw the Victorian state executive, led by Ted Hill, organise a sustained campaign to drive him out of the party by 1951.[299] Ken Mooney recalled his father, Mal, a BWIU country organiser, being instructed by the CPA hierarchy in the early 1950s not to recruit any more migrants, a demand he refused to act on.[300] Jack Mundey's role as a union delegate in the SMWU and his active support for the peace movement, led him to reject his Catholicism and ALP roots and join the CPA in 1955.[301] At one stage working in a factory alongside East European migrants, he came to understand that the CPA claim they were all 'fascists' was wrong, as some of them had suffered badly without justification under the regimes that had been

imposed by the Soviet Union at the end of the war.[302]

Similarly, in 1950 Audrey Blake was conducting a factory-gate meeting outside Radio Manco, a Richmond factory where many migrants worked. When challenged by an angry crowd about her claim that only fascist collaborators were imprisoned, Blake simply denied reality. It was not until more than a decade later that Blake conceded that one of her most persistent questioners, a woman who had spent three years in a Stalinist camp, was correct in her denials of being a fascist collaborator.[303] In the Midlands railway workshops John Gandini, a communist activist in the Electrical Trades Union, agreed with the characterisation of the Eastern European migrants as 'people who have escaped justice at the hands of the socialist countries'. Despite this hostility towards East European migrants, Gandini convinced Western Australian communists to support the campaign against the hanging of Karol Tapci, a Czech migrant.[304] It was not until he left the CPA that he was prepared to concede that many of the migrants had legitimate grounds to complain at their treatment by Soviet authorities.[305]

When Geoff McDonald joined the Eureka Youth League in August 1948 he attended a series of lectures on why the East European 'fascists' should never be allowed into Australia.[306] At the time, McDonald was working as a carpenter helping to build temporary hostels at Williamstown for the expected arrival of the refugees.[307] When they arrived on a bus McDonald stood and watched a group of people who were 'clearly workers like ourselves'. When McDonald tried to raise the issue with a party functionary his views were ignored.[308] From 1948 onwards almost every building site in Melbourne employed a number of East European refugees. As a BWIU organiser from 1950 onwards, McDonald witnessed their hostile reaction when delegations who had been to Eastern Europe presented favourable reports about conditions there at workplace meetings.[309] McDonald was on a political trajectory that was to take him out of the CPA and into the ranks of anti-communist trade union officialdom.

Barrie Blears, an EYL member in 1953, later conceded that the anti-migrant campaign had the inherent danger of being misunderstood as anti-migrant, thus perpetuating the long historically labour movement tradition of hostility towards migrants.[310] As a result of his experiences during the Depression and his admiration of the resistance of the Soviet Army to the German invasion, Arthur Pauly joined the CPA in South Australia in 1942.[311] As an activist in the AWU just after the war he rejected the offer from Clyde Cameron of a union job and later, a seat in Parliament if he resigned from the CPA.[312] After he started work in a boiler shop and became a shop steward in the FIA he recruited East European migrants to the union.

Despite the contrast in political outlook between the communist leadership of the

union and its new members, the union addressed the problems faced by the migrants, and was able over time to win significant improvements in their conditions.[313] Many of the Polish migrants explained that, as a result of their experiences with the Soviet Union they were anti-Stalin, not anti-Russian. This attitude had a strong historical basis. For example, during the Stalinist terror of the 1930s, 144,000 Poles in the Soviet Union had been arrested, and of these 111,000 had been executed.[314] These murders virtually wiped out the Polish Communist Party.[315] Those who survived the experience became committed anti- Stalinists. However, in common with other communist union activists it was not until years afterwards, that Pauly finally understood that what the Polish migrants had said about their experiences was correct.[316]

Yugoslav migrants and the CPA

In 1947 *Tribune* reported that between 50 and 60 Yugoslavs had returned home to assist in the construction of the new socialist society. Their return was also prompted by a growing 'hate aliens' campaign being driven by politicians and newspapers.[317] The following January *Tribune* reported that Australia had lost 800 of its finest migrant citizens who were returning home to Yugoslavia to help rebuild its shattered economy. The article included many of the returning migrants' favourable comments about the Tito leadership and their rejection of Cold War propaganda about an alleged dictatorship that was supposed to exist in Yugoslavia. Also included in the group were about 100 young people going to work on the Youth Railway project.[318] One Australian who had worked on the railway in 1947 was Chas Bresland, the Western Australian president of the EYL. He had raised the necessary money through his strong links to the Yugoslav community.[319] Also of assistance would have been Paddy Troy, secretary of the CDRHWU, who had his own links to the Yugoslav community and was also a strong supporter of the EYL.[320] The Yugoslav community both in Western Australia and in Melbourne had supported other communist-led campaigns including raising substantial funds to send the Graeme Bell Jazz Band to the 1947 Youth Festival in Prague.[321]

For the CPA, East European migrants who returned to their various homelands could be contrasted with those migrants who had consciously abandoned the task of building the new socialist societies that were starting to emerge in Eastern Europe. On occasions the CPA would publicise the stories of migrants who had chosen to reject life in capitalist Australia and return home.[322] In 1954 the Soviet-backed regimes of Eastern Europe offered an amnesty to the refugees and called on them to return home to help build socialism in their home countries. The campaign relied on statements from those who had already returned about their harrowing experiences in the capitalist

countries and how much better life was now they had returned home.[323]

Yet few migrants responded to the call to return to their homelands. Out of the more than 12,000 Czech migrants in Australia only 43 accepted the invitation to return.[324] This almost total rejection of the amnesty would have confirmed the CPA's view that the migrants were incorrigible anti-communists. Among those to return were the Russian émigré parents of Boris Frankel who had been working-class communist activists between 1937 and 1956. When the family arrived in the Soviet Union it was not the socialist utopia of their dreams and within four years had returned to Australia. Despite this experience they remained opponents of conservatism, but critical of the CPA for its failure to understand the nature of Stalinism.[325] Their experience was mirrored by many of the Yugoslav migrants who also quickly returned to Australia disillusioned at what they found in Yugoslavia.[326] Their disillusionment with not just Tito's communism but communism in general, would have opened up a deep divide between them and the CPA.

In June 1948, after differences between the Tito regime and the Soviet Union intensified, Yugoslavia was expelled from the Cominform.[327] It was the first of the postwar splits in the international communist movement, a harbinger of the split between China and the Soviet Union in the 1960s. Its impact was quickly felt in Australia where the CPA leadership adopted the Soviet position. In comments to the July 1950 Central Committee meeting Dixon argued that the Tito government had become a 'war base of American imperialism' and was now 'a grave menace to the peace of the world'.[328] At the time the peace movement was a priority for the CPA and Dixon's comments are an indication of the extent to which the CPA was prepared to tailor its policies in accordance with those of the Soviet Union.[329] Dixon went on to demand that the CPA 'destroy every nest of Titoism, expose every Tito spy' and that a failure to do this would 'weaken the fight for peace'.[330] In October 1949, at a meeting of the Permanent Committee of the Partisans For Peace, Yugoslavia was expelled from the organisation after Alexander Fadeyev, the leader of the Soviet delegation, claimed that 'Tito and all his clique are hirelings in the hands of the warmongers'.[331] It was a clear signal that the Soviet leadership expected other communist parties to follow its leadership.

In July 1948 the political committee endorsed the Cominform expulsion of Yugoslavia and condemned the opportunist errors of the Yugoslav leadership.[332] It was not until years later that some CPA leaders conceded that the Soviet charges against the Yugoslav leadership were baseless.[333] The dispute had a particular resonance in Australia due to the relatively high numbers of pre-war Yugoslav migrants and the often close contacts between them and the CPA. As tensions in the international

communist movement escalated, many European communist parties expelled members who were considered to be Tito supporters.[334] In Australia, the previous close connection between communists and the Yugoslav community started to break down as communist activists sought to take their distance from their previous support of the Yugoslav regime. In June 1950, members of the EYL returned the medals they had been awarded for their help in the construction of the Youth Railway project in Yugoslavia in 1948.[335] The construction of the railway was part of an international campaign of solidarity with Yugoslavia which saw volunteers from many countries, including hundreds of young Britains work on the project.[336] The return of the medals was a clear sign of the enmity that Communists were now expected to show to their former comrades.

The campaign against German migrants

The campaign against the East European migrants helped to establish the precedent for a similar campaign against the arrival of German refugees from 1952 onwards. However, the campaign was one of rhetoric, which meant it was often based on public meetings and distribution of anti-German migration propaganda, and not union action aimed at preventing their entry into the workplace.[337] The election of the Menzies government, which was determined to suppress the CPA, also made it more difficult for communist-led unions to pursue political issues as they had under the previous Labor government. Moreover, the numbers of German migrants involved was considerably fewer than those from Eastern Europe. Between 1952 and 1957 37,071 German migrants arrived in Australia.[338] The government assured ex-servicemen's organisations that German migrants would be carefully screened to exclude former Nazis, which helped to eliminate a major source of potential opposition to its policy.[339] This became clear when the federal executive of the Returned Soldiers' League (RSL) overruled a decision of the 1950 NSW State RSL Congress to oppose the government's plans.[340] In 1953, as German migrants started to arrive, 65%t of those polled were in favour of German migration, a rate considerably higher than the support for other migrants.[341] The campaign was also undermined when the Jewish Returned Servicemen opposed any attempt to prevent the entry of German migrants.[342] Some of these veterans would have been former members the Anders army, which helps to explain the CPA's repeated false claims that they were pro-fascist.

The main vehicle through which the CPA pursued the anti-German migrant campaign was the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism (JCCFAS). The Council had been established in May 1942 to contribute to Australia's war effort and to oppose any expression of anti-Semitism in the Australian community.[343] It was

established as a broad-left wing organisation whose wide support continued into the immediate postwar period.[344] Such support was largely based on the role the Soviet Union had played in the defeat of German fascism, but it started to erode rapidly as the Cold War atmosphere intensified. The process was assisted by the arrival of large numbers of Polish Jewish refugees, supporters of the Polish Bund, a social-democratic organisation, who as virulent anti-communists worked actively to destroy the CPA's influence in the Jewish community.[345] Their actions would have fuelled the already deep seated hostility of the CPA to their arrival.

At the end of the war 11 million ethnic Germans were expelled from centuries old colonies in Eastern Europe. It included five million Germans from the Polish-occupied areas and three million Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia.[346] The expulsions rook place despite an agreement at the Potsdam Conference that any removal of the long-established German populations be carried out 'in an orderly and humane manner' — which was ignored by the Soviet-imposed regimes in Eastern Europe.[347] The expulsion was a savage response to the widespread support that many German communities in Eastern Europe had given to reunification with Germany in the 1930s. It was also the direct product of the new Oder-Neisse frontier for Poland which had the support of the Allied powers.[348] It was from this large pool of ethnic Germans that Australia recruited many of its migrants. In 1950 the Menzies government announced its intention of allowing 20,000 Germans to migrate to Australia.[349] The Menzies government was responding to pressure from the United States to accept significant numbers of German and Italian migrants as a way of reducing unemployment in these countries, which could have led to increased support for communist parties.[350] Again, it is possible to place Australia's mass immigration policy in the context of Australian support for the Western alliance against the Soviet Union.

The CPA viewed the German migrants as unrepentant fascists, particularly those who had fought in the German Army during the war. The reality was somewhat different from these claims. The anti-communist Isi Leibler acknowledges that the majority of war criminals and former Nazis who were able to emigrate to Australia were not German, but were from Eastern Europe.[351] Helen Rubinstein, the historian of the Victorian Jewish community, also rejects the view that the majority of German migrants were anti-Semitic.[352] The CPA's blanket condemnation of the German migrants as fascists ignored many aspects of German history. In the November 1932 election, the last before Hitler assumed total power and crushed all opposition, the combined vote of the Social Democrats and the Communist Party was greater than that of the National Socialists.[353] Since communists were excluded from migrating to Australia, it is almost certain that at least some of Australia's postwar migrants came

from former Social Democrat voters and were therefore, anti-fascist.

Some Germans later came to regret their support for Hitler. As a young boy growing up in a small German town in the 1920s and 1930s, Rick Holz joined the Hitler Youth aged ten and saw Hitler as the saviour of the German people. Holz willingly joined the German Army aged 17 in 1941 to help defeat those whom he believed threatened Germany's existence. However, his experiences in the war destroyed his faith in Hitler and Nazism and at the end of the war he committed to live the rest of his life without hatred and prejudice.[354] In the prisoner-of-war camps Holz conceded that there were many Germans who were willing to fight another war.[355] Holz was to emigrate to Australia in the 1950s.[356] Similarly, as a young teenager, Fred Frese survived the Allied bombing of Hamburg. After his arrival in Australia in the 1950s, he eventually became an active member of the Seamen's Union after coming into contact with many of the communists who were active in the union.[357] His acceptance shows that many communist union activists were not necessarily bound by the CPA's rigid definition of German migrants as pro-fascist. However, such characterisations would have created many barriers to the CPA reaching large numbers of German migrants.

During his visit to Europe in 1947 Calwell rejected an approach from the French government to include German refugees as part of the mass immigration program. At a time when public support for the policy was uncertain, the Labor government was not willing to risk the success of the policy by including former enemy aliens.[358] However, there was support for German migration. As early as 1948 H.H. Gullett, a Liberal MP, called for the mass immigration program to include Germans and Austrians.[359] Gullet had a history of anti-Semitic views and his call would have helped convince the CPA that its assessment of the German migrants was correct.[360] In February 1949 General Callaghan, the head of the Australian military mission in Berlin, also called for German migration to Australia.[361] After the defeat of the Chifley government, the new Prime Minister Robert Menzies and Harold Holt, the minister of immigration, spoke strongly in favour of German migration.[362] Not surprisingly Holt denounced the anti-German migration campaign as communist inspired.[363]

Despite Holt's assurances that there would be screening of German migrants to exclude former members of the Nazi Party, there was considerable doubt about the effectiveness of the process.[364] However, a challenge by *Guardian* for him to deny that the Menzies government intended to use German migrants as a potential military force appears not to have been answered.[365] During the 1930s Dr Johannes Becker established branches of the Nazi Party in the Barossa Valley and Adelaide, areas where many ethnic Germans lived. At the end of the war the Chifley government deported back to Germany many of those who had been interned during the war.[366]

While the numbers involved were only a small proportion of the ethnic German population, the situation allowed opponents of German migration to argue that, just as they had been in Eastern Europe, ethnic Germans were an inherent threat to national unity.[367] It was for this reason that during the May 1951 federal election Calwell pledged that a Labor government would not permit any large-scale German migration.[368] Opponents of German migration also argued that since the majority of proposed migrants had grown up during fascism, the relentless indoctrination they had received had permanently turned them into virulent enemies of democracy.[369]

In Victoria, the campaign committee produced a 100,000 pamphlets explaining why German immigration should be opposed. One of the ways in which they were distributed was through the trade union movement.[370] In November 1950, 3000 people attended a protest meeting against the proposed the Menzies government's policy.[371] One of the keynote speakers was the Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett.[372] As well as opposition to German migration, Burchett shared several other political positions with the CPA. In particular, Burchett wrote articles in support of the new regimes in Eastern Europe and later was to support the jailing of the Hungarian, Cardinal Mindszenty, who was a vocal critic of communism.[373] His articles would have provided invaluable propaganda for the CPA and its attempts to convince East European migrants to return to their homelands. Burchett also had direct links to communist-led unions through his brother, Clive, who was both a CPA member and an activist in the BWIU.[374] Burchett had returned to Australia in September 1950 after receiving an invitation from the APC and the DRC, to speak on peace-related issues and the threats to civil liberties by the Cold War hysteria that was rapidly escalating. Over the next four months he addressed many meetings, including many outside factory-gates.[375] Given his prominent role in the Melbourne public meeting opposing German migration, it is certain that Burchett would have raised the issue at many of these meetings and sought support for the campaign.

At the Sydney anti-German migration meeting on February 26, 1951 Margaret Kent- Hughes, an activist in the NSW Teachers' Federation, was one of the speakers.[376] She remarked that the smearing of the meeting as a communist front was similar to the events she had witnessed in Germany when she had worked there in 1936-37.[377] Her comments certainly indicate sympathy or support for the CPA and its polices. At the time the Teachers' Federation leadership had a strong communist presence, with Sam Lewis being elected president at the head of a communist-aligned ticket in 1945.[378] However, the majority of the union membership started to voice their opposition to Lewis and the union's active support for political issues that had no direct connection with teachers' conditions.[379] This was to lead to the defeat of Lewis, but not all of his

supporters, in the Federation's 1952 elections.[380] While the active support of the Federation leadership support for the 'No' case in the 1951 referendum to ban the CPA was the prime factor in the Lewis defeat, the Federation's de facto involvement in the anti-German migration campaign would have formed part of the background.[381]

An important feature of the anti-German migration campaign was its endorsement by leading ALP activists. Around the country ALP politicians either spoke at public meetings in opposition to the Menzies government's plans or otherwise indicated their opposition. Their involvement broadened the appeal of the campaign beyond the ranks of the CPA and the Jewish community. Kim Beasley, the MP for Fremantle, spoke at the meeting of 1800 in Perth in January 1951.[382] At the Sydney meeting of 6000 at the Sydney Town Hall, Dr. H.V. Evatt was one of the key speakers.[383] Evatt would later claim that German migrants would establish 'anti-democratic and subversive colonies' as well as introduce the ideas of 'racial superiority'.[384] Evatt's views were consistent with the chauvinistic views he had expressed in the 1920s when he spoke out against Southern European migrants.[385] His comments showed the inherent danger that the CPA campaign against both German and East European migration could exacerbate working class racist sentiments, which was not their intention.

The presence of leading ALP figures at the public meetings limited the ability of leading CPA union activists to take a leading role in the campaign. The period was marked by the intense battles between the CPA and the ALP-sponsored Industrial Groups for leadership positions in the trade unions. This made it very difficult for ALP leaders and major CPA union officials to speak from the same platform, despite the apparent common ground. The battle between the two parties was often intense and bitter that often went beyond the initial battleground of the trade unions. For example, Paddy Troy, the communist secretary of the CDRHWU, constantly attempted to use his influence in Fremantle's trade unions to defeat Kim Beazley in pre-selection ballots.[386] Under these circumstances the two political opponents could not speak from a shared platform.

However, there were signs that some of the enmity between the two organisations was starting to fade. In his role as the legal representative of communist-led unions in the legal challenge to the Menzies Act to ban the CPA, Evatt was in frequent contact with many communist union officials, including Jim Healy from the WWF and Jack McPhillips from the FIA.[387] At the same time it can be presumed that Evatt was also often in contact with Ted Hill, the Victorian state secretary of the CPA, as well as being a leading barrister. It is seems highly plausible that at some of their meetings broader political questions, such as the campaign against German migration, may have been discussed. Within the ALP there was also the first sign of concern at the growing

strength of the Industrial Groups, particularly those based in Victoria, and their possible political intentions.[388] The divisions in the ALP were increased when Evatt took a leading role in arguing the 'No' case in the September 1951 referendum to ban the CPA.[389] The party was also slowly starting to change its position of unrelenting hostility towards the ALP. It noted that the apparent unity between the ALP and CPA in opposition to German migration could be the start of 'a united movement that can rapidly oust the Menzies government from office'.[390] Thus, the campaign against German migration was one of the issues that was to take the CPA back towards the mainstream, and cooperation with sections of the ALP.

Despite the presence of many ALP politicians at the public meetings called to oppose German migration, the leading role of the JCCFAS ensured that the anti-German migration campaign had limited appeal. For many non-communist Jews the close connection between the CPA and the JCCFAS meant whatever chance the campaign had of succeeding was now non-existent.[391] The Liberal government was determined to implement its policy and reacted harshly to criticisms and placed the Jewish community under enormous pressure to end the campaign.[392] Under this pressure the majority of Jewish activists and organisations withdrew their support from the campaign.[393] When the JCCFAS persisted with the campaign and refused to cancel a protest meeting against the visit of the German pianist Waller Gieseking, it was expelled from the Jewish Board of Deputies, the umbrella organisation of the Jewish community.[394] The Victorian ALP, then firmly under the control of Grouper-aligned supporters, proscribed the Council for its role in the anti-German migration campaign.[395] These twin steps, as well as the prevailing Cold War tensions, effectively isolated the Council until there was a limited revival in the late 1950s.[396]

Itzhak Gust, one of the leading communist supporters in the JCCFAS, later drew similar conclusions to those drawn by some communist union activists about the campaign against the East European migrants. Gust emphasised that the campaign against German migration was sectarian and marked by a determination by the communist activists involved to impose their political outlook no matter what the consequences.[397] It also failed to take into account the international political aspects including the ties between Israel and West Germany and the impact this had on the local Jewish community who were now unwilling to disagree with this policy.[398] The campaign also occurred at the height of the Cold War and this effectively destroyed the potential of the campaign to succeed. In the end the economic recession of 1952 sharply reduced the number of planned German migrants and consequently the opposition to German migration ebbed away.[399]

Conclusion

The CPA expressed strident and prolonged opposition to the arrival of East European and German refugees/migrants in the first phase of Australia's mass immigration program. Across Australia many communist-led unions attempted to prevent the entry of the East European migrants into the workplace. When they could not achieve this, they signed agreements with employers that attempted to confine them to jobs with the lowest pay and worst conditions. The campaign against the German migrants was less strident but had many similar features.

From its inception the CPA broke openly and decisively with the racism that dominated the Australian labour movement. This was not imposed from the Soviet Union. Overwhelmingly, the majority of its membership had a genuine commitment to internationalism and believed in complete equality between all races. However the CPA was not totally immune to displays of chauvinism. With the majority of its membership concentrated in the working class, who were often racist, it would be unrealistic to expect this would not have had an impact on party members. But the CPA's public policy of opposition to racism was real and it campaigned strongly for them. At the same time it was seeking to exclude East European and German refugees/migrants from workplaces it had influence in, it called for the ending of the White Australia Policy.

The campaign against the East European and German migrants was therefore an aberration from the entire thrust of the CPA's strong stance against Australian working-class racism. While it had legitimate concerns about the indentured labour that was required of these migrants, it chose not to confine itself to these concerns. Its opposition to the arrival of these migrants was political – but it lacked the confidence that it could convince their co-workers of their policies on this issue. Instead it resorted to building a campaign that appealed to the racist traditions of the Australian working class. These included false claims of threats to the conditions of other Australian workers and allegations of preferential treatment in housing. The entire campaign was the product of the close ties between the CPA and the Soviet Union. Since these migrants had consciously rejected the new 'socialist' societies of their homelands they were condemned by the CPA as anti-working class. To their credit a number of communist trade union activists later acknowledged that the campaigns against these migrants had been mistaken.

On this issue communist union activists had less difficulty in following CPA policy than was the case with the peace movement. This support was often based on encounters in the workplace between the East European refugees and communist union activists. There is little doubt that the majority of the East European refugees were anti-

communist and many of them were willingly drawn into the battle to defeat communist union officials. Their experiences with the brutal reality of the Stalinist Soviet Union convinced them of the need to engage in a political struggle against Communism. The East European refugees were a significant proportion of Australia's first migrant intake and this further deepened the hostility of the CPA towards them. These political and racial tensions started to ease with the arrival of other ethnic groups such as the Greeks, Italians and Maltese whose combined numbers reduced the political importance of the East European migrants.

The mass immigration program was to transform the Australian workforce and the trade union movement. For most of its history the Australian trade union movement had been largely isolated from the influences of non-Anglo Saxon workers. This isolation had led to a deeply entrenched racism among large numbers of Australian workers who were often virulently hostile to workers from other cultures. The danger of the CPA campaign against the East European and German refugees was that it could both intensify and broaden this racism. This is particularly true at times of high unemployment which was a persistent fear of many workers with memories of the Great Depression. The arguments used by the CPA to justify its opposition to the arrival of the East European and German migrants, such as false claims about preferential treatment in housing, and distortions of their political outlook were clearly designed to appeal to these racist traditions. In these attitudes as this chapter has explained, the CPA often transgressed its previously high internationalist standards. However, it was to redeem itself with a more positive approach to the arrival of other migrant workers and the struggle by Aborigines for their human rights. This will be the subject of the next chapter.■

6. 'They will make splendid allies': The CPA and European Migrants

Introduction

This chapter continues the examination of the CPA's attitude towards the mass immigration program that was to transform Australia's economic, social and political framework from 1948 onwards. The previous chapter analysed the prolonged and vitriolic campaign that communist-led unions waged against the arrival of East European and German migrants from 1948 onwards. However, when migrants from other countries such as Greece, Italy and Malta started to arrive in Australia they faced a different reception from communist-led unions. While a positive approach towards these migrants was not always uniform or consistent by all communist-led unions, it was in general a continuation of the internationalist outlook that had been a central feature of the CPA since its formation.

For the CPA working class unity in Australia was crucial if its aim of a working class revolution against the Australian capitalist state was to be achieved. As the mass immigration program gathered pace, the CPA hierarchy stressed that one of the central tasks facing its trade union activists was combating the entrenched racism of the Australian working class. Its own members were expected to be exemplary in their attitudes towards migrants and on occasions the party hierarchy took active measures to enforce the high standards expected from members. As migrants started to enter the industrial workforce they encountered communist union activists who often offered them friendship and helped them adapt to Australian society. This was a prelude to their possible involvement in the trade union movement or the CPA.

The CPA faced a particular challenge as it attempted to build a unified working class movement at a time when tens of thousands of new workers were arriving in Australia. Immigrant societies can face the strong possibility of a working class divided between native born and migrant worker. At times of economic recession when there is a sharp increase in unemployment, many native born workers often blame migrant

workers for their unemployment. During the 1952 recession when unemployment started to increase rapidly, communist-led unions such as the BWIU responded quickly and supported unemployed Italian migrants when they protested at the lack of promised jobs. Their struggles led the CPA leadership to acknowledge that Australian workers had much to learn about working class struggles from their Italian co-workers. A similar pattern emerged during the 1961 recession when unemployed migrants again demonstrated at the lack of promised jobs. Once again communist-led unions supported their campaign for employment.

This was a sharp contrast to many of the historical traditions of the Australian labour and helped to forge strong bonds between the CPA and Italian migrants. Similar policies towards migrants were adopted by other communist-led unions. In Sydney the WWF helped Maltese migrants find jobs and accommodation. In return, the Maltese became a significant part of the support base of the communist leadership of the union. Other migrants did not encounter any major problems in being active in other communist-led unions such as the Victorian branch of the Painters' Union.

Despite these positive approaches the relationship between the CPA and migrants was often complex and difficult. There were also some difficulties in fully integrating migrants into local suburban branches where their lack of English often raised barriers to their full participation in activities. These difficulties were sometimes acknowledged, and did not prevent a number of postwar migrants assuming important leadership positions within a relatively short period after joining the CPA. These members would often be used by the leaderships of communist-led unions to address other migrants who did not speak English. Thus, in the 1940s and 1950s the CPA continued to be a multi-ethnic party, while for the main part the ALP remained predominantly a party of the Anglo-Celtic working class.

Migrants: The communist outlook

The previous chapter examined the prolonged and vitriolic campaign that communist-led unions waged against the arrival of the East European and German migrants from 1948 onwards. But even at its height communist union activists could sometimes transcend the barriers imposed by the CPA policy and find some common ground with these migrants. From the late 1930s to the late 1940s, the communist writer John Morrison worked on the Melbourne waterfront. He used his skills to write a series of stories steeped in the socialist realist tradition drawn from events he had actually witnessed. In The Welcome, Morrison displays some of the ambiguities of the CPA's attitude towards the East European migrants.

The story opens with the arrival of the *Ville de Nice* on a hot February day in 1947.

One of the first refugee ships to arrive in Australia, it is crammed full of what appears to be mainly Maltese, Yugoslav and Czech migrants. The Yugoslav and Czech migrants were among the targets of the CPA campaign against Calwell's immigration program. At first there is open resentment by the Melbourne wharfies to the new arrivals. The collective memory of the waterside workers is that during the 1928 strike by waterside workers migrants were used to destroy the union. However, the sight of hundreds of children looking hungrily at an ice cream van soon breaks through the openly displayed resentment. Defying the orders of a foreman, the waterside workers quickly organise to ensure that every child on the ship has an ice cream. A new understanding has started to emerge between the migrants and Australian workers before the ship departs for Sydney and Brisbane.[1]

The veracity of this story can be confirmed from a number of different sources. In 1950 the Melbourne *Herald*, reported that migrant children on their way to the Bonegilla migrant hostel seldom left Melbourne without a supply of sweets and ice cream. It was, as the paper reported, a way of 'setting New Australians off on the right foot'.[2] Reg Saunders, Australia's first Aboriginal army officer, recalls from his time when he worked on the Melbourne waterfront in the late 1940s, that the waterside workers were militant anti-capitalists, but they showed surprising kindness and 'kicked in a few bob' for the refugee children.[3] His description of the involvement of militant anti-capitalists in giving confectionary to migrant children is almost certainly a reference to communist union activists, or those influenced by them,

The initial response of the waterside workers to the arrival of the first of the postwar migrants, was based on false memories of what they believed was the major role played by migrants in helping to break the 1928 strike, which almost destroyed the union. Yet, while some migrants did act as strike-breakers, the majority of those who crossed the picket lines were of Anglo-Celtic background.[4] The situation meant that the 'few of us who knew better' had to be prepared to challenge and defeat the resentment that many waterside workers felt towards migrants.[5] There was also a need to destroy the 'popular idea that immigration is the direct cause of unemployment, an idea that the real culprits take care to foster when it suits them'.[6] Morrison's story encapsulates two of the themes that were at the centre of CPA policy – the need for working class unity particularly with the possibility of another depression, and the necessity of rejecting the chauvinistic traditions of the Australian labour movement. The challenge that faced the CPA was to abide by these high ideals.

The CPA and anti-racism

An important feature of the CPA was its internationalist outlook and its core view that

all workers in Australia whatever their national origin had interests in common. As the postwar migration gathered momentum, the CPA again stressed the need for working class unity, 'irrespective of differences in nationality, colour or creed'.[7] It emphasised that this unity could be best achieved by migrants learning English and becoming involved in the trade unions and progressive movements.[8] Ralph Gibson, a leading Victorian CPA functionary, later conceded that this approach was mistaken. It was based on assimilation attitudes and that the correct approach for communists was integration into a multilingual and multicultural society.[9] The approach also underestimated the difficulties that faced migrants learning a new language, while working full time as an industrial worker. Trade unions, including those led by communists, were slow in supplying information in languages other than English to their new migrant members.

However, the CPA argued that its understanding of assimilation differed from that of many Australians. The party's concept of assimilation was based primarily on 'unity in struggle against the boss and in political activity against Menzies'. Once this was done real assimilation and absorption can then take place on the basis of common interests.[10] It called on trade union movement to 'educate' migrants about Australian radical movement history.[11] While this was important for the CPA's goal of building a united working class movement it failed to address a number of key issues. In particular, it failed to acknowledge that Australian workers could have learnt as much about anticapitalist struggles from some newly arrived migrants, as migrant workers could have learnt from Australian workers. At this point the CPA policy stressed the need for *political unity* between Australian and migrant workers, which limited its approach only to those migrants who shared some of its political goals. It failed to address the broader question of the right of migrants to maintain their own culture – while integrating into a multicultural society.

The Newcastle Trades and Labor Council, which had a significant communist presence did respond by recognising that migrants had 'special problems that required study by unions to ensure improved industrial relationships'.[12] It was a belated recognition, after ten years of mass immigration, that migrants had specific problems that differed from Australian workers and that unions had to do more if they wanted to earn the respect and trust of migrants. But the CPA was still slow on occasions to approach migrant workers and talk to them about their problems. In a report to 1958 party congress H. Stein, emphasised that before the labour movement could make greater efforts to approach migrants we, 'had to clear the decks within our own party'.[13] Stein reported that there was still some hesitations by party members to approach migrant workers and that while language difficulties did create some problems this

was often over-emphasised.[14] This criticism was similar to the criticisms that other party functionaries had made about communist union activists involvement in the peace movement. However, as we shall see, when presented with an opportunity to support migrant workers who were engaged in political struggle, communist-led unions actively supported them.

The narrowness of the CPA approach to migrants on occasions was shown when it said that it was 'not a desirable practice' for migrants to establish their own communities where they exclusively 'spoke their native tongue, continue national customs, etc.'.[15] This can be seen as a concession to the prevailing chauvinistic attitudes that were deeply embedded in Australian society. It also ignored the factors that led migrants to live in concentrated communities. Apart from the obvious issue of racial prejudice that denied many migrants equal access to housing, many migrants resided in suburbs adjacent to the industrial factories where they worked. There was also a failure to understand that many migrants wished to maintain aspects of their culture while integrating into Australian society on their own terms. Despite some of the limitations of the CPA approach to migrants in the postwar period it remained a multiethnic party that was attractive to left-wing migrants as it had been from the 1930s onwards. For example, more than two hundred Greeks joined the party during the 1950s.[16]

What often flowed from CPA policy was the requirement that its members had to be free from the chauvinistic attitudes that were common in the working class. Open displays of such attitudes could hamper the recruitment and integration of migrants into the CPA at a time when it was committed to recruiting as many members as possible. In all their areas of their political activity, both within the CPA and more importantly in the trade unions, communists were expected to be exemplary in their attitudes and behaviour towards migrants. In an address to migrant workers, Sharkey stressed that that one of the more important tasks for communist union activists was to challenge and defeat the chauvinism that existed in the working class. This would be a prelude to recruiting migrant workers.[17] The address by such a high-ranking CPA leader is indicative of the importance that the leadership of the party placed on the issue of combating working-class racism. Yet, Sharkey failed to acknowledge or even address the explicit racist campaign that the CPA had conducted against the arrival of the Eastern European and German migrants. Despite Sharkey's urgings, communist union activists were not always immune to the effects of the chauvinism that surrounded them in the workplace.

In the late 1940s Paddy Troy, the communist secretary of the CDRHWU, would fine members of the union who made racist comments about the union's migrant

members.[18] But Troy was not exempt from the occasional display of prejudice. At a Western Australian CPA State Conference in the late 1940s, Leah Healy, who was of a Jewish background, raised the issue of an unnamed person who had made a racist comment about Jews collecting money. Troy immediately admitted the offence and said that it was an 'attitude that I picked up and I recognise the need to combat it'.[19] Thus, even communist union officials alert to the dangers of dangers of racial prejudice could inadvertently succumb to mild racism. What was different about the CPA was that it recognised the issue and was willing to take steps to solve it. This stands in sharp contrast to the ALP which remained a firm supporter of the White Australia Policy and whose leaders such as Calwell and Evatt, as previously noted, had long standing chauvinistic attitudes.

During the 1952 Youth Carnival for Peace and Friendship in Sydney, communist activists Rupert Lockwood and Stephen Murray-Smith were drinking in a hotel. A row erupted between them and the hotel owners after barmen refused to serve two Indian seamen. When the issue could not be resolved, Lockwood and Murray-Smith walked out refusing to drink in a 'Jim Crow hotel'. They left behind about half-a-dozen of their friends. Lockwood was extremely angry at the lack of support on such a fundamental issue of racial discrimination and threatened 'dire action' against those involved.[20] It is almost certain that those concerned were members of the CPA or perhaps a member of a communist-led union such as the Seamen's Union or the WWF, or quite possibly both. As a leading CPA functionary with close ties to a number of communist-led unions, Lockwood was in a position to carry out his threat.[21] A few weeks later Lockwood informed Murray-Smith that a number of those concerned had visited him in his flat to apologise for their behaviour.[22] Their apology indicates that Lockwood had acted on his promise to take action against those concerned. It is another confirmation that the CPA was willing, on occasions, to take action against those who breached their standards on racial prejudices.

Despite these instances the CPA was not always consistent in its campaign to eliminate racial prejudices from its ranks and in the workplace. For example, in Perth at rallies or public meetings, Jack Marks, a leading communist activist at the Perth Midland workshops, would frequently use terms with racist connotations such as 'spaghetti eaters' or 'septic tanks'.[23] There appears to have been little attempt by the CPA leadership to persuade Marks to modify his language, and he persisted with it.[24] Other examples of racial prejudice also existed in the party. During World War II, the CPA's enthusiastic support for the war, after June 1941, often involved racist caricatures of the Japanese.[25] This left a legacy which lasted well into the postwar period. Charles D'Aprano, who had joined the CPA in 1943, found it difficult to talk to the Japanese

until he met Japanese women who were victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima or Nagasaki.[26]

In 1952 unemployment levels increased to 2.9 per cent - about three times the recent rate.[27] One of the most immediate impacts of this was that fifty-two per cent of those polled thought that immigration levels were too high. The opposition to immigration levels was higher from those who voted for the ALP.[28] This development had an impact on the CPA and its outlook. A meeting of the Cental Committee in August called for the complete cessation of all immigration until full employment was achieved.[29] After this policy was adopted communist union activists attempted to implement it. A special congress of the ACTU in September 1952 endorsed the call for an end to immigration despite opposition from some conservative union officials.[30]

The growth in unemployment led to an increased chauvinism in the working class and a demand that migrant workers be the first to be retrenched. What was alarming for the CPA leadership was that this trend was reflected to some extent inside the CPA.[31] While the scope and nature of the problem is not revealed in detail, the frank admission does indicate that it was enough of a problem to place it on the public record. Ted Rowe, who made the issue public, was both a member of the central committee and the leading communist activist in the AEU. He would have been in frequent contact with a range of communist union activists from different industries around Australia. In his report, Rowe stressed that the CPA had to assume the leading role in explaining the cause of unemployment and build a united movement of the working class, both Australian and migrant, to overcome it.[32]

Rowe also stressed that the relationship between the CPA and migrants was a two way process. After unemployed Italian migrants had demonstrated at the Bonegilla migrant camp, Rowe claimed that the incident, according to Rowe, showed that they would make 'splendid allies' of the Australian working class in the coming battles against capitalism.[33] It also showed that the Australian working class had much to learn from migrants. Australian communists had to avoid a narrow approach and they needed to learn and understand the traditions and culture of their migrant co-workers.[34] At a time when widespread unemployment could have led to bitter divisions in the working class, the CPA's committed support for migrant struggles stood in sharp contrast to many of the historical traditions of the Australian labour movement. Rowe's comments echo similar calls made by other communist leaders. For example, L. Harry Gould, the CPA theoretician, stated in 1948 that Greek, Italian and Maltese rebel songs would become an integral part of Australian culture.[35]

These sentiments placed the CPA well in advance of the rest of the labour movement. However, there was sometimes a dichotomy between CPA policy and the

ability or willingness of rank-and-file communist trade unionists to fully implement it. As we have seen, the CPA was not necessary immune from chauvinism, or consistent in acting against it. The CPA felt the closest affinity to those migrants who shared either its overall political goals or who were willing to support its credo of militant trade unionism. But even here it struggled at times to fully integrate them into the CPA or the trade unions. The differences of language and cultural traditions were not always overcome. The question of how to relate to the East Europeans in a positive way was never solved. The political gulf between the two groups was too great to find common ground. This problem was most acute in the late 1940s when the East European refugees were a significant proportion of the migrant intake. To some extent the problem was eased by the arrival of migrants from other countries whose numbers far exceeded those from Eastern Europe. It was towards these new arrivals that the communist union activists started to turn.

CPA and migrants

When migrants started to enter the industrial workforce in the late 1940s it was not unusual for them to come into contact with communist union activists in the same workplace. This was often the first step for some migrants to becoming involved in the trade union movement and from there to join the CPA. Shortly after arriving in Melbourne from Greece in February 1950, George Zangalis started work at GMH, where he met Aldonis Panagis an activist in the communist-led Democritus League. Zangalis quickly joined the Eureka Youth League and a year later in February 1951, the CPA.[36] By 1954 Zangalis was a member of the CPA's Metropolitan Committee and calling on local branches to do more to recruit migrant workers.[37] Earlier, in 1951, Basil Stephanou who had joined the CPA in 1944 was elected to the State Committee where one of his main areas of activity was the Greek CPA branch.[38] Even at this stage in postwar migration history, there were not unsurmountable barriers to migrants holding important leadership positions in the CPA.

Giovanni Sgro arrived at the Bonegilla migrant hostel in April 1952, and a few weeks later was one of the leaders of the Italian migrants who staged a militant demonstration when the promised jobs did not eventuate.[39] Despite claims of CPA involvement in the demonstration, it was not until he arrived in Melbourne that Sgro established contact with the CPA which he joined in 1954.[40] His initial contact with the CPA came from his attendance at the monthly meetings of the Painters Union which had a number of communists in key leadership positions.[41] While the union leadership, as we have seen, was hostile to the arrival of the East European migrants it was more receptive to migrants like Sgro who shared a similar political outlook. Sgro was also

able to form a close friendship with Doug Gillies, the organiser of the Coburg CPA branch, who worked in a factory with one of Sgro's friends. Gillies, a former school teacher, had gone into industry so that he could have direct contact with industrial workers.[42]

Over the next four years Sgro's major area of political activity was working with other migrant workers and attempting to recruit them to the CPA. Sgro spoke at lunchtime meetings at the railway and tramway workshops as well at factory gates and construction sites.[43] These meetings would have been organised with the support of various communist union officials. His activity is a clear indication that the CPA was often serious about its commitment to reach out to migrant workers. Sgro left the CPA in 1958 to join the ALP, but was to remain a Marxist for the rest of his life.[44]

The 1952 Bonegilla 'riot'

In January 1952 the communist journalist Rupert Lockwood stressed the need to link the struggle against the Menzies Government's war plans with the necessity to fight against the threat of growing unemployment.[45] The situation led the CPA to escalate its opposition to the mass migration program. Its policy for the half Senate election, which was due in the first half of 1953, called for the immediate ending of all immigration as the new arrivals only contributed to the growing numbers of the unemployed as well as compounding the housing shortage.[46] Unemployment grew rapidly during 1952, the direct product of the Menzies government's economic polices and massive military spending in preparation for war with the Soviet Union, which it believed would break out in 1953.[47] This helps explain the vigorous support given by communist union activists when unemployed Italian migrants started to campaign against their unemployment later in the year. For the CPA, the growing threat of a possible war with the Soviet Union, and increasing unemployment were directly linked, and it was incumbent upon the party to struggle against both.

In March 1952 the Charted Accountant reported that increasing numbers of Australians were talking about a possible depression.[48] In May, half the people surveyed considered they were worse off than the year before.[49] In response to the growing economic crisis and widespread union opposition to the arrival of any more migrants, the Minister of Immigration Holt announced a cut in the immigration intake.[50] In September a special congress of the ACTU endorsed a call for an immediate cessation in all immigration.[51] The danger for the CPA was that such calls from within the trade union movement could trigger a wave of chauvinism: where recently arrived migrants could become the targets of unemployed workers who would blame them for their predicament. The onus on the CPA was to honour its commitment to migrants that

once in Australia they had the same rights as other Australian workers.

In the first six months of 1952 almost 20,000 Italian migrants arrived in Australia.[52] By July 1952 the *Guardian* reported that there were three thousand Italian unemployed migrants at Bonegilla. It called on all workers, Australian and migrant, to unite to oppose the war plans of the Menzies government and to act jointly to prevent any dismissals taking place.[53] At Bonegilla the Italians had been isolated from other nationalities and were overwhelmingly young men from rural Italy.[54] A detailed ASIO report on a large number of the Italian migrants present at Bonegilla during the upheaval shows that none of them had any political connections before they arrived in Australia, and only a handful had been previously a member of a trade union.[55]

Despite this evidence, in an interview between an unnamed officer from the Melbourne ASIO office and Giuseppe Guelj, who had been Acting Chief Patrolman at Bonegilla, claims were made by Gueli that he had heard conversations about communist cell leaders from Italy being present at the hostel.[56] In another interview Frattura, the Assistant Supervisor, Block 2, reported that he had heard residents singing the 'Red Flag' and that one migrant had made comments suggesting support for Mao Tse Tung.[57] However, the diary entry of R. Casey, Australia's Minister for External Affairs, detailing his discussions with Italian Ministers during a visit to Italy the year before, about the extensive political vetting of potential migrants meant that known communists were precluded from emigrating to Australia.[58] It is therefore unlikely that there were any significant numbers of active communists at the camp.

The unrest at Bonegilla in mid-1952 cannot therefore be attributed to the activities of alleged communist agitators. Its real cause was a deep seated anger by many Italian migrants at what they regarded as the Australian government's broken commitment of employment shortly after they arrived in Australia.[59] After some weeks of simmering unrest an angry demonstration by at least one thousand unemployed Italian migrants took place on 17 July.[60] Around the same time a report by a Senior Detective O'Connor reported that a group of Italia Libera members was on the way to Bonegilla.[61] His information followed a discussion with Dr L. Dainelli, the Italian Consul for Victoria, who claimed that 'communist members of Italian Libera' were frequently attending Bonegilla.[62] The organisation had been established in Melbourne in March 1943 as an antifascist organisation and to mobilise Italian-Australians support for the war effort.[63] It had a strong communist presence. Charles D'Aprano, a CPA member was the Victorian secretary of Italia Libera.[64] In February 1950 the organisation held its first national congress and committed itself to assist newly arrived Italian migrants.[65] Thus, Italia Libera had a long standing interest and commitment in the welfare of Italian migrants.

However, even before the major disturbance on 17 July there had been at least some informal contact between Italian migrants at Bonegilla and Italia Liberia. A widespread complaint about the quality of food on 14 July was later attributed to the circulation of the newspaper Italia Liberia.[66] There had also been some contact between T. Manetta, a Bonegilla resident and the D'Aprano family. The contact address he gave authorities when he left Bonegilla was that of Charles D'Aprano's uncle, Arturo D' Aprano.[67] Also living at the address was a Teodoro D'Aprano identified by ASIO as an official in Italia Libera and an alleged communist.[68] Italia Libera was therefore often the first contact between the CPA and Italian migrants. For the CPA it would have been natural to establish contact in this way because so few of the migrants would have been able to speak English.

The CPA immediately welcomed the struggle by the Bonegilla Italian migrants. It compared the action of Holt in sending the army into Bonegilla with the policies Hitler and Mussolini during fascism.[69] Hector Varenti, an EYL activist, was active in exposing the conditions that led to the disturbances at Bonegilla.[70] Following the events of July 17 Greek communist activists Panos Gerondakis, Dimitris Gogos and George Zangalis from the Democritus League were the first Greeks to visit Bonegilla after the 17 July, events. Despite attempts by the administration to prevent their entry into the camp they did enter, and received a warm welcome from the residents.[71] In Queensland the CPA linked the struggle by the Italian Bonegilla migrants with other struggles by Italian migrants in the 1930s.[72] The Queensland, BWIU State secretary, G. M. Dawson, said that Italian migrants had 'proved by their words and deeds that they are good unionists' and went on to add this 'had been demonstrated in many disputes on the job'.[73] The union sent a message of support to Bonegilla, but it was withheld by the camp authorities.[74] It can be assumed that the intention of the authorities' aim was to isolate the demonstrators from any possible contact with the more radical section of the Australian trade union movement.

On 20 July forty copies of the *Guardian* were found at the camp.[75] The CPA was also able to distribute a leaflet in Italian to the residents. It demanded immediate jobs for all Italian workers and said that the CPA was waging the same fight as the Italian Communist Party.[76] It called on the Italian migrants to reject the use of 'devastation, fire or vandalism' as this would alienate them from the Australian people.[77] The leaflet called on the Italian migrants to support Australian trade unions and have confidence in Australian workers.[78] As well as providing the postal addresses of Italia Libera offices in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, the leaflet also gave the postal address of the BWIU in Brisbane.[79] The leaflet was authorised by L. Kelton, later identified by ASIO as an executive member of the Albury CPA branch.[80] There were also claims that

there members of the CPA working at the Hume Weir were visiting the camp to distribute communist material.[81] An editorial in *The Argus* claimed that the resentment of the Italians at Bonegilla was 'understandable' as they had been given 'frustrating idleness and five shillings a day'.[82] The paper later warned that the situation was providing 'fertile soil for Communism to feed on'.[83] The situation led to the Menzies government deciding to reduce the migration intake by half.[84] The fear that the CPA would benefit by an economic crisis was not groundless, as the party grew during the early 1950s but these gains short lived as the fears of another depression ebbed away.[85]

Apart from the issues of unemployment and the campaign for peace there was another strong reason for the CPA's support for the Italian migrants. In 1952 there was an intense battle for control of the FIA between the communist leadership and its Grouper-led opponents.[86] Many migrants, including the Italians, were directed to work in large industrial complexes such as BHP, where the union representing workers was often the FIA. In Wollongong, the arrival of large numbers of migrants saw the Italians emerge as the largest non-British immigrant group.[87] The changing composition of the Australian workforce posed a new challenge to the CPA, and how it would respond to the new arrivals. However, with a long history of supporting Italian migrants dating back to the 1930s, it was in a position to respond positively.

The support given to the Italian Bonegilla migrants by the CPA can be seen as an attempt to build a wider support base for the embattled communist leadership in the union. An ASIO report claimed that there was an Italian fraction functioning in the FIA in October 1951.[88] It had been established by Doug Gillies, the secretary of the Coburg CPA branch.[89] Gillies friendship with Sgro and other Italian migrants can be seen as part of the CPA's attempt to win their support in the FIA elections. Other communist Italian-Australians also had links with the FIA in this period. Charles D'Aprano had worked with the FIA in their attempts to organise Italian migrants.[90] During 1952 Hector Varrenti either worked or attempted to get work in factories where there were large numbers of Italian workers. One suggested workplace was Wiltshire Tiles where he was expected to spare no effort to recruit Italian migrants to the party or Italia Libera.[91]

Italian migrants continued to struggle against unemployment. On October 25 a Sydney meeting of four hundred and fifty unemployed Italians passed a series of resolutions calling on the Federal government to take immediate action to end their unemployment. These resolutions included a call for an immediate end to immigration, a massive public works campaign, the abolition of hostel charges for unemployed migrants, and for the Federal government to rescind the £31 that each migrant was expected to pay for their assisted passage.[92] The meeting also declared that they would

work with any Australian organisation that fought against unemployment and for the right to work. The BWIU and the WWF sent representatives to the meeting as an indication of their support.[93] The motions that were passed were consistent with CPA policy and indicated that many migrants did not necessarily regard a call to end immigration as anti-migrant. Despite the ACTU Congress resolution on immigration, the NSW ALP declined to attend the meeting.[94]

A few days after the meeting there were violent clashes between the police and two hundred unemployed Italians who were marching on the Italian consulate.[95] There were also other protests by unemployed Italians during October and November in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria.[96] The Italian Prime Minister, Alcide de Gasperi, called on the Federal government to urgently address the issue and find work for Italian migrants.[97] Earlier, following the Sydney demonstration the Italian Minister Dr S. Danco, said because of the careful vetting of potential migrants, he was certain that there was no communist involvement in the unrest.[98] However, B. A. Santamaria proposed to establish a special Italian branch of Catholic Action, to act as a bridge to the Australian Catholic community.[99]

In November 1952, Rowe cited the actions of the Bonegilla migrants as a demonstration of the possibilities of Italian migrants becoming allies of the Australian working class in the coming struggles.[100] What was important for the CPA was not just the fact that the Italian migrants were waging a militant struggle against their unemployment but they had looked towards the Australian trade union movement for support. This offered the opportunity for building alliances between the two groups and in the process Australian workers could learn a great deal from the Italian migrants.[101]

The 1961 recession: the communist response

In 1961 the onset of another recession again and a subsequent increase in unemployment again raised the prospect of a major depression. During the year unemployment averaged 2.4 per cent, the highest level for a decade.[102] In South Australia there were nine thousand unemployed, double the rate of the year before.[103] This development was largely the product of the harsh 1960 federal budget which saw increased interest rates, cuts in social welfare and other increased taxes and imposts.[104] By the end of the year there was widespread disillusionment with the Menzies Government and it only narrowly survived the December 1961 election by a majority of one seat.[105] For the CPA the challenge was to ensure that there would be no repeat of previous recessions in which migrants were blamed for the rising unemployment levels.

Migrants were invariably the first to be laid off when unemployment started to

increase. There was strong evidence that many employers were deliberately targeting migrant workers and retrenching them before Australian-born workers. Tom Wright, NSW Secretary of the SMWU, reported that a large majority of those retrenched from his industry were migrant workers.[106] In response to mounting evidence of discrimination against migrant workers, Pat Clancy, the NSW secretary of the BWIU, pledged his union to fight against any employer who adopted such practices. He called for a united campaign by all workers to fight against discrimination and for the Right to Work.[107] At the May 1961 NSW CPA State Conference, Harry Stein again acknowledged that many migrants were bearing the greatest burden of the recession and wanted to know how they could win the right to work.[108] The demand for the 'Right to Work' and the call for a united campaign by Australian and migrant workers were to became dominant themes of CPA propaganda throughout 1961.

Throughout that year, communist union activists attempted to establish closer links with unemployed migrant workers. Their actions stood in sharp contrast to the experiences during the Great Depression when significant numbers of workers blamed migrants for the economic crisis. In May Roger Wilson, Assistant Secretary of the Victorian branch of the SUA, addressed a meeting of unemployed Greek workers drawing up plans for a bigger meeting. In common with other communist union leaders Wilson called for a united labour movement response to the economic crisis.[109] In early June a mass meeting of three hundred unemployed Greek migrants called on the Federal government to honour the commitments on employment that had been made to them before they left their homeland.[110] Another mass meeting of three hundred unemployed workers from Fitzroy and Collingwood was addressed by Ron Hearn, from the BWIU management committee, who called for solidarity by all workers, Australian or migrant, employed or unemployed.[111] In July 1961, after hearing a report by the SMWU about the alleged police intimidation of one of their Greek members, the NSW Labor Council unanimously passed a resolution calling on the State Labor government to investigate other similar cases.[112]

The high point of working class solidarity between migrants and Australian workers came in the aftermath of a demonstration by unemployed Italian migrants at Bonegilla in July 1961. For many weeks there had been weekly demonstrations demanding employment. These had been peaceful until 17 July when a policeman's manhandling of a demonstrator provoked an angry reaction.[113] The Federal government attempted to evade responsibility for the demonstration and subsequent damage to buildings by blaming the trouble that erupted on communist agitators.[114] However, the real cause of the demonstration was similar to the events of 1952. Many migrants considered that the government had broken commitments of employment given to them before

they left Italy, and as a result vented their anger when the promised jobs failed to materialise. However, on this occasion the CPA was able to marshal considerably more support for the demonstrators than in 1952. This can be best understood by the growing numbers of migrant workers in trade unions as well as an easing of some of the political tensions from the height of the Cold War.

Almost immediately following the demonstration the CPA called on the Australian working class to support the Bonegilla migrants.[115] It sent Malcolm Salmon, a *Guardian* journalist, and George Zangalis, a leading Melbourne communist, to Bonegilla to interview residents. Despite attempts to intimidate them many migrants responded warmly to the visit.[116] The following week the *Guardian* hailed the 'heroic' actions of the migrant demonstrators and called for an end to the police repression of migrant workers.[117] A week after the demonstration, eleven migrants were arrested and charged with a variety of offences. Following this development, support for the migrants started to flow in from trade unionists around the country.

The NSW, Queensland and South Australian Labor Councils voted to support the arrested Bonegilla migrants.[118] In Victoria, V. J. Stout, Secretary of the Trades Hall Council also condemned the arrests and opposed the excessively high bail of £30.[119] In Sydney, support came from unions representing building workers, painters, builders' labourers, miscellaneous workers, gas workers and brick and tile workers.[120] Support also came from the Combined Waterfront Action Committee which described the charges the Combined Waterfront Action Committee which described the charges as a witch-hunt against migrants.[121] As well as supporting the arrested migrants, the BWIU called for an immediate end to unemployment.[122] In the face of this widespread union support when the arrested migrants finally appeared in court, the charges of rioting and assault were dropped.[123] For the CPA the successful outcome of the campaign would have vindicated its view that, despite the recession, it was possible to build actions that united Australian and migrant workers.

Throughout 1961 the CPA opposed the arrival of additional migrants. Where possible it sought to highlight claims that incorrect information was being given to intending migrants. For example, *Tribune* reported a demand by some Italian workers for an end to misleading information given to potential Italian migrants.[124] A similar demand was made by Ron Hancock from the BWIU about misleading information on wage levels supplied to British migrants.[125] At the 18th Congress of the CPA in 1958, Harry Stein had warned of the possible dangers of a campaign against mass immigration. During the Great Depression there had been chauvinistic outbursts against migrant workers in Queensland and Western Australia as well as widespread hostility towards British migrants.[126] The only way this could be avoided was for the

CPA to take the leading role in any campaign that emerged to ensure that it did not develop into a similar direction.[127] Stein's report specifically rejected all attempts to discriminate against migrants already in Australia, and called for joint campaigns by Australian and migrant workers around common interests. As the above examples demonstrate, this was a course that the CPA followed throughout 1961. Its trade union members actively supported every struggle where migrant workers were playing a leading role. In adopting this course the CPA started to break down the long standing chauvinistic traditions of the Australian working class.

The Waterside Workers' Federation and migrants

The vast majority of migrants that arrived in Australia during the postwar period commenced their working life in Australia as industrial workers. While communist-led unions were almost uniformly hostile to the refugees from Eastern Europe, the reception given to other migrants was often very different. It was possible for some communist union leaderships to establish some common ground with their new migrant members and win their support for militant policies. This was despite the attempts by successive federal governments to bar any potential migrant who had shown any sympathy for Communism. However, when migrants did arrive in Australia and experienced the harsh reality of the Australian workplace they were sometimes receptive to the appeal of militant unionism as advocated by communist union leaderships.

As World War II drew to an end the WWF saluted the courage of the Maltese resistance to the Axis powers in the face of widespread bombing.[128] This common experience in the war against fascism was to provide one of the links that the CPA could use to attract Maltese migrants once they started to arrive in Australia in the late 1940s. However, much of the mainstream Australian labour movement had previously been virulently opposed to Maltese migrants. During the 1916 conscription referendum, when a boatload of Maltese migrants, arrived they were met by a storm of chauvinistic abuse.[129] During the 1928 waterside workers strike the Melbourne WWF targeted the non-Anglo- Celt strike breakers, including the Maltese, even though they were in a minority of trike breakers.[130] Thus, the willingness of communist waterside workers to approach Maltese migrants in the postwar period was a sharp break with both the traditions of the Australian labour movement and their own union. It was a move that was to bring significant gains for the communist union leadership.

On the Sydney waterfront Maltese waterside workers overwhelmingly supported the Healy leadership and played an important part in helping to consolidate the left-wing leadership of the union.[131] This was despite the fact that the Maltese were

overwhelmingly Catholic and in theory, natural allies of the Grouper-led forces in the union.[132] In Europe the Maltese were among the most frequent church attendees and the Catholic Church had a major influence on Maltese society.[133] However, their political outlook contrasted sharply with the Catholic migrants from Eastern Europe who were virulently opposed to communist union leaderships. This underlines that there were not necessarily any insurmountable barriers to Catholic-influenced workers supporting a communist-led union leadership. Presumably one major reason for this support was the assistance the Sydney WWF leadership gave Maltese migrants in finding accommodation and employment after they arrived in Sydney.[134] There was also a strong presence of communist supporters in the various Maltese Clubs; this also served as a link with both the CPA and the WWF.[135]

Similarly, in 1950 in Melbourne, Manny Calleja, a newly arrived Maltese migrant and a British Naval veteran, was given financial assistance by waterside workers for six weeks after he had lost his thumb in an accident at home. At the time he was not even a member of the WWF.[136] Calleja was working as a crane driver for the Melbourne Harbour Trust and respected the WWF for its industrial militancy and the solidarity it offered to fellow workers. Defying pressure from his employer, Calleja resigned from his union to join the WWF where he remained an active member for many years.[137] It was through such examples of practical help provided to Maltese migrants in Sydney and Melbourne that the WWF won the support of many Maltese migrants. Loreto York, a Maltese migrant, arrived in Melbourne via Britain in 1954. During the war he had served in the British Royal Air Force where his political views were shaped by the Jews, communists and socialists whom he met there. On his arrival in Australia he became an active shop steward and a member of the ALP. Despite this he became an admirer of Ted Bull, the communist secretary of the Melbourne WWF.[138]

The support given to Maltese migrants by the WWF was replicated in its approach to other migrants. In Sydney the majority of Greek CPA members were active members of the WWF and there were Greek communists active in the Adelaide WWF.[139] In 1953 the Sydney WWF established a film unit. The aim of the unit was to provide an alternative point of view that challenged the dominant Cold War consensus. As a result the films it made were often strident in their condemnation of the oppressive nature of capitalist society.[140] In 1954, in a report to the Sydney WWF Tom Nelson, the communist branch secretary, said that that the films were potentially a 'new and important weapon in the hands of the working class to aid them in the fight against reaction'.[141] Once completed the films were shown wherever workers worked, lived or gathered. Indeed one of the first experiences that migrants had of Australian culture was when the films were shown at migrant hostels or emergency housing

settlements.[142] They were also shown outside factory gates and where possible with union support at various worksites.[143]

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the CPA's response to the profound changes in Australian society in the first two decades after the end of World War II. These decades saw the transformation of what was a predominantly Anglo-Celtic workforce into a multiethnic workforce. This development posed an enormous challenge for the CPA. The danger of immigrant societies is that they can fracture along ethnic lines making it more difficult to build a united working class movement to challenge the capitalist system. The CPA's approach was based to circumvent this by attempting to build a union movement that that was inclusive of migrants and would respond to their specific issues. While the CPA was not always consistent, it generally honoured its policy that once migrants arrived in Australia they should have the same rights as other Australian workers. On occasions it took action against its own members who displayed signs of racist and/or chauvinistic behaviour. As a result a number of migrants did join the CPA or found no insurmountable barriers to being active in communist-led unions.

The greatest challenge for the CPA came during the recessions in 1952 and 1961. When unemployment starts to increase the danger of working class racism is at its greatest, since unemployed workers often blame migrants for their plight. During the Great Depression unions such as the AWU displayed openly racist attitudes to Italian migrants and attempted to prevent them working in the canefields. In sharp contrast to this outlook the CPA actively supported the Italian workers and their demands for improved conditions. In the post-World War II period the CPA again responded positively to the demands of Italian migrants. During the1952 recession FIA communist-union activists, who supported Italian migrants in their demands for employment, gained potential allies as the battle for control of the union reached its climax. During both the 1952 and 1961 recessions the BWIU took a public stance in support of migrants by issuing leaflets, providing speakers at their meetings and throwing the weight of the union behind their campaigns. This activity helped cement an alliance between the CPA and a section of the migrant workforce that was willing to support militant trade unionism. The still relatively strong position of the CPA in the trade unions throughout this period also meant that the CPA's strong opposition to working class chauvinism helped to diminish its extent, but did not eliminate its presence.

The following chapter will analyse another area in which communist union activists challenged working class chauvinism. Aboriginal workers faced an institutionalised system that denied them the same rights as other workers. For many decades the

labour movement had either ignored their plight or had viewed Aboriginal workers with outright hostility. However, in the aftermath of World War II the oppressive conditions endured by Aborigines became increasingly untenable, both domestically and internationally. The situation provided new opportunities for the communist union activists to campaign against these conditions and bring them to an end. The ways in which this was done will be detailed in the following chapter.■

7. 'They have lit a fire that will — and should — blaze': The CPA and the Aboriginal Rights Movement

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the CPA's positive response to the postwar mass immigration program. This response was based on its commitment to internationalism which stressed that all workers, whatever their ethnic origin had common interests. Working-class unity had to be built on the basis of the dominant Australian white working class actively supporting campaigns for justice by all groups oppressed by capitalist society. However, migrant workers were not the only group in the postwar period that communist union activists supported in its quest for working class unity. The end of the war saw Aborigines renew their struggle for full human rights. The CPA mobilised many resources to provide both practical assistance and, at times, political leadership to the emerging campaign.

From early in its history the CPA had a long standing policy of support for Aboriginal human rights. Under pressure from the Comintern in the 1920s the party had adopted a wide ranging radical program of demands aimed at ending Aboriginal inequality. This policy at first emphasised the differences between 'tribal' and 'detribalised' Aborigines and 'full-blood' and 'part-Aborigine'. Aborigines still living under tribal conditions were .to be protected against the encroachment of 'white civilisation' and allowed both the unfettered right to control their own lands and to maintain their culture in any way they chose. Detribalised Aborigines were considered part of the working-class movement who should have the same rights as other Australians. This distinction was maintained until the 1954 party congress when the party abandoned its previous analysis and accepted that people of mixed descent were also Aborigines.

Communist union activists such as Tom Wright, a member of the central committee and federal secretary of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union, were campaigning on

Aboriginal rights from the 1930s onwards. In 1938, Wright played a leading role in convincing the Labor Council of NSW to adopt a wide ranging set of demands based on the CPA policy. It was the strongest statement by any Australian trade union organisation in support of Aboriginal rights up to that time. During World War II a shortage of labour meant that Aborigines entered the workforce in significant numbers for the first time. This bought them into contact with tens of thousands of urban-based trade unionists, including many communists. For Aborigines it also gave them permanent employment and access to award wages and conditions for the first time. In the aftermath of the war Aborigines showed a new militancy in defending the gains they made. In May 1946 a strike by Aboriginal station hands in Western Australia commenced. The communist, Don McLeod, played a leading role in the strike and support from communist-led unions such as Seamen's Union were crucial in ensuring the strikers' partial success three years later. In Darwin the communist-led NAWU supported Aboriginal workers who staged a series of strikes in 1950-51. These strikes were significant because Aboriginal workers constituted the majority of the workforce. These strikes provided the CPA with concrete opportunities to mobilise its trade union network and offer practical support to Aboriginal workers.

In the period after World War II the issue of Aboriginal human rights assumed even more importance. The strikes had demonstrated that the institutionalised oppression of Aborigines could only be solved by political action. From the late 1940s onwards organisations with a national focus and supported by communist-led unions campaigned for full civil liberties for Aborigines. In particular, the Council for Aboriginal Rights (CAR) was established in March 1951 in response to federal government repression of the strikes by Darwin's Aboriginal workers. Its strong focus on equal wages for Aboriginal workers helped to cement its links to communist-led unions. The wide-ranging nature of the CPA involvement in the Aboriginal human rights movement led many of the Aboriginal activists of the 1950s to join the CPA as it was the only party that consistently supported their demands. While many of these activists were eventually to leave the CPA, few of them regretted their former membership. It had provided them with a political education and organising skills which they took into the Aboriginal movement where they decided to concentrate their political activity.

The CPA and Aborigines

The formation of the CPA of Australia in October 1920 was a major turning point in the history of the Australian labour movement. Once it had gained official recognition the new party automatically became a member of the Comintern. The Comintern demanded that its affiliates in countries such as Australia and the United States cam-

paign strongly against the racial oppression that existed within their own countries. This meant that the newly formed communist parties had to make a sharp break from the policies of the social-democratic parties, which were often overtly racist or indifferent to the racism that was widespread in the working class. The CPA accepted this obligation. Its strident opposition to working-class racism clearly differentiated it from the ALP which continued its fervent support for the White Australia Policy.[1] When in office in the 1930s, the Queensland ALP strengthened laws first passed in the late 19th century which regulated every aspect of an Aborigine's life. In particular, this government made it illegal for unions to organise industrial action by Aboriginal workers.[2] With the CPA rapidly extending its support in the trade unions the differences between the two parties was clear.

In 1928 the Comintern adopted a series of resolutions on the national question. They raised the issue of the struggle against racism and colonialism to a new level. The new policy called for the 'rights of all nations, regardless of race, to complete self-determination'.[3] These resolutions helped establish the theoretical framework for communist parties around the world to formulate a new approach on racial issues, including those of indigenous or national groups in their own countries.[4] There was also increased pressure on communist parties to fully implement the decisions of the Comintern. The Fourth World Congress held in late 1922 demanded that its sections carry out congress resolutions 'unanimously and according to plan, not only in word but also in deed'.[5] The Sixth World Congress in 1928 adopted a resolution that called for all national sections to be subordinate to policy decisions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern.[6] Thus, there was a clear expectation was that the CPA would honour its obligations of its Comintern membership and develop a coherent program on Aboriginal rights.

During the late 1920s the CPA challenged the prevailing myth that Australia had been settled without bloodshed or harm to the indigenous population.[7] However, it shared with the IWW the view that Aborigines were a doomed race and consequently the issue of Aboriginal rights was not a priority for the party.[8] In the new political atmosphere in the Comintern, where the struggle against racism and national oppression were considered to be important issues, this lackadaisical approach was no longer acceptable. One possible reason for this lack of action on the issue was that in its early years the CPA was engaged in bitter internal divisions as members from different political traditions fought for control of the party. However, by 1928 a new leadership committed to absolute fidelity to the Comintern had control of the CPA.[9] It was this leadership that was to develop the first extensive political program on the Aboriginal issue.

It was not until 1931, however, that the CPA finally adopted a program that detailed its political outlook on Aborigines. While he was in Moscow Tom Wright, who was to emerge as one of the key communist union activists on Aboriginal issues, was encouraged to apply the national question to the situation of Australian Aborigines.[10] The adoption of a finalised program on Aborigines underlined the CPA's determination to honour its obligation to Comintern decisions. However, the policy was written by another CPA leader, Bert Moxon, rather than Wright.[11] Most likely, this was because Wright had been removed from his position as party general secretary in 1929 for his failure to respond quickly enough to the political changes that were taking place in the international communist movement. Consequently, while remaining a member of the central committee his overall influence had declined.[12] The adoption of a detailed Aboriginal policy underscores the Comintern's influence on the political development of Australian communists and their diminution of insular attitudes on racial questions. It was the most radical statement on the issue until the emergence of the independent Aboriginal movement of the 1960s.[13] However, the link to the Comintern, particularly in the early 1930s when it adopted a number of ultraleft and sectarian polices, had a negative impact regarding the CPA policies on this crucial question.

The 1931 program included demands for full and equal rights for Aborigines: the ending of all forms of forced labour, equal wages, the abolition of the Aboriginal Protection Boards, the right of Aboriginal children to be educated in public schools, the release of all Aboriginal prisoners, and the hearing of legal cases against Aborigines by all-Aboriginal juries. The policy also supported the right of Aborigines to maintain and develop their own culture rather than forcibly assimilated into Australian society. In a clear sign of Comintern influence the program supported the establishment of Aboriginal republics in Central, Northern and North West Australia.[14] In short, the policy was a mixture of radical demands, many of which would be taken up Aboriginal movement of the 1960s, overladen with 'Third Period' Stalinist polices of the early 1930s.

A similar position developed with the CP of the United States of America (CPUSA). According to James Cannon, a pioneer communist, and later a Trotskyist for more than four decades, not one of the leaders of the American communist movement was able to develop a new approach to the problem of Afro-American oppression.[15] In attempting to develop a new policy all the discussions on the issue took place in Moscow under the tutelage of the Comintern leadership. For example, as early as 1920 at the Second Congress of the Comintern, initial discussion of a possible communist program for Afro-Americans commenced.[16] Under the leadership of the Comintern, the American communists adopted and then attempted to implement a far-reaching

revolutionary program that sought to end the special oppression of Afro-Americans.[17] In October 1930, the Comintern acknowledged that the CPUSA had fought against working-class racism but it had failed to campaign strongly on the demand for a black republic in the southern states where the majority of Afro-Americans then lived.[18] A similar position developed in South Africa where the Comintern was decisive in helping to convince the Communist Party of South Africa to adopt the slogan of a Black Republic as the first step towards the construction of a socialist republic.[19]

Thus, without the direct intervention of the Comintern many of the world's communist parties would have struggled to develop a Bolshevik outlook on class, race and national oppression and the links between them. The problem was not that the newly formed parties were chauvinistic or racist in outlook, but that they had failed to understand the urgency of developing an alternative policy that delineated them from their social-democratic opponents. The CPA had made considerable steps in challenging working-class racism by convincing the Australian trade union movement to affiliate to the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat, which linked trade unionists across Asia.[20] However, what was needed was something more than routine propaganda against racism. As Leon Trotsky explained to the Afro-American poet Claude McKay, a communist party that limited itself to platonic statements on Negroes and did not seek actively to recruit them, was not entitled to call itself communist.[21]

At the centre of the CPA's policy was its distinction it made between 'tribal' and 'detribalised Aborigines', and 'full blood' and 'half-blood' Aborigines. This was position was a direct product of the Comintern's 1928 thesis that regarded tribal Aborigines as an oppressed nation rather than a racially oppressed minority within Australian society. Its positive feature was that it aimed to protect those Aborigines still living on their traditional lands against any further encroachment by white society. This was one of the reasons the CPA used to explain its opposition to the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range.[22] An important part of this approach was the party's support of the right for Aborigines to maintain their culture and integrate into white Australian society on their own terms. The CPA's support for Aborigines to fully control any minerals on their traditional lands was a percussor to the demands for land rights that emerged in full force from the 1960s onwards.

At its 13th Congress in March 1943, the CPA declared that 'the spirit of the Atlantic Charter must be applied to the Australian Aborigines.[23] The stress on Australia's obligations under various international treaties was to be a theme that the CPA would return to in the postwar period. The following year it reissued Tom Wright's pamphlet *New Deal for the Aborigines*, first published in 1939.[24] The pamphlet contained a modified version of the program that Wright had been able to steer successfully

through the NSW Labour Council in October 1937.[25] By this time the CPA had moved away from its ultraleft and sectarian 'Third Period' policies and had embraced a broad range of non-communist forces. This meant that potentially divisive demands such as support for Aboriginal republics were abandoned in order to build the greatest possible unity to build the popular front to confront the growing threat of the fascist powers. This policy was strengthened, as we shall see, after the Soviet Union's entry into the war, when all other political struggles became subordinate to the defence of the Soviet Union — especially the call for Aboriginal republics.

Wright's 1944 pamphlet continued the analysis that had been at the centre of the 1931 program. It accused those in charge of Aboriginal policy of seeking to destroy Aboriginal people by assimilating them into Australian society and obliterating all traces of their own culture.[26] This explicit rejection of the consensus that Aborigines were a dying race shows that the Comintern influence was both prolonged and positive. However, the central weakness of the policy was the CPA's continuation of an approach that divided Aboriginal people into 'full bloods' and 'mixed-bloods'. It called on all acts and ordinances to be amended so that the term 'Aborigine' would only apply to those of 'full blood' descent.[27] The intention of this policy was, as we have seen, was to protect Aborigines still living in 'tribal' conditions against further intrusion onto their traditional lands. Wright also condemned the role of religious missions as contributing to the disintegration of Aboriginal society and called for the cessation of their contact with tribal' Aborigines.[28] In the post-war period there was often conflict between communist-influenced organisations and religious societies for influence in the emerging Aboriginal political movement; at least some of this enmity can be traced back to this earlier period.

During World War II the rapid growth of the CPA led to some weakening of the previously hierarchal and rigid structure of political discussion inside the party. A public discussion opened in March 1944 about what the CPA policy on Aborigines should be. In explaining the party's support for the Curtin government's referendum to transfer responsibility for Aboriginal affairs to the federal government, Frank Russell, a leading Victorian functionary, called for a new 'scientific' approach that sought to protect those Aborigines still living under tribal conditions.[29] His views were challenged by Dr Alex Jolly who contended that the vast majority of Australia's '40 or 50,000' Aborigines were already living on the fringes of white society and were no longer in a tribal state.[30] Jolly argued that the party's policy should not force almost tribalised natives to continue 'their precarious existence in the desert'.[31] Finally, Jolly called upon the CPA to oppose the chauvinism of white Australians, which he claimed was largely responsible for the plight of detribalised Aborigines.[32] The discussion was continued

in February 1945. 'Kit Carey' accurately described the plight of Aboriginal workers in rural Queensland and noted that their wages were paid to the government rather then the Aboriginal worker concerned.[33] He went on to reject as 'eyewash' the possibility that Aborigines could be given control of land in outback Australia.[34] Despite these challenges to the party policy on the Curtin government, it remained unchanged.

In 1945 Jean Devanny published *Bird of Paradise*. The aim of the book was 'to tell the world what our people think about the war and the kind of society they would like to see arising out of it …'[35] The book was based on a series of interviews that Devanny conducted as she moved down from Queensland towards Sydney. Bill Young, an 'elderly' Aborigine, spoke with bitter resentment at the system which saw half their wages confiscated and paid directly into a government fund and the many difficulties Aboriginal workers faced when trying to recover their money.[36] He also explained that with the same access to education and other support Aborigines would be able to compete on an equal basis with white workers.[37] The demand for equality with white Australians was to become an integral part of the CPA's policy in the postwar period.

In 1947 the CPA published Gerald Peel's *Isles of the Torres Strait*. Peel's acknowledgement of the contributions made by Richard Dixon, assistant national secretary of the CPA, and prominent communists Ted Laurie, Fred Paterson, Tom Wright and Fred Rose, confirms that the party saw the situation of the Torres Strait Islanders as a major issue that had to be addressed in the postwar period.[38] Peel's interest in the issue arouse came after a Torres Strait Islander visited him at the Sydney CPA offices, as well as discussions Peel had with communist seamen who visited the Islands during the war.[39] The Islander had been encouraged to read political and historical books by an Australian communist whom he had then met. He also met with a number of American and Australian communist seamen; when mixing with them, he said it felt 'like back home'.[40] As a result, he now considered the CPA the only Australian party that was committed to helping his people achieve their aims.[41] At the start of the war many Islanders were hesitant about supporting the Australian war effort given their negative experience with Australian colonialism. After, however, speaking with several Australian trade unionists who were visiting the islands, they were convinced that it was in their long-term interests to fully support the war effort.[42]

Peel's book was aimed specifically at the Queensland labour movement since the Queensland 'Labour' government had the direct responsibility for the governance of the Islands.[43] Peel also called on the federal Labor government to immediately open discussions with the Islanders for the purpose of developing a written constitution and a directly elected government of their own choosing.[44] Along with its strong support of the postwar strike wave and the bans on Dutch shipping in support of Indonesian

independence, Peel's pamphlet provides yet another indicator that the CPA was beginning the process of delineating itself from Labor governments. Peel emphasised that it was not yet possible for a finalised program of demands to be drawn up. The book called for the right of Thursday Islanders to enter the hotels on the island, for increased power for the island councils, and for representation in the Queensland Parliament.[45] Importantly, it recognised the right of the Torres Strait Islanders to secede from Australia if they so chose to do so, which bore similarities with the call for Aboriginal republics of the early 1930s.[46] This recognition of a distinct identity of the Torres Strait Islanders that differed from mainland Aborigines was well in advance of organisations that were campaigning for full human rights of Aborigines. It was not until 1964 that the then Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines (FCAA) changed its name to Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATAI) as recognition of this difference.[47]

The 14th Congress of the CPA was held in August 1945 just as Japan was about to surrender. In his report to the congress J.B. Miles stated that the party had to challenge all signs of racial and national prejudices. While Miles specifically mentioned anti-Semitism it became clear that the CPA intended addressing other unresolved issues.[48] The conference resolution called for 'a rapid advancement in the treatment of all sections of the Aborigines'.[49] The demand was linked to a call for the ending of colonial empires and for the immediate granting of independence to the European colonies in Asia.[50] Just over a year later, at a meeting of the communist parties of the British Empire in early 1947, J.C. Henry, the Australian delegate, stressed that the Australian labour movement had some special responsibilities towards Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Henry also linked their struggles with the colonial oppression by Australia of the peoples of Papua and New Guinea.[51] It was a theme that the CPA often returned to, with the resolutions at the 1951 and 1955 congresses stating that the oppression of the Aborigines and colonial people had its roots in a ruthless and exploitive capitalist system.[52]

In September 1954 the CPA made a major shift in its Aboriginal policy. This has been attributed by one historian to changes that were then occurring in the international communist movement.[53] However, as we have seen, as early as 1944 some party members were already questioning aspects of party policy on Aborigines, and arguably this contributed to the new outlook. The new policy rejected any attempt to divide Aborigines into full-blood and mixed blood and stressed the need for unity between all Aborigines irrespective of their physical makeup. The CPA also abandoned the fiction that significant numbers of Aborigines were still maintaining a traditional lifestyle and recognised that Aborigines were now part of the Australian working class, while

remaining an oppressed national minority.[54] In fact, as early as 1928 the Bleakley report into Aboriginal labour in the Northern Territory recognised that Aboriginal workers were crucial to the functioning of the cattle industry.[55] This trend continued over the next three decades. By 1960, out of 16,000 Aborigines living in the Northern Territory only 400 were classified as living under tribal conditions.[56]

In 1963 the central committee of the CPA issued a draft of a proposed new policy on Aborigines.[57] Its call for contributions to the discussion from a wide range of organisations and individuals show that the CPA was willing to consider alternative views from outside party ranks.[58] In 1967 after an extensive discussion the 21st Congress of the CPA adopted an expanded version of the draft program.[59] It was later described as 'the third most important stage in developing the theoretical analysis and action program for Australia's black minorities'.[60] The strength of the policy was its rejection of assimilation and support for integration — a policy well in advance of both federal and state governments.[61] The policy raised a number of important demands, such as an immediate increase in spending on education, health and housing in Aboriginal and Islander communities, the repeal of all discriminatory legalisation, and a call for these improvements to be made 'in consultation with Aboriginal leaders and communities'.[62] At this stage very few people outside the immediate orbit of the CPA would have recognised the right of Aboriginal people to negotiate on their own behalf. Thus, from the late 1930s to the mid 1960s the CPA was constantly shaping its programmatic understanding of its Aboriginal policy. These changes took place in response to developments at both the international level and changes in Australian society.

However, there was sometimes a gap between what the party hierarchy expected from members, and the way in which members responded to the demands made by the leadership for active involvement in the campaign for Aboriginal equality. In January 1955, Sam Aarons, a leading Western Australian functionary called for increased participation by party members on the issue.[63] Two years later the political committee made similar calls. Its statement emphasised that the organised labour movement should play a leading role in the campaign — an implicit reference to communist trade union activists.[64] The 1967 congress resolution called on all party members to give 'active assistance' and work cooperatively with Aboriginal leaders to build the movement.[65] These repeated calls by party leaders for more involvement by party members suggest that they were, at times, dissatisfied at the response by many members to their demands. W.J. Brown later conceded that there had been some failures to develop strong links with the leaders of the Aboriginal movement.[66] From 1954 to 1956 Brown was editor of *Tribune* at a time when there was an increased coverage of

Aboriginal issues in the paper.[67] This would have made Brown aware of the scope of CPA involvement in the various campaigns around Australia for Aboriginal civil rights. In reality, the situation was similar to that of communist union involvement in the peace movement. It was often less than the party leadership expected or demanded, but many communist union activists remained actively involved in campaigning for Aboriginal civil liberties, irrespective of party leaders' demands.

Aborigines and World War II

As we have seen, the CPA changed its political outlook on Aboriginal issues in 1954. In part, the stimulus for this change can be attributed to the CPA's increased awareness of the changes in Australian society that had occurred over the previous decade. The relationship between Aborigines and white society was profoundly affected by developments during World War II. The war increased the pace of the social change that was already occurring and brought to end the passive acceptance by Aborigines of their oppressive conditions.[68] This development can be traced to a number of factors. One immediate impact was that the destruction of the European colonial empires by the Japanese helped to end the view that white domination was both inevitable and enduring.[69] The contacts that were established between Australian troops, who were moved to the north and west of Australia to defend Australia against a possible Japanese invasion, meant for almost the first time many Australians witnessed the reality of Aboriginal life on the previously remote cattle stations. The troops also worked alongside Aborigines who were employed at the various army camps. More importantly, the armed forces were also generally free of racism that was often widespread in north and western Australia.[70]

A number of communists who were to play an active role in the campaign for Aboriginal human rights spent some time in the Northern Territory during the war. For example, the postwar CPA functionary, Paul Mortier, and the author, Frank Hardy — who was to emerge as a powerful spokesman for the Gurindji in the late 1960s — both spent time at an army base at Mataranka in the Northern Territory from 1942 onwards.[71] Similarly, Ron Hancock, who was to become assistant federal secretary of the BWIU in the late 1940s, was conscripted into the Civil Construction Corp and sent to the Northern Territory to work on urgently needed defence projects. Hancock later became active in helping win BWIU and wider union support for the Tranby Aboriginal Co-Operative College.[72] Along with other communists who had served in the army during the war, their direct experiences of the oppressive Aboriginal conditions undoubtedly provided the stimulus for their later involvement in the campaign for Aboriginal rights.

For many Australians the war was fought on an anti-fascist basis and these features combined to leave a legacy of goodwill towards Aborigines that continued into the post-war period.[73] In December 1945 the Army Educational magazine *Salt* published an entire issue devoted an entire issue to the plight of Aborigines in the Northern Territory. It included an article by Sergeant W. Smith that called for Aborigines to be paid 'what every man is entitled to … a wage sufficient to maintain human dignity'.[74] There was then a significant communist presence on the staff including Vane Lindsay, Jules Freeman, Ambrose Dyson and Frank Hardy.[75] Its enormous circulation of 185,000 copies, each of which was read by at least three people, suggests that the causes that the CPA was supporting at this stage had wide popular support.[76]

In 1942 a meeting of councillors from all the Torres Strait islands had voted, after an extensive discussion, to support the war effort despite their negative experiences with colonisation.[77] Their decision appears to have been influenced by discussions that some Islanders had with members of the Australian forces who in peace time had been militant trade unionists.[78] Even before the war ended Australian troops had demonstrated their support for equal rights for Aborigines. For example, on the Torres Strait Islands, troops had called for the removal of the Department of Native Affairs and for wage equality for Islanders with white troops. They were successful in lifting wages to two-thirds of the 'white' rate.[79] With around 4000 CPA members in the armed forces it was quite likely that there was some communist involvement in this action.[80] Such activity would have formed part of the general political propaganda work in the armed forces that the CPA conducted during the war.[81]

Ex-serviceman's experiences of conditions of Aboriginal workers on the stations continued into the postwar period. During the Pilbara strike, when Don McLeod was speaking about the conditions of Aboriginal workers on the stations from the CPA platform on Perth's Esplanade, his comments were endorsed by the returned servicemen who were present.[82] This was at a time when many returned servicemen were violently anti-communist and their response indicated that at least on this issue the CPA had the potential to gain wider public support for one of its campaigns. One example was Jim McClelland, then a Trotskyist and later a minister in the Whitlam government. He served 10 months on Bathurst Island, where he came to admire the Tiwi and their good fortune in escaping the brutal treatment that had been inflicted on the Aborigines on the mainland.[83]

Until the start of the war the overwhelming majority of Aborigines lived in rural areas of Australia and their contact with the rest of the Australian working class was relatively limited. The conscription of tens of thousands of Australian workers opened up the labour market and for the first time significant numbers of Aboriginal workers

obtained employment at award rates and conditions. Many Aborigines moved to the urban areas to take advantage of the new job opportunities. Melbourne's Aboriginal population increased rapidly and due to the high demand for labour, there was jobs for those who wanted work, including Aboriginal women.[84] Hundreds of Aborigines also moved to Sydney where many worked in the munitions industry.[85] This brought them into regular contact with either the FIA or the SMWU, the major unions in the industry, both of which had a strong communist presence. Other New South Aborigines, freed from the 'Dog Collar Act' that previously restricted their movements, moved to rural centres such as Coffs Harbour, Nowra, Kempsey, Bega, and Yass where there were new also job opportunities.[86]

In Western Australia according to government reports, Aboriginal employment increased from 3198 in June 1939 to 5625 in June 1944. However, since many employers never applied for the permits that were officially needed to employ Aborigines, the reports underestimated the number of Aborigines working.[87] In the south of Western Australia, Aborigines secured employment as unskilled or semi-skilled workers at award rates.[88] A similar situation existed in the north where Aborigines obtained work in industries that had been previously denied to them.[89] These developments increased the contact between Aboriginal workers and the CPA. Some of those impressed with the CPA's strong commitment to Aboriginal equality even joined the party.[90]

In Perth, CPA branches protested against the appalling living conditions on the Wydgie Road and other town camps.[91] CPA support for Aborigines was also displayed in Port Hedland in 1942. Don McLeod from the Anti-Fascist League, which had strong links to the CPA, helped organise a protest meeting after a recently arrived colonel attempted to declare the area a prohibited area, which would have barred Aborigines from working.[92] The meeting carried resolutions demanding that 'half-castes' be immediately given equal status with white workers and that there should be an investigation into how the conditions of Aboriginal station workers could be improved.[93] There was already a deep-seated anger by Aborigines at an economic system that paid them considerably less than the white workers they worked alongside.[94] However, this resentment, as we shall see, was to remain curtailed until the end of the war when it erupted in the most significant strikes of Aboriginal labour.

In 1944 the Curtin government's attempt to gain increased federal power in 14 different areas, including control over Aboriginal issues, was decisively rejected by Australian voters.[95] Such powers would have given the federal government the ability to overrule state legalisation. For example, the Western Australian Labor government in 1944 passed the Western Australian Native (Citizen Rights) Act. At the time it was hailed as 'progressive', but in reality it continued to impose harsh conditions on

Aborigines who sought acceptance by white society.[96] It was with expectations that repressive laws like this would be abolished that the CPA campaigned strongly in support of the proposed constitutional changes.[97] The negative vote effectively ended any intention of the federal government to take any action to improve the conditions of Aborigines. This became apparent when Chifley rejected a call for federal expenditure on Aboriginal affairs to match state spending.[98] When the Aboriginal activist, William Ferguson, protested at the absence of any mention of Aborigines in Chifley's 1946 election speech, he was informed by John Tonkin, acting for Chifley, that due to the defeat of the referendum, the issue was a matter for the states.[99]

In a report to the central committee in February 1947, Tom Wright accused the Chifley government of continuing the policies of its predecessors and refusing to grant Aborigines full equality with white Australians.[100] For example, in 1946 the Chifley government banned Aboriginal servicemen from serving in the Japanese occupation forces.[101] Despite the fact that around 1000 Aborigines had served in the armed forces during the war, Frank Forde, the minister for the army, argued that no Aboriginal serviceman could meet the high physical and educational standards that were required.[102] A strong protest movement was launched led by the Australian Aborigines' League which called a public meeting that recommended full citizenship for Aborigines and the lifting of the ban.[103] Despite these protests the ban remained in place.[104] At the United Nations Evatt resisted all attempts to examine Australia's treatment of Aborigines arguing that it should only intervene if international peace was threatened.[105] It was at this time that major political differences were opening up between the CPA and the ALP, and Aboriginal policy was to be another arena in which there were clear divisions between the two parties.

In Queensland Aborigines worked on the canelfields and the railways. It led to permanent changes in their lives, and recognition that they were now considered valuable members of the community. For some it meant eventual home and car ownership.[106] Willie Thaiday, who had been sent to the punishment centre on Palm Island in 1932, left the island in 1942 and worked as an agricultural labourer on the Atherton Tablelands for four years.[107] However, the gains made by Aboriginal workers were often uneven. In 1942 Aboriginal station hands walked off Lake Nash cattle station in protest against receiving only rations, cloths and boots as wages. They gained an increase of £1 a month — which they saw as a victory.[108] The majority of employers of Aboriginal labour considered that the wartime experiences of Aborigines, particularly those who had worked for the army and received good wages, had 'ruined' them and they would have to be shown 'their place' once the war ended.[109] In the postwar period the CPA responded to this new situation and increased its support for

the Aboriginal movement.

CPA union activists and Aborigines

From the mid-1930s Tom Wright, the federal president of the SMWU, was one of the consistent communist union activists in the campaign for Aboriginal rights. Even anti-communists were prepared, on occasions, to accept that Wright's support for Aborigines derived from a genuine commitment and was not simply the product of his communist views. Shortly after his appointment as the minister of the interior in the Menzies government, Paul Hasluck had several conversations with Wright. While Hasluck believed that the CPA was intent on stirring up racial divisions, he accepted that Wright's actions, in contrast, flowed from a deep interest in the issue.[110] Len Fox, who wrote extensively on the history of the Aboriginal movement, acknowledged Wright as a pioneer of the movement and one of the first Australians on the left to speak out consistently in support of their civil liberties.[111] Joe McGinness, an Aboriginal communist union activist, acknowledged this role by explaining that Wright's pamphlet, *New Deal for the Aborigines*, was one of the crucial steps that led to the formation of the Federal Council of Aboriginal Affairs (FCAA).[112] Wright's advice to Gerald Peel helped to shape many of the ideas contained in his book *Isles of the Torres Strait: An Australian Responsibility*.[113] Wright's central role in the publication of two of the CPA's major theoretical statements on Aboriginal issues demonstrates both his strong commitment and an extensive knowledge of the issues involved.

Wright's interest in the Aboriginal movement developed from the time when he was a young man working in rural areas.[114] It was a commitment he maintained after moving to Sydney even though as a leading trade union functionary he may have had little direct contact with Aborigines.[115] He was intimately involved, however, in Aboriginal political issues that emerged from the 1930s onwards. In August 1934, Wright helped to organise a public campaign to oppose a death sentence that had been imposed on Tucker, a Northern Territory Aboriginal, after he had killed a Japanese pearler to protect some Aboriginal women.[116] During the official celebrations in 1938 to mark the sesquicentenary of white settlement, Wright along with other communists gave active support to the Aboriginal-organised Day of Mourning and Protest, which challenged the myth of a benign development of white Australian society.[117] However, Wright and the CPA faced accusations from Bill Ferguson, one of the Aboriginal organisers, that they had retained most of the money raised for the campaign for their own use.[118] As vice-president of the New South Wales Labor Council, Wright was instrumental in gaining the support of the Council for these issues.[119] In 1944 he strongly supported the Curtin government's attempt to take

control for Aboriginal affairs away from the states and centre policy development at the federal level.[120] Wright's active involvement with many of the key Aboriginal campaigns of this era demonstrates his longstanding commitment to the Aboriginal human rights.

As a delegate to the Comintern Wright accepted its insistence that the CPA pay increased attention to Aboriginal issues.[121] However, his framework was shaped by the distortions that the Stalinist leadership increasingly imposed on the Comintern from the 1928 onwards. Wright's outlook was also influenced by his contact with the liberal anthropologists Olive Pink and Donald Thomson. From them he accepted the view that tribal Aborigines should be totally isolated from white society so that their culture would not be destroyed.[122] This meant, according to Wright, that 'full-blood' Aborigines also had to be separated from 'part' Aborigines.[123] He also insisted that the term 'Aborigine' did not apply to people of mixed descent living in urban centres.[124] In the postwar period Wright called on the trade union movement to give active support to Aborigines struggling for their rights. This assumed a practical form when his union levied its members for several years to support the strike by the Pilbara station workers.[125]

Wright continued to view those people of 'mixed race' who insisted on calling themselves Aborigines as being 'confused and misled' by government policy.[126] In March 1954 the NSW SMWU protested to Paul Hasluck against the employment of Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory mica mines. The union argued that the low wages of £2 a week and the dangerous working conditions were a new form of slave labour.[127] Unlike other unions, which often sought to limit the entry of Aboriginal workers into industry, Wright and the CPA argued that that there should be no barriers to Aboriginal workers entering industry provided they received the same pay and working conditions as other workers. In January 1957, after the Graydon Report revealed the terrible living conditions of Aborigines in the Warburton Ranges, Western Australia, Wright played an active role in supporting a resolution by the NSW Labor Council executive calling on the ACTU to lodge a protest with the federal government.[128]

Olive Pink commenced her involvement in the Aboriginal rights movement in the 1930s. She developed links with Sydney's communist, feminist and labour movements as she attempted to develop wider support for the campaign in the late 1930s.[129] It was natural for her to work closely with Wright who was, as we have seen, consistently acting in support of the emerging Aboriginal movement. In February 1950 Wright was instrumental in the publication by *Communist Review* of an open letter by Pink. The letter condemned plans by Aranda artist, Albert Namatjira, to establish a pastoral station on another tribe's land.[130] The core of Pink's argument was very similar to the

views that both the CPA and Wright had advocated for many years. Wright's views today would be considered not only mistaken, but reveal a flawed understanding of Aboriginal identity. But his outlook which did not start to change until the 1960s was shared, by many of those involved in the movement for Aboriginal equality. His opposition to the dominant assimilation policies of the era, as well as his record of active support for the Aboriginal movement over three decades, are more important in weighing up his contribution than some of his mistaken views.

In Western Australia, when the strike by Aboriginal station workers in the Pilbara commenced in May 1946, Don McLeod emerged as one of one of the most prominent communist activists in the state. His vigorous public advocacy of the key issues of the strike ensured that he became the symbol of the communist attempts to change the unequal relationships between white and Aboriginal Australia. His involvement in the strike occurred despite attempts by the Western Australian government to intimidate him and being told repeatedly that the issue of Aboriginal workers conditions was nothing to do with him.[131]

McLeod was born in Meekatharra and after leaving school at 15 worked as a prospector, well-sinker and contract worker.[132] As a son of a miner in a large family of eight children, whose mother died when McLeod was only four, it is quite possible that his childhood experiences gave him an initial strong sense of social justice that was to dominate his social and political outlook in his adult life.[133] However, it was not until 1935 while working with Alex Fenton, a British migrant, at the Silver Sheen asbestos mine, that he started to develop an increased awareness of the problems faced by Aborigines in Western Australia.[134] By 1937, after years of working in the bush with Aborigines, McLeod had come to understand the need for a fundamental change in the treatment of Aboriginal people. He was now prepared to play an active role in any campaign that emerged to challenge the oppressive conditions that ruled most aspects of their lives.[135]

What characterised McLeod's approach to Aborigines was its fundamental contrast to the many religious organisations that were also active in Aboriginal issues. He specifically rejected the religious idealism that often said 'We must uplift our unfortunate (but inferior) black brothers'.[136] McLeod firmly believed in absolute racial equality and after the start of involvement in Aboriginal politics frequently acted on this belief. For example, when working in the Ashburton River region in 1937 he transported a sick Aborigine who was in need of urgent medical treatment to hospital. Such acts led to other Aborigines to trust him.[137] In contrast with other employers who hired contract Aboriginal workers McLeod paid his workers well and treated them with respect.[138] This also earned him the trust of Aborigines, a rare feature for a white man in this period.[139] Along with Wright, McLeod was a vocal opponent of assimilation

viewing it as leading to the total destruction of Aboriginal culture.[140] It was a position that McLeod maintained after he left the CPA. In 1960, the community that had been established in the aftermath of the Pilbara strike divided over the schooling of Aboriginal children, which McLeod and his supporters viewed as yet another attempt to drive children away from their parents.[141]

By the early 1940s McLeod was in close contact with the CPA in Perth. This was precipitated by McLeod's regular listening to Bill Beeby, whose radio program each night on 6AM-PM was presented on behalf of the Anti-Fascist League, a group with strong ties to the CPA.[142] McLeod then established a branch of the League in Port Hedland and started to distribute its pamphlets and raise funds for the organisation.[143] It was in this period that he started to see Marxism as explaining Aboriginal oppression and its possible solution.[144] Dorothy Hewett, the communist author, who met McLeod when he came to Perth to mobilise support for the strike, described him as having read the Marxist classics with Aboriginal elders under the glare of a hurricane lantern and dreaming of a strike by the Pilbara workers.[145] Graham Alcorn, the Perth CPA functionary, considered that McLeod's knowledge of Marxism and his fundamental view of the centrality of the working class as the key agents of social change were important factors in the eventual success of the strike.[146] As an active trade unionist McLeod had helped to transform the AWU branch on the Port Hedland wharf into a strong and militant section.[147] McLeod had also read Wright's pamphlet and this had helped to further consolidated his understanding of the Aboriginal issue.[148]

As the momentum built towards a strike McLeod's identification, with the CPA was total. McLeod explained that he had joined the party because it was the only organisation that could offer practical assistance to the unfolding struggle.[149] In July 1944 McLeod wrote to Ernie Thornton, the FIA Federal secretary, describing himself as a secret CPA member with the task of organising the Aboriginal people.[150] McLeod was also in regular contract with the communist author Katherine Susanna Prichard who took the letters into the party headquarters so that they would be aware of the developing struggle.[151] In March 1946, shortly before the planned commencement of the strike, McLeod attended the 12th State Conference of the Western Australia branch of the CPA. After speaking to a session of the conference detailing the unfolding struggle and his role within it, McLeod received sustained applause and the total support of the CPA to achieve the demands of the Aboriginal workers.[152] His performance earned him the respect of J.B. Miles, the party's national secretary, who was attending the conference.[153] With the victory of fascism having been achieved, the CPA now considered it had the responsibility of defeating the remaining elements of racism in Australian society. It was through the role of McLeod and the absolute trust

he had of the Aboriginal workers, that the CPA now had the opportunity to achieve this aim.

McLeod's public identification with the CPA became a focal point of the attack on him and the aims of the strike.[154] It also helped to fuel an anti-communist hysteria. At one stage McLeod was threatened with a rifle by a publican who claimed he had fought in the army for six years to keep Australia free from Communism, and if McLeod did not leave Port Hedland by the next day his head would be blown off. McLeod replied that it was only due to the contribution of the Soviet Union that German fascism was defeated.[155] Yet — and this is significant — McLeod's role during the strike was not that of a traditional communist trade union leader, at the head of a group of strikers directing the course of events. At all times McLeod worked through the Aboriginal community leaders and this provided his links with the strikers.[156] As Rowley assessed it, McLeod's role during the strike was one of 'giving advice when asked for it, and continuing to give it when the recipients had not followed it, but had come back again'.[157] In his autobiography McLeod stressed the central role of the Aboriginal organisers Dooley Bin Bin and Clancy McKenna in establishing the groundwork for the strike.[158] Before the commencement of the strike McLeod had frequent conversations with them aimed at convincing them that they had the ability to organise their communities and then act as strike leaders.[159] McLeod's membership of the CPA provided the links to the trade union movement and the support necessary if the strike was to be successful. McLeod was to leave the CPA around 1950 possibly in response to the decline of party involvement in Aboriginal issues.[160] His isolation from major urban centres where the CPA was mainly based, as well as his unconventional style of organising, may have provided additional reasons to let his party membership lapse.[161]

Many Western Australian communists believed that since WA had the largest population of Aborigines, they had a particular responsibility to challenge the institutionalised racist system that had been established in the state.[162] The CPA's total support for the Pilbara strikers shows that words were often followed by actions. However, as the experience with Don McLeod illustrates, it was difficult for the CPA to maintain consistent involvement after a particular struggle had reached its peak and started to ebb away. From the late 1940s onwards, the CPA became increasingly preoccupied with the fight to defend its legal existence. This drew it away from other political struggles including, at times, the Aboriginal movement. The problem would have been more acute in smaller branches like the Western Australian branch with its small membership and limited financial resources. McLeod's absolute commitment to the cause of Aboriginal equality was something the CPA could not always match.

However, it is clear that at the start of the Pilbara strike, McLeod's outlook and actions were shaped by his close connection with the CPA.

Other communist union activists provided practical assistance to Aboriginal families when they faced difficult situations in their lives. In Perth in 1944 communists and Eureka Youth League members helped organise a demonstration after some Aboriginal families were evicted from some condemned houses they had occupied.[163] When the Crabbe family moved to Fremantle during World War II and were unable to find suitable accommodation, Paddy Troy used his influence to find them a house as well as a school for the children.[164] During the Pilbara strike Troy played an important role in helping to mobilise trade union support for the strikers. The CDRHWU endorsed the strike and imposed a levy of sixpence a week on each member to help sustain the strikers. The union also convinced the Fremantle District Council to support the strike and several other District Councils adopted similar resolutions.[165] Several other District Councils were vocal in their condemnation of both A.A.M. Coverley, the minister for the north west, and the Wise government's failure to address the issue of Aboriginal inequality.[166] Since the District Councils were effectively under the control of the ALP, the resolutions were a clear indication of the changing attitudes towards Aboriginal workers in the broader labour movement.

A similar situation existed in Queensland where successive Labor governments continued to administer a system that was as oppressive as the Western Australian system. Again, this placed the onus on the CPA trade union activists to mobilise to defeat the institutionalised racism that threatened to divide the working class along racial lines. However, unlike the Western Australian CPA branch, which remained small with only a limited influence in the trade union movement, the Queensland CPA grew to a relatively mass party with deep roots in many Queensland communities. This was particularly the case in North Queensland where the party was able to build significant bases of support for their policies.[167] While this support ebbed as the Cold War hysteria intensified, the still significant CPA presence in the trade unions in places such as Townsville and Cairns meant there were many opportunities to build alliances between the trade unions and Aborigines.

At the end of 1945 the communist barrister Ted Laurie commenced work as a research assistant with the Queensland Trades and Labour Council. He helped to gather information that underpinned the union claims for the 40-hour week and for an increase in the basic wage.[168] Laurie also obtained information on the pay and working conditions of Thursday Island workers which Peel used in *Isles of the Torres Strait*.[169] This contribution, along with that of Wright's, confirms the often close connection between communist trade union activists and the Aboriginal movement.

There were similar trends in other parts of Queensland. As a young child growing up on the Atherton Tablelands, Jack Mundey witnessed the oppressive conditions that faced many Aborigines, including a de facto system of forced labour.[170] From his father he absorbed the view that that this exploitation must end and that the government should 'look after them'.[171] Few communists of this era would have had this direct experience of the oppressive conditions faced by rural Aborigines. It was an experience that was to remain with him when he became involved with the trade union movement. A number of Aboriginal activists, as we shall see, were members of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) at the same time as Mundey was starting to challenge the corrupt right-wing leadership. Their influence can be seen when the union in the 1960s became a sponsor of the Redfern All Black Rugby League Football Club.[172]

In 1961 Brian Manning was secretary of the Darwin branch of the CPA. Shortly after he had arrived in Darwin in 1956, he met an Aboriginal man from Echo Island who educated him about the institutionalised wage discrimination faced by Aboriginal workers. This convinced Manning of the justice of the Aboriginal struggle for equality. As a result he joined the CPA, which he considered to be the only party at the time that had a progressive policy on Aborigines.[173] At the 19th Congress of the CPA in 1961, where he was a delegate, Manning spoke about the oppressive conditions of Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory. In Melbourne, after the congress, Manning had discussions with Shirley Andrews and Barry Christophers who were two of the central leaders of the Council for Aboriginal Rights (CAR). They provided him with a copy of the CAR constitution which Manning took back to Darwin. Both Andrews and Christophers were members of the CPA.[174] After his return to Darwin Manning, along with another communist Terry Robinson, played a key role in helping to establish the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights (NTCAR).[175] Since the majority of Aborigines were illiterate in English one of the crucial roles that communist activists such as Manning performed in the NTCAR was to transcribe the Aboriginal activists views into understandable English.[176] Communists in Darwin and elsewhere in Australia were instrumental in helping to establish what was to become the most significant voice for Aboriginal rights in the Northern Territory.

The formation of the NTCAR brought a swift response from the Northern Territory administration. The director of welfare refused permission for the NTCAR to conduct meetings in halls controlled by the branch.[177] Its Aboriginal leaders were harassed, a clear attempt to break the connection between them and CPA activists.[178] The fear of communist involvement would have been heightened by Manning's central role as Darwin secretary of the CPA.[179] His active involvement in the issue is also an indication of the commitment of the priority of many communist union activists to the

issue of Aboriginal equality. This would have been particularly true in the Northern Territory where Aborigines were a significant factor in the workforce. Other local communists, including George and Moria Gibbs, became the most prominent European supporters of the organisation.[180] The situation led the editor of the *Northern Territory News* to call on other whites to join the organisation to undermine communist influence. However, there was no response and white communists continued to be almost the only European supporters of the NTCAR.[181]

During the period of the CPA's illegality during World War II, Jack McPhillips, assistant secretary of the FIA, was transferred to Darwin to strengthen the leadership of the NAWU.[182] It was the first step towards the CPA winning the majority of leadership positions in the union. During the period of communist leadership of the union between 1946-1952, the NAWU gave strong support to strikes by Aboriginal workers as well the general campaign for Aboriginal equality.[183] The election of the new conservative leadership of the union in late 1952 meant there was an effective abandonment of any support for the campaign for Aboriginal equality. During the 1950s CAR repeatedly called on the leadership of the AWU and NAWU to campaign for equal pay and working conditions for Aboriginal workers.[184] However, it was left to the NTCAR to campaign on this issue. After the NAWU conservative leadership had withdrawn its rural organisers, the NTCAR produced a report which exposed the conditions of Aboriginal workers on the cattle stations.[185] Thus, the appearance of an organisation that upheld the earlier traditions of the NAWU of support for Aboriginal equality deepened the already festering divisions in the union.

Shortly after its formation the NTCAR applied for affiliation to the NAWU, a move that was rejected by the union leadership.[186] The decision was based on the leadership's claims that the NTCAR was communist-controlled and intended to be used as a means of regaining control of the union.[187] Yet, the reality was somewhat different from this crude and inaccurate portrayal of the NTCAR. When the organisation was established it was Manning who drew up the constitution that ensured that Aborigines had control of the organisation.[188] In adopting this approach Manning replicated the actions of McLeod who believed that Aborigines should provide the leadership for the campaign for equality. Along with the Cairns Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander Advancement League, the NTCAR was the only Aboriginal civil rights organisation of this era that had a majority of its members who were of Aboriginal or Islander descent.[189]

The NTCAR quickly became the main public face of Aboriginal protest in the Northern Territory. It claimed to have over 300 members.[190] This was at a time when the NAWU said that it only had 50 Aboriginal members.[191] These figures confirm

Stevens' claim that the conservative leadership of the NAWU was reluctant to recruit large numbers of Aboriginal workers for fear of increasing the size of the anti-leadership forces inside the union.[192] The NTCAR could with some justification claim to be the real representative voice of Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory. One of the main foci of Aboriginal civil rights organisations in this era was on the wages and conditions of Aboriginal workers.[193] The sharp contrast in policy on the issue between the two organisations was bound to lead to an escalation in the conflict between them. When the union leadership continued to refuse to act on Aboriginal issues, NTCAR organised a series of demonstrations inside and outside the union's Darwin office.[194] However, these demonstrations had no immediate impact on the union's policies. It was left to the NTCAR to act on industrial and other issues for its Aboriginal members.[195]

In 1966 the communist author, Frank Hardy, arrived in Darwin to renew his friendship with Cecil Holmes.[196] It was a time when Hardy was under enormous pressure from a combination of financial, personal and political crises in his life.[197] His visit resulted in the publication of *The Unlucky Australians*, an epic account of the strike by Aboriginal workers at the Wave Hill cattle station and the start of the modern land rights movement.[198] Its publication was to open bitter divisions in the CPA as Hardy was sharply critical of the actions of the local CPA branch. Hardy described the local branch as 'something of a caricature more noted for northern anarchy than Marxism.[199] He was less jaundiced in some other descriptions: he wrote of George Gibbs, a former NAWU official, that 'there was no doubting his knowledge of the Territory and its cattle industry'.[200] Similarly, Hardy acknowledged that Manning 'spoke of the Aborigines with warmth and was clearly determined to take up his work for them where he left off'.[201] A somewhat different view was offered by Holmes who acknowledged that the Darwin Waterside Workers led by George Gibbs, Brian Manning and Bill Donnelly — 'stout party comrades' — had played a key role in organising support for the strikers.[202] Hardy's comments were related to the complex situation that was emerging in the NAWU and how best CPA activists could relate to the union leadership. He described them as being 'dispirited by long years of work without sufficient result'.[203] This was an acknowledgement that even after losing their union positions CPA activists had continued to struggle for Aboriginal equality.

Aboriginal activists and the CPA

The CPA's strong support for the emerging Aboriginal rights movement and its consistent opposition to the White Australia Policy meant that many of the new Aboriginal activists saw the CPA as the only means through which they could pursue their

political goals. In this era the overwhelming majority of Aborigines were working class and their first contact with the CPA would have usually been the product of encounters with communists in the workplace. For example, after working as a builder's labourer, Chicka Dixon started work on the Sydney waterfront commencing in the 1960s. His political activity was the start of his political education. He acknowledged that the CPA were 'masters of organising' and was convinced it gave him the best political education he ever received.[204] Other Aborigines had contact with communist union activists in the various Aboriginal rights organisations that were established in the post-war period. However, the repressive laws that regulated every aspect of an Aborigine's life often prevented Aboriginal people from joining the CPA. In Western Australia, despite the party's strong support for the Pilbara workers and its opposition to discrimination in Perth, some Aborigines hesitated to join the party because of the fear of possible retribution by state authorities.[205]

In Queensland, the prevailing anti-communist political culture meant that white activists who spoke out in support of Aboriginal rights needed considerable courage, because the movement had been portrayed as the product of communist propaganda.[206] The aim of the was clearly intended to prevent unity between progressive white activists and Aborigines who were beginning to challenge their inferior status. This reached a peak in mid-1961 when forces linked to the DLP and various church denominations were successful in temporarily dissolving the Queensland branch of the FCAA. The dissidents established the One People of Australia League from which known communists were excluded.[207]

Louise West, a Sydney Aborigine, joined the CPA in 1942 when the party was still illegal. Her decision was influenced by her socialist grandfather and her support for the Soviet Union's resistance to the German invasion.[208] One of the first party meetings she attended was a lecture on chauvinism and this helped to convince her it was an organisation for all oppressed people.[209] Her experiences of party life, in which she later assumed important roles, would have confirmed these first impressions. Like other members she started to educate herself in Marxist theory and read pamphlets such as Stalin's *The Foundations of Leninism*.[210] West later became secretary of the Surry Hills branch and after studying other Marxist texts became a class tutor.[211] Her political education was further developed by her husband, Dominic James MacLoughin, a New Zealand communist. However, he was averse to her political involvement and the marriage broke up.[212] At this time West did not consider herself to be an Aborigine. She accepted the party view that urbanised or 'part' Aborigines were now members of the Australian working class and had thereby ceased to be Aboriginal.[213] West started to become increasingly involved in the Aboriginal movement in the 1950s and drifted

out of the party in the late 1960s.[214] Importantly, despite leaving the CPA she continued to maintain many of the ideas she had absorbed in the party.

A similar political evolution was made by the Aboriginal poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal, formerly known as Kath Walker. Her movement towards the CPA was shaped by her struggle to raise her children as a single mother, and encounters with racism in suburban Brisbane in the early 1940s.[215] Walker joined the CPA in 1943 because it was the only party that opposed the White Australia Policy.[216] Walker's membership only lasted to 1946 and like thousands of other Australians she left the party after its wartime popularity had rapidly eroded.[217] Walker later acknowledged that she was 'damn proud' to admit that the CPA had done a good job in educating her about politics.[218] An important reason why she left the CPA was that the leadership wanted to write her speeches for her and she was not prepared to accept this.[219] The clash between Walker and the party hierarchy underlined some of the difficulties that faced some Aboriginal activists in the party. A hierarchal party that demanded absolute loyalty contrasted with an emerging Aboriginal political consciousness that wanted to control their own future. Those Aboriginal activists who were also active trade unionists encountered fewer problems in maintaining their party membership.

About 1933 Patrick Sullivan Hume's family moved to Fremantle.[220] His father started working on the Fremantle wharf and became an active member of the Ship Painters and Dockers' Union taking part in the industrial struggles to improve pay and working conditions as well as campaigns to support overseas seamen who were often being underpaid.[221] In 1947 aged around 21 years old Patrick, followed his father onto the wharf where he also became an active unionist taking part in many picket lines and rallies.[222] Neither of them seemed to have encountered any racism during their union activity. Their acceptance by other union members is an indication of the withering away of the once dominant racial prejudices that were once widespread in the trade unions. Whilst it remains unclear if they joined the CPA, their support for militant trade unionism would have brought them into contact with communist activists such as Paddy Troy who had a high profile in the Fremantle area. These links were, presumably, strengthened by the strong support that the CPA was giving the Pilbara strikers at this time. For many Aboriginal activists it seemed that communist-led unions were among the organisations most likely committed to Aboriginal equality.

Charles Leon was born in Foster (NSW) in 1900. At the age of 16 his formal schooling ended and he commenced work on the Tasmanian wharves.[223] In the early 1950s he was living in Sydney and working as a builder's labourer. This brought him into contact with communist union activists such as Jack Mundey, who were challenging the then conservative leadership of the union.[224] As a member of the CPA in the 1950s

Leon was a member at a time when it faced a very real threat of being driven underground by the Menzies government.[225] For Leon the crucial difference between the Liberal and Labor parties, when compared to the CPA, was that whilst the two major parties wanted 'to do things for us', the CPA 'was not for charity but for our dignity'.[226] It was a telling difference and helps to explain why so many Aboriginal activists were or had been members of the CPA. Leon acknowledged that the party had taught him a lot, particularly the lesson that if you fought hard and long enough you would eventually achieve your aims.[227] When the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF) was established, Leon left the CPA because the Fellowship 'was doing what the party was talking about'.[228] Implicit in this statement was a criticism that the CPA could not do all that its Aboriginal members wanted. Despite his resignation from the party, Leon stressed that the AAF and other Aboriginal organisations continued to maintain strong links with the trade unions, many of which would have been communist-led.[229]

Ray Peckham was another Aboriginal activist who was also a member of the BLF and the CPA.[230] He came from a family background of involvement in political activity with his father supporting William Ferguson in Dubbo in the 1930s.[231] In 1932, his father, Tom Peckham, and another Aboriginal activist, Ted Taylor, were instrumental in the CPA-led Unemployed Workers' Movement decision to protest the refusal of rations to unemployed Aborigines and to campaign for the abolition of the Protection Board.[232] Ray Peckham's close connection to the party became clear when he joined the Australian delegation to the 1951 Berlin World Youth Festival.[233] The particular problems faced by some Aboriginal activists are shown when Peckham had to apply to the superintendent of the Aboriginal Welfare Board for permission to travel, which was initially refused.[234]

In his political activity Peckham emphasised the important role of trade unions in assisting the struggle for Aboriginal equality. Peckham worked closely with Dick Hunter, an Aborigine from Broome in Western Australia, who moved to Sydney in the 1950s. Hunter had worked as a seaman along the Australian coast and this experience resulted in joining the CPA.[235] At the 1961 conference of the FCAA, Peckham representing the South Coast Labor Council (SCLC), reported that he had won union support to help house Aboriginal people in their own homes despite local opposition.[236] Peckham had been instrumental in the SCLC establishing an Aboriginal Advancement Committee to campaign on this and similar issues.[237] In 1963 with another Aboriginal trade unionist, Monty Maloney, Peckham established *The Aboriginal Worker*, which called on Aborigines to be active in their unions. It was almost certainly one of the first newspapers to be aimed directly at Aboriginal workers.[238] In 1964, despite having the support of the CPA, Peckham's challenge to Faith Bandler for the position of NSW state secretary

of FCAA was defeated. His continued stress on the central role of trade unions in the struggle for Aboriginal equality as well as his links to union organisations such as the communist-led SCLC confirm that he had absorbed many of his political ideas during his CPA membership.

In his autobiography Joe McGinness acknowledged the important contribution made by trade unions to the campaign for Aboriginal equality as well the personal support given to him by his own union, the WWF.[239] His political involvement commenced during the Depression when he took part in demonstrations of the unemployed, one of which camped out on the veranda of the Government offices in Darwin for almost a week.[240] However, it was his 20 years of active involvement with the WWF, first as a branch delegate and later as a member of the Executive Committee of the Cairns branch of the WWF that contributed most to the furthering of his political education.[241] Earlier, during World War II, when stationed in Borneo, McGinness noticed but did not fully understand until some years later, the positive lesson of the Dyak resistance to colonisation.[242] In the immediate postwar period CPA leaders, such as Graham Alcorn, would link the independence movements in the Pacific with the Aboriginal struggle in Australia. It was his membership of both the CPA and the WWF that did much to further his political development.

In 1958, the Cairns Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders Association was established in response to a growing number of complaints about instances of racial discrimination, Joe McGinness was elected secretary. It received strong support from the Cairns Trade and Labour Council which had been the only white organisation to respond to instances of racial discrimination.[243] What was unique about the Cairns Association was that, in contrast compared with similar advancement leagues around Australia, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders formed the majority of the membership and held all the main executive positions.[244]

Bill Onus was another Aboriginal activist who consciously chose to work with the CPA on a range of political issues, not just those that were linked to Aboriginal issues. From the mid-1940s onwards he spoke at numerous organisations including the ALP, Liberal Party, CPA and various trade unions. The aim of these addresses was to mobilise support to effect fundamental changes in the way Aborigines were treated.[245] He worked as a clerk on the Melbourne waterfront.[246] Despite being a member of the ALP he became a supporter of the APC. His willingness to speak from communist platforms led to claims that he was also a 'communist' with the result that he was barred entry to the United States.[247] This action confirmed the fears that some Aborigines harboured about joining the CPA or working with it had foundation. However, it did not prevent Onus from continuing to be involved in peace-related

issues. In 1957, Onus along with other individuals and a range of organisations, including the CPA, he protested against the appalling living conditions of Aborigines in the Laverton-Warburton area of Central Australia where they had been displaced due to the British atomic testing at Maralinga.[248] As was the case 10 years earlier with the Woomera Rocket Range protests, the linkage between Aboriginal rights, perceived defence priorities and the CPA meant the protests failed to change government policy.

In 1959 'Eddie' Koiki Mabo commenced work on the Queensland Railways; it was the beginning of his involvement with the trade union movement. He became the union delegate on the Townsville-Mount Isa rail project and then urged other Aborigines to join trade unions.[249] In 1962, Mabo became the first secretary of the Aboriginal Advancement League where he worked closely with CPA union activists such as Eddie Heilbronn, Bill Timms, Bill Irving and Fred Thompson.[250] Mabo established close links with the communist-led Townsville Trades and Labour Council and attended their fortnightly meetings as an observer.[251] There, the trade union leaders refused to speak out on behalf of Aborigines, but they encouraged any Aboriginal attendee to raise any issue they were concerned about.[252] This arrangement was unique in trade union peak bodies and underscored the CPA's ongoing commitment to Aboriginal human rights.

In 1961 Monty Maloney, a builders' labourer, was elected as a BWIU international delegate to tour Eastern Europe and attend the twelfth anniversary celebrations of the establishment of East Germany. Soon after his return to Australia he joined the CPA.[253] His trip was an echo of earlier trips by other communist Aboriginal activists such as Faith Bandler. In contrast Australia, with its oppressive racial system still in existence, the Soviet Union, with its claimed guarantees of ethnic and national rights, appeared to many of the 1950s Aboriginal activists as a model of how multiracial societies could be built. The belief that the Soviet Union had successfully eradicated all racial prejudice within a generation after the Bolshevik revolution, was embodied by the Afro-American activist and singer Paul Robeson.[254] His visit to Australia in 1961 and his comments on the plight of the Warburton Ranges Aborigines would have fuelled government's suspicions that Aboriginal activism was the product of communist manipulation.[255]

According to an ASIO report, Maloney declared at a CPA conference that 'I don't refer to myself now as an Aborigine but as a communist'.[256] If accurately reported, the attitude is consistent with how many communists viewed urbanised Aborigines. It also is similar to the recollections of the Sydney Aboriginal activist, Louise West. Yet the same report adds that Maloney in the same speech constantly referred to Indigenous people as 'my people'. For many Aboriginal communists this conflict between the two identities appeared to be insurmountable within the one organisation.

This eventually led to many Aboriginal communists leaving the party so that they could directly pursue the campaign for Aboriginal equality. This did not end the linkage between Aboriginal activists and the CPA. At the 1962 FCAA conference Maloney stressed that the Aboriginal civil rights movement should look towards the working class for fundamental changes to their conditions rather than rely on the goodwill of politicians.[257] As we have seen, unions such as the WWF, were consistent supporters of the Aboriginal movement and this helped maintain the linkage between Aboriginal activists and the CPA.

The Pilbara strike

As we have seen, Don McLeod established strong links with the Aboriginal community during World War II. This was of crucial importance as it provided direct links to the trade union movement and the political and financial support that would be needed to ensure the strike's success. The strike that commenced in late April 1946 has been described as 'the most important single event in the history of Aboriginal affairs in Western Australia to that date'.[258] At one level the strike can be seen as part of the massive postwar strike wave that at first challenged, and then defeated, Prime Minister Chifley's resistance to the granting of a shorter working week and for an end to wage pegging.[259] While the commencement date of the strike on the May 1 seems to suggest direct links to the international socialist movement, it was also coincidently, the start of the shearing season.[260]

Unlike other Australian workers, Aboriginal workers were faced with a vast array of laws and regulations that denied them many of the basic rights that other Australians enjoyed. The campaign against these laws became an important part of the strike. Thus, from the onset of the strike it had an enhanced political aspect that was not present in many of the other strikes of this period. Along with its aggressive advocacy of other strikes, the bans on Dutch shipping and the proposed ban on the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range it appeared that the CPA was determined to use its leadership of many trade unions to challenge government policies. This led some Aboriginal leaders such as Lawrence Clarke, a Port Hedland activist, decline to publicly endorse the strike. His rejection was based on his support for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs.[261]

As the momentum built up for a strike before the end of the war, Don McLeod was able to use his influence to convince the Aboriginal workers to delay the strike until fascism had been defeated.[262] Notwithstanding the CPA's opposition to strikes during World War II was shaped by its commitment to the Soviet Union, there were convincing reasons why a strike by Pilbara station workers during the war was not

sustainable. While workers such as miners and waterside workers could, and did, defy their communist union leaders and strike, this was hardly the situation with the Pilbara station workers. They lacked the strong local traditions of militancy of these working class communities that helped to maintain strikes despite disapproval from employers, governments and union officials. Under these circumstances a strike by the Pilbara workers, without similar bases of support, was doomed to isolation and defeat.

Once the war ended, preparations for the strike began. The strike commenced a few days earlier than the planned May 1, 1946 when workers started walking off the cattle stations. In the end about 25 cattle stations were affected by the strike.[263] While the strike was to officially last about three years, in one sense it never ended since many of the original strikers never returned to the cattle stations after establishing their own independent, self-supporting communities.[264] The strike, therefore, had two facets: that of a traditional working class struggle for improved pay and conditions, and 'a foundation story of the post-war lands right movement'.[265] In order to gain the support of the trade union movement Graham Alcorn, the Perth CPA functionary, had protracted arguments with McLeod about the centrality of a wage demand rather than some of the broader issues of Aboriginal rights that McLeod wanted to raise.[266]

In his memoirs Joe McGinness considered that the strike was defeated.[267] However, the strike led to a wider interest in and support for Aboriginal issues.[268] The strike also helped encourage Darwin's Aboriginal workers to wage their own struggles for improved conditions.[269] It also began to place Australia's treatment of Aborigines under the international spotlight due to the CPA's international connections. The Committee for the Defence of Native Rights (CDNR) sent information about the strike to the World Federation of Trade Unions asking for their support.[270] The CNDR also sent a statement to the Canberra conference which established the South Pacific Forum.[271] The CPA had taken the lead in establishing the CNDR and it became the main vehicle through which it could display their support for the strike.[272] The strike was also raised at the United Nations where Australia's treatment of Aborigines was condemned by the Soviet Union.[273] As the decade progressed the ability of the CPA to use its international connections to raise the treatment of Aborigines was a constant irritation for successive federal and state governments.

The North Australian Workers Union and Aborigines

The NAWU was the Northern Territory's biggest and most influential union.[274] It had survived the difficult World War II period when the Northern Territory was under military administration and by November 1947 it had 1400 members.[275] While this may seem small when compared with the size of unions in the rest of Australia, 20% of

the Territory's workforce were members of the union.[276] This gave the union a strategic importance that other unions of similar size did not process. Its influence was not limited to its own union members. The union's newspaper, the *Northern Standard*, was Darwin's only daily newspaper between 1945 and 1953. The paper was edited by the union's secretary rather than by a trained journalist.[277] From the end of 1947 to late 1951 every secretary of the union was also a member of the CPA.[278] This gave the *Northern Standard* a strong socialist orientation and it campaigned consistently on Aboriginal issues.[279]

Shortly after the end of World War II a communist-led ticket was elected in the NAWU elections. The new leadership was determined to end all forms of racial discrimination against Aboriginal people.[280] One of the first steps it took was to remove a clause in the union's constitution that prevented Aborigines from joining the union.[281] The election of a new union leadership coincided with an increased sense of self-awareness and militancy by Aborigines. These two developments were to converge in a series of strikes by Aboriginal workers in Darwin in the late 1940s. The prominent role of the communist-led NAWU in supporting the aims of the strikers led to charges that Darwin 'was Russia's only Australian colony' and that the union was 'running almost everything'.[282] However, in common with the majority of other communist-led unions, active communists were a minority on the union's executive — they held only three out of the 13 executive positions.[283] There were also other communist influences in the union. Grace Bardsley joined the CPA in 1941 and worked in the union office during the period of communist leadership of the union.[284] Even after leaving the CPA and moving to Sydney she continued to be active on a range of organisations committed to social justice and peace. In 1956 she became a volunteer worker at the NSW based Aborigines Progressive Association.[285] Her political outlook had been clearly shaped by her experiences in the CPA and NAWU.

In the late 1920s Darwin waterside workers and communist activists, C. Mahoney and J. Waldie, fought unsuccessfully for the removal of the exclusion clause from the NAWU constitution.[286] There was no guarantee that history would not repeat itself when the new NAWU leadership arranged a ballot on the issue. The ballot eventually saw less than 20% of the union membership voting.[287] This low turnout can be attributed to a number of factors. These include an increased respect for Aborigines due to their contributions to the war effort; the defeat of fascism which made racism increasingly unacceptable; and the prestige of a newly elected leadership committed to a fundamental change in the union's outlook. However, given the rejection of a similar move in the 1920s there was some risk in the course adopted by the new NAWU leadership. That it did adopt such a course, suggests its strong commitment to Aboriginal equality.

However, it was not always consistent on the issue of racial equality. In January 1950, the union rejected the use of indentured labour in the pearling industry, with Arthur Olive, the union secretary, claiming that the move would 'depress the conditions of the Australian worker'.[288] Ironically, this was the reason used by some trade unions to justify their ban on Aboriginal membership. An alternative course would have been to recruit the pearling workers to the NAWU, and campaign with them to lift their conditions to that of white Australian workers.

Despite this blemish the CPA role in the union, as we shall see, was overwhelmingly positive. When Aboriginal workers organised and went on strike the union leadership actively supported them. However, in January 1952 a right-wing ticket was successful in winning every executive position.[289] Once the communists were ousted from the leadership of the NAWU, the union reverted to its traditional disinterest or outright hostility to Aboriginal workers.[290] The new leadership quickly asserted its control of the union by sacking the editor of the *Northern Standard*.[291] This ended an invaluable outlet for socialist propaganda. Despite the intense Cold War atmosphere the defeated leadership gained 40% of the vote, which indicated that many union members were supportive of the leadership's policies.[292] After losing their union positions communist activists, such as George and Moria Gibbs and Jack and Esther Meany, remained politically active in Darwin in both the CPA and the trade union movement but with reduced influence.[293]

The Chifley government viewed the communist-led NAWU with considerable hostility. By 1947, the wartime cooperation between the CPA and the ALP government was rapidly eroding, and sharp differences over economic and international issues were starting to emerge. It soon became apparent that there were also major differences over Aboriginal policy. In 1947, the Department of the Interior called a conference to discuss the conditions of Aboriginal pastoral workers.[294] By this time the Pilbara stationhands had been on strike since May 1946 and it was clear that Aboriginal worker inequality was now a key issue for many communist trade unionists. When the union requested to attend the conference its application was rejected. Wright's claim that the decision was based on the hostility of the minister of the interior, who was also president of the Australian Workers Union, seems an accurate summation of the situation.[295]

The enmity between the AWU and the CPA was longstanding. The exclusion of the NAWU, the only union prepared to act on the issue of Aboriginal inequality, meant decisions of the conference were inevitable. It resolved that first year Aboriginal male worker be granted a 12s.6d a week lifting to 20s a week after three years.[296] When the NAWU appealed to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission

to have Aboriginal pastoral workers employed under award rates, the claim was rejected. The court ruled that the various Aboriginal ordinances precluded Aboriginal workers from being included in the award system.[297]

The NAWU often saw the struggle by Aboriginal workers in strict economic terms. For example in 1946 Yorky Walker, the NAWU secretary, in an open letter to H.V. Johnson, the minister for the interior, argued that the conditions of Aboriginal workers 'were a menace to the standards of white workers and a betrayal of faith by the Government in its duty to the natives of Australia'. Walker's letter was in response to the union's exclusion from the federal government's conference to discuss Aboriginal workers' conditions.[298] A similar view was advanced in January 1951 by Yorky Peel, the then NAWU secretary. Peel explained the NAWU's strong support for Aboriginal rights was taken not only on humanitarian grounds, but recognised that the wages of white workers were threatened while Aboriginal workers were 'held in slavery to provide cheap labour for employers'.[299] It is plausible that these arguments were used by the NAWU leadership to convince white workers that it was in their own interests to support the campaign for equality by Aboriginal workers. If they failed to do so, their own conditions would eventually be eroded. However, this stance was to cause some dilemmas for the union leadership.

In 1949, the director of native welfare attempted to introduce a scheme whereby Aborigines were to be offered training in a range of skilled and semi-skilled jobs. The pay rate was higher than that of Aboriginal pastoral workers, but importantly it was less than that paid to tradesmen and union members. It was on this basis that the union condemned the plan as exploitative and the union also had to confront the issue that some of its own members were unemployed.[300] Many employers would undoubtedly have used the introduction of the scheme to hire the cheapest possible labour, which would have been Aboriginal workers, and this would have prolonged the unemployment of union members. Under these circumstances the union's opposition was both understandable and to a large extent justified, despite the fact that the union's policy may have prevented some Aborigines from gaining employment. The union's whole outlook was based on lifting the standards of Aboriginal workers up to that of European workers. It had taken important steps in this direction. Discriminatory clauses had been removed from the union constitution and the union had campaigned strongly against the Aboriginal ordinances that institutionalised Aboriginal inequality. For the sake of its own political credibility it could not accept a situation which continued to entrench this inequality. What the union was prepared to do, and did, almost from the time the communist-led leadership was elected, was to throw the support of the union behind every struggle by Aboriginal

workers.

In his memoir Murray Norris, one of the key communist activists in the NAWU, assessed the communist contribution to the Aboriginal struggle in the following terms: 'We did as much as we could with the means available to us, which was very little'.[301] This almost certainly underestimates the impact of the communist-led NAWU had when challenging the oppressive conditions faced by Aborigines. For the first time Aboriginal workers could approach the NAWU, the dominant union in the Northern Territory, confident that they would receive a positive response. This helped to start to change the political and social culture in the Northern Territory as Aborigines started to struggle for their rights.

Despite this the CPA faced significant difficulties in implementing their full program for Aboriginal equality. The role of the Labor government in maintaining the discriminatory wage system has already been noted. In December 1949 the Chifley government was defeated and a Liberal-Country Party coalition was elected. In October 1950, after the Communist Party Dissolution Act had been passed, the NAWU's Darwin office was raided by the police. They also raided the house of Michael Carne, the Darwin secretary of the CPA, who was also working as a temporary NAWU organiser.[302] The following year, Paul Hasluck, the new minister of the interior, viewed the CPA's activity in support of Aboriginal equality with hostility. He believed it was both designed to embarrass Australia on the international stage and create racial unrest in Australia.[303] In the face of this entrenched opposition the NAWU was unable to make any substantial progress in achieving its major aims for reform. Thus, the failure of the NAWU to achieve any real progress towards Aboriginal equality was the product, not of its own inactivity on the issue, but from a persistent and entrenched opposition from successive Federal governments determined to maintain the existing oppressive system.

One limitation that the union faced was that it could pay its organisers only £9 a week with no additional expenses. This was at a time when a truck driver could earn £15 a week plus allowances.[304] Under these circumstances those who took the job were clearly committed to trade unionism and the program of the new leadership. Despite these difficulties the new leadership was able to have some impact on the pay and conditions of Aboriginal station workers. In October 1948 after visiting cattle stations on the Barkly Tableland George Gibbs, the NAWU organiser wrote a detailed report on the conditions he found.[305] The following February Aboriginal workers at Lake Nash cattle station went on strike demanding that they be paid a cash wage as well as calling for improvements in other conditions. After three months on strike a settlement was reached for £2 a month and 'free tucker'.[306] The rate was still substantially below

the rate paid to white workers, but it was the first time that Aboriginal workers had received a cash repayment.[307]

In June 1949, when Gibbs visited the station again he reported that many Aboriginal workers were unhappy with the settlement as well as the lack of warm clothing.[308] The following year, in September 1950, Gibbs reported that 'slave labour' was being used at Lake Nash.[309] Despite all the efforts it had made to end these conditions the union had made little substantial progress. However, it was able to make one important contribution towards bringing the system to an end. The union gathered information on Aboriginal workers and supplied it to the Melbourne-based DRC, which was starting to campaign on Aboriginal civil rights issues.[310] Even after losing his union position Gibbs retained an extensive knowledge of the Territory and its cattle industry.[311] Eventually, this information was to become an important weapon in the hands of those organisations campaigning for an end to the oppressive system. There were other occasions where the NAWU attempted to reach beyond the trade union movement for support. In 1947, an attempt to hold a national conference that may have led to a permanent national organisation to lead the fight for Aboriginal equality, failed due to differences over its possible policies and increasing Cold War tensions that viewed the activities of communists with deep suspicion.[312]

A series of strikes by Darwin's Aboriginal workers occurred between 1947 and 1951. At one level these strikes can be seen as part of the postwar strike wave that occurred throughout Australia in the same period. However, the prominent role of CPA members supporting the strikers, as well as the range of demands raised by the strikers, gave the strikes an added political dimension that did not then exist to the same extent in many of the other strikes. By 1951, despite the leading role of communists in the NAWU, strikers were able to gain some support in the mainstream media. A major article in March 1951, in the Melbourne *Argus*, by Gordon Williams was headlined 'I stand with the natives for a new deal'.[313] The comment, almost certainly inadvertent, echoed the demand in Wright's pamphlet. The fact that a normally conservative paper like the *Argus* made such a statement indicates that the CPA's position had some support in the wider Australian community.

On February 3, 1947 Aboriginal workers from the Berrimah Compound refused to board the open trucks that took them daily into Darwin to their various workplaces. The day before this action, a group of seven Aboriginal workers made contact with the NAWU office and asked for assistance in drawing up a list of demands to be served on the Administration.[314] Frank Whiteoak, the union's Darwin organiser, helped them establish a strike committee and draft their demands, but prudently remained in the background.[315] Whiteoak's apparent hesitancy can be seen as an attempt to avoid the

repressive measures that had been used in Western Australia against the Pilbara strike and its supporters.[316]

The critical issue is that, after organising themselves, Aboriginal workers had approached the NAWU for support knowing that they would receive a positive response. This course of events approximated the development of the Pilbara strike where the first steps towards organising the dispute were taken by the Aboriginal workers, before they approached the trade union movement for support. It was now possible to build genuine alliances between the NAWU and Aboriginal workers based on the defence of common interests as well as mutual respect. The demands that were raised by the strikers included a minimum wage of £4 10s a week with a higher proportion of cash in the bank; the establishment of a government store; improvements in clothing supplied to Aboriginal workers; and the establishment of a government school for Aboriginal children.[317] With the active support of the union the strikers were able to achieve some important improvements in pay and conditions, such as a pay rate of £2 a week, improved food and better quality clothing.[318] While the settlement of the dispute did not meet in full the strikers' demands, Norris reports that they were 'very happy' with the result.[319]

The union continued to encourage Aboriginal workers to organise and continue the fight for a school which was eventually established with classes up to the fourth grade.[320] The demands for a school and trade training were part of the wider demands that were starting to emerge from the Aboriginal movement. The struggle by Aborigines was not only for economic equality with white workers, but also included the demand that the state provide the infrastructure, such as schools and trade training, through which Aborigines could start to compete on an equal basis with white workers. The positive response by the NAWU leadership to many of these demands indicates their broader understanding of the importance of responding to issues raised by Aboriginal people. The alliance between the two groups was further strengthened when Aboriginal workers marched in the 1947 Darwin May Day.[321] A strong foundation had now been established between the communist-led NAWU and some Aboriginal workers. This was to lead in three years time to a new wave of industrial action by Aboriginal workers.

In November 1950 and January-February 1951 a series of limited strikes by Aboriginal workers at the Berrimah Reserve took place. Again, the NAWU leadership claimed that they had no prior knowledge of the disputes but it quickly swung the resources of the union behind the strikers.[322] The situation was even more critical for the NAWU leadership than had been the case in 1947 dispute. The Menzies government was determined to dissolve the CPA and to remove all known communist union

officials from their positions. When Menzies introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Bill into Parliament in April 1950, he read out a list of 53 alleged leading communist union officials. While the communist-union officials of the NAWU were not directly named, the whole thrust of the government's argument was that communist union activity was inherently subversive.[323] When Darwin's striking Aboriginal workers presented a list of their demands to the government it was dismissed as 'certainly not written by a native'. It was also claimed that the strikers had been misled by 'whites versed in union agitation'.[324] The attack on the role of the CPA in the disputes became sharper when the Melbourne *Herald* claimed there was little doubt 'that communists are inciting the present strike wave'.[325]

The November strike lasted two days.[326] It was met with a hostile response by H L. Anthony, the minister for the interior, who allegedly told the Northern Territory Administrator that the strikers could starve before he would respond to their demands.[327] The strikers statement said that for years they had been exploited and that they would resist any attempt to intimidate them.[328] However, unlike the 1947 strike where some concessions had been made to the strikers, the government was determined to resist any substantial relaxation of the discriminatory Aboriginal wage system. It was a period of intense public debate over Communism, and it was in the government's interest to portray Aboriginal worker unrest as the product of communist activity. Anthony's comments also reflected the dominant Social Darwinism that was prevalent in the Australian community at the time. For example, Menzies believed that local Aborigines in his childhood home of Dimboola were 'rather an idle community, and at that time of course, it hadn't occurred to anyone to try to do something about them'.[329] This view was to remain with him during his adult life.[330] Thus, when the communist-led NAWU did attempt to 'do something' about the conditions of Aboriginal workers it encountered a virulent reaction from the federal government. The impetus for the increased NAWU activity on the issue came from its recent decision to 'do everything in its power to obtain award rates and conditions' for Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory.[331]

Rather than be intimidated by the harsh reaction of the federal government to the November dispute, Aboriginal workers launched a new wave of industrial struggles in January/February 1951. They not only raised a demand for a wage of £7 per week, but also other demands such as improvements in food and conditions at the reserves, citizenship rights, and freedom of movement.[332] Apart from their daily trips by truck into Darwin for work, Aborigines were barred from entering the city at night except from a weekly trip to the cinema.[333] The Northern Territory Administrator, A.C. Driver, later conceded that the conditions at the Berrimah Aboriginal compound

were 'crude' and that plans had been drawn up to move Aborigines to the Bagot Road village which had better facilities. However, the move would also give authorities 'better control over natives', who could then prevent them going 'walkabout around town and get into trouble'.[334]

The most notable feature these strikes was the emergence of Aboriginal leaders who could act as spokesmen for their community and then work closely with the NAWU leadership. All the fundamental decisions about the conduct and direction of the strikes were made by the Aborigines themselves, with the union role being limited to advice and practical help such as the writing of statements and generating publicity for the strikers.[335] However, this Aboriginal leadership was not as strong as the leadership in Western Australia. As we shall see, this was to make it vulnerable to repressive measures by the Federal government.[336] Those Aboriginal leaders who did emerge were vocal about the plight of Aborigines and often displayed considerable courage in the face of government repression. In the November strike, Lawrence emerged as the spokesperson of the Aboriginal community, and he continued in this role when a new wave of industrial action erupted in January.

In the face of this continuing industrial unrest the NT administration turned to more direct methods to bring it to an end. On January 17, after leading a march of 32 strikers from Berrimah Reserve towards Darwin, Lawrence was arrested and charged under the Aboriginal Ordinance for interfering with the lawful employment of an Aboriginal worker. Another Aborigine, Billie Palata, a police tracker, was charged with interfering with the police in the performance of their duty.[337] Lawrence explained that the marchers intended to go the office of Mr Moy, the Director of Native Affairs, and then to the NAWU.[338] He also stated that the march was 'only union business'.[339] Yorky Peel, the acting union secretary, issued a statement supporting the strikers and explained that it was the union's aim to obtain award rates and citizenship for Aborigines.[340] It also sent a protest telegram to Arthur Fadden, the acting prime minister.[341] The active involvement of the NAWU in the industrial unrest led to Darwin police opening an investigation into the union's conduct. They visited the union office with three sheets of typewritten questions, which Yorky Peel declined to answer.[342]

Lawrence was eventually sentenced to four months hard labour.[343] The overt political nature of the charges was shown when the prosecution was led by the deputy crown solicitor, assisted by two legal officers from the Crown Law Office, instead of the normal police sergeant conducting the case.[344] It was also conceded in court that no white striker had ever been charged with a similar offence.[345] The NAWU gave what assistance it could to Lawrence and other Aborigines charged under the Aboriginal Ordinance. It arranged for legal representation and provided the £100 bail for

Lawrence.[346] However, on his release he was confined to the Bagot Reserve, and prevented from having any contact with striking Aborigines at the Berrimah Reserve. In addition he was banned from Darwin. The combined effect of these two measures was to destroy his effectiveness as a strike leader.[347]

The harsh repression directed at Lawrence confirmed Norris's observation that when an Aborigine emerged as a leader, he was 'either sent back bush or framed-up on some charge and sent over to Delissaville, a so-called convict settlement over the Harbour'.[348] A tactical shift was now needed by the union and the Aboriginal workers to try and avoid any further prosecutions of Aboriginal strike leaders. In the future a 'hidden leader' would liaise with the union and go 'back to the nominal leaders and lead from behind'.[349] By the time of the second wave of industrial action Fred Waters had appeared as this leader. Norris described him as a 'good leader' — which can be taken as confirmation that the NAWU leadership was not seeking to unilaterally impose its views onto the Aboriginal community, but were keen to develop an equal relationship with the recognised leaders of the Aboriginal community. This approach underlines the genuine concern the NAWU leaders had for the welfare of Aboriginal leaders who often had to face the full force of state repression. It was also a sharp break from the normal role of communist strike leaders who were expected to lead from the front, and also demonstrates the flexible tactics the union was prepared to adopt in order to advance its aims.

However, these tactics were to no avail. Fred Waters, the 'hidden leader', was quickly detected and faced being charged with various offences under the Aboriginal Ordinance Act. In an attempt to circumvent this, the NAWU hired him as a carpenter at the Stadium site, which in theory should have prevented him being charged as he was now lawfully employed.[350] Despite this, the Department of Native Affairs used its extensive powers and banished Waters to Haast's Bluff reserve, 1800 kilometres south of Darwin.[351] His wife, Maggie, wept as government officials called to take him to Haast's Bluff. She believed that he could be in 'plenty trouble' if he remained there.[352] The union waged an extensive legal challenge to the deportation of Waters including an appeal to the High Court, but all the courts ruled in the government's favour and Waters remained at Haasts' Bluff. [353] There was now a sense of urgency to the NAWU campaign to free Waters as it recognised that his banishment was a potential death sentence.[354]

When the news of Waters' banishment broke, Norris was in Melbourne on a union rules case.[355] After receiving advice from Frank Purse, the BWIU federal secretary, that the NAWU should apply for a writ of Habeas Corpus on Fred Waters' behalf, Norris made a quick return trip to Darwin to win union executive support for the legal

campaign.[356] On his return to the southern states Norris began a prolonged campaign that combined both the legal challenge to Waters' banishment, as well as an extensive round of speaking at union, workplace meetings and public meetings on the issue.[357] During his tour Norris addressed aggregate meetings of the Miners' Federation with the union supplying a car so he could move quickly between meetings.[358]

There was a positive response to his tour with more than 30 unions as well as Trades and Labor Councils sending messages opposing the treatment of Waters.[359] After Norris addressed the ACTU interstate executive it decided to open an inquiry into the conditions of Aboriginal workers in the Northern Territory.[360] Tom Wright called for the repeal of the Ordinance Acts.[361] During his tour Norris addressed the federal ALP at Parliament House in Canberra and Dr Evatt, the federal ALP leader, provided free legal advice about the direction of the various court cases associated with the challenge to Waters deportation.[362] This would have been one of the few times in this era that an acknowledged communist was able to speak directly to an ALP meeting. On this issue there was common ground as several federal ALP parliamentarians were critical of the government's actions.[363] In NSW Clive Evatt, the chief secretary, said that the arrest of Waters was further evidence that Australia was a police state. He went on to call for Aborigines to be given the same rights as other Australians.[364] The journalist Gordon Williams said that the Aboriginal strikers had 'lit a fire that will — and should — blaze until the conditions of the native throughout Australia are examined dispassionately, carefully, sympathetically, and free of prejudice'.[365]

The NAWU's challenge to Waters' banishment opened in the High Court before Justice Fullagar in mid-February 1951.[366] In an interim decision he refused an application for a writ of habeas corpus explaining that he had no jurisdiction in the matter.[367] In his final judgement in late March, Justice Fullagar said that there was an impression of hypocrisy about the union campaign and that it committed perjury when giving evidence. He had accepted evidence from the government that the union's application to hire Waters had been issued after he had been removed to Haast's Bluff.[368] Despite these claims no charges were ever laid against any member of the NAWU. A week after Justice Fullagar's decision, Waters was returned to Darwin. On his return he said: 'They could have shot me for fighting for my people, but I would not have cared'. He went on to add that he continued to believe that the strike action was justified and that Aboriginal workers should get better conditions and higher wages.[369] At a time when the CPA was often in retreat this victory was a testimony to the tenacity and commitment of communist union activists to the issue of Aboriginal equality. It was conducted against a background of the union being consistently short of money, and

reliant on free legal support to conduct some of the court challenges to Waters' deportation.[370] When he was presented with a bill for legal costs of £666 after losing the appeal to the High Court — an enormous amount in those days Norris told the Clerk of Courts to send the bill to the prime minister or to Vestey's, a major cattle station owner in the Northern Territory.[371]

Despite the gains made by Aboriginal workers the victories were only partial — both the discriminatory wage system and the Aboriginal Ordinances remained in place. The NAWU support for Aboriginal rights did not end with the return of Waters to Darwin. In September 1951 it sent Jack McGinness, president of the Australian Half Castes Progress Association, to the ACTU Congress, as the union's representative. There he made a passionate speech in support of Aboriginal human rights and won support for full Aboriginal equality.[372] However, the decision to send McGinness deepened the existing divisions in the union when plans by the communist-led union executive to also send Scotty Cane, an avowed communist, were defeated.[373] In union elections later that year a right-wing ticket won every executive position.[374] This defeat brought to end the active participation by the NAWU on the campaign for Aboriginal human rights.[375]

Aboriginal rights organisations

The defeat of the 'communist-led' leadership in the NAWU, combined with the punitive measures against Aboriginal strike leaders by a hostile and unyielding Federal government, meant that that the traditional working class strike weapon was no longer viable. It had led to the persecution and isolation of Aboriginal leaders who had emerged to lead the struggle. What was needed now was an organisation with a national focus that would campaign consistently and strongly for Aboriginal civil rights and place pressure on the Federal government to change their policies. This became the next step forward for communist union activists committed to the issue of Aboriginal rights.

Although the Darwin strikes were defeated they left a lasting legacy that was crucial to the further development of the Aboriginal movement. Norris's tour of the Eastern states led directly to the formation of the Council for Aboriginal Rights (CAR). Unlike similar organisations that had been established in the 1930s with a predominantly local or state focus, from its inception CAR adopted a national focus, with a particular emphasis on the Northern Territory, a federal government responsibility.[376] The organisation only remained viable in Victoria.[377] In 1956 a similar organisation — the Aboriginal-Australian Fellowship (AAF) — was established in New South Wales. It was committed to working with trade unions and drew particularly strong support from those unions in Newcastle and Wollongong that had a strong communist influence in the local Labor Councils. Other communist-led unions, such as the BLF and the

WWF, also gave the AAF their support.[378] Aboriginal activists, Charles Leon and Ray Peckham, were members of the BLF and the union leadership sought to support their activities in a practical way. At its first meeting held in the Sydney Town Hall, two rank-and-file wharfies spent their day off from work picking up wildflowers from Faith Bandler's land at French's Forest and on their return decorated the hall. It was, Bandler explained, 'magnificent, absolutely beautiful.'[379] It was through acts like this that often went unrecorded, that activists from communist-led unions contributed to the Aboriginal struggle.

The next significant development came in mid-February 1958 with the formation of the Federal Council for the Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA). The move was welcomed by *Tribune*, which reported that the new organisation would campaign for the 'integration' rather than 'assimilation' of Aborigines into Australian society on the basis of equality.[380] Unions were permitted to formally affiliate with the new organisation, which had a structure similar to existing peak trade union bodies.[381] In 1962, the WWF, the ARU, BLF and BWIU were affiliated to the FCAA.[382] They were joined later by the Seamen's Union, reflecting its long-standing support for Aboriginal rights.[383] These affiliations helped to reinforce the strong connection between Aboriginal rights and the trade union movement, particularly those unions with a strong communist presence.

In Queensland Alex McDonald, the Trades and Labor Council secretary played an active role in mobilising union support for FCAA. McDonald encouraged the unions concerned to appoint less prominent communists as their representatives in an attempt to avoid the movement being labelled as a communist front.[384] This was particularly important in Queensland, which had some of the most repressive laws regulating Aborigines.[385] The first conference of the Queensland FCAA saw 100 Aborigines attend as well as representatives from the trade union movement.[386] There was also representatives from FCAA groups in and Townsville.[387] The Cairns group had been established with strong support from the local Trades and Labour Council after the racist sacking of a Filipino taxi driver. This sacking had heightened awareness of the need to challenge all forms of racism including that directed against Aborigines.[388] Despite campaigning against instances of racist abuse on Aboriginal reserves and police violence against Aborigines, the FCAA found it difficult to win white support beyond the ranks of trade unionists.[389]

The formation of the FCAA was a major step forward for Aboriginal rights. Up to its establishment the Victorian CAR had acted as an informal co-ordinating centre for the various bodies around Australia that were actively campaigning on issues of Aboriginal human rights.[390] With a new national organisation it would now be possible

to initiate national campaigns that could increase the pressure on the Federal government for fundamental change in laws and ordinances affecting Aboriginal people. Since trade unions were an important part of FCAA they would continue to campaign strongly on these issues, as many communist-led unions had done for several decades.

Conclusion

Almost from its inception the CPA was the most consistent working class supporter of Aboriginal human rights. The Comintern insisted that the CPA not only had to be actively involved in the struggle for Aboriginal rights, but it also had to develop a programmatic analysis of the causes of their oppression. From the mid-1920s onwards, the consolidation of Stalinist control of the international communist movement imposed on the world's communist parties a narrow and, at times, ultraleft understanding of the struggles of oppressed nations. Until 1954 the CPA's outlook was shaped by these policies. It maintained that there was a difference between 'tribal' and 'detribalised' Aborigines and 'full bloods' and 'part-Aborigines'. Those Aborigines living within white society were considered to be members of the Australian working class and were no longer Aborigines. Whatever the limitations of these policies, the positive feature was the recognition that Aborigines had the right to maintain their own culture and not to be forcibly assimilated into white society.

A new stage in the campaign for Aboriginal human rights opened up after World War II. For the first time Aborigines were drawn into the labour market in significant numbers. This gave them a new found confidence to challenge the oppressive regulations that dominated almost every aspect of their lives. In the postwar period this was to lead to strikes by Aboriginal pastoral workers in Western Australia and urban Aboriginal workers in Darwin. These traditional forms of working-class struggle were welcomed by the CPA, which provided active support. At the same time many of the emerging Aboriginal leaders joined the CPA attracted by its support for Aboriginal struggles and its consistent opposition to racism. While many of these Aboriginal leaders eventually left the CPA they acknowledged that the political training they received inside the party was invaluable in their later activity as Aboriginal activists. By 1960 Aboriginal people did not appear to have made substantial progress to full equality within Australian society; however the formation of the FCAA in 1958 was a significant step forward. It was this organisation that received significant support from the labour movement and was to lead the campaign for the 1967 referendum which held out the promise of further progress for Aboriginal people. With its sustained campaigning on the issue of Aboriginal rights, the CPA can justifiably claim some of the credit for this advance. ■

8. Conclusion

This book has examined the political activity of the CPA in the trade union movement between 1945 and 1960. Although its militant role in improving working conditions resulted in communists increasingly being elected as union officials from the mid-1930s, support for trade union militancy represented only part of the CPA's approach to trade union politics. The CPA also claimed adherence to revolutionary Marxism. Marxism is unique in its attitude towards the role of trade unions in capitalist society. While reformist political currents in the workers' movement accept that trade unions can play some role in shaping society, Marxism insists that trade unions are crucial in convincing workers to abandon the capitalist system.

The CPA's insistence that political theory and action should be central to the way trade unions operated in an advanced capitalist society challenged many of the existing practices and tenets of the trade union movement. Some form of political debate was inherent in most unions. Trade unions had established the ALP as their political representatives and the majority of the industrial unions in which communists were active were affiliated to the ALP. This meant that political issues would always find some resonance within their structures. Unions affiliated to the ALP sent delegates to ALP conferences which helped to determine its policies. However, the expression of working-class politics was to be confined to the parliamentary sphere and unions — at least in theory — were reduced to being passive observers of the process. The CPA policy of political trade unionism was not limited to the ALP's mild reform goals. It envisioned a more active role, where trade unions would use their industrial strength to pursue their political ideals.

The impact of the CPA's formal recognition as the Australian section of the Comintern in 1922 was mixed. It brought communists into contact with co-thinkers around the world, including those in the immediate region, and under pressure from the Comintern, the CPA accelerated its interest and involvement in peace, migrant and Aboriginal issues. However, the ascendancy of the Stalinist faction in 1928 was to destroy such positive features. The Comintern was transformed into an organisation

that was totally subordinate to the dictates of the Soviet leadership. This extended to all areas of political activity. An unquestioning acceptance of Comintern decisions was now required of all communist parties. Despite the dissolution of the Comintern during World War II, it remained mandatory in the postwar period for all communists to support the decisions of the Soviet leadership.

This generation of communist union activists specifically rejected pursuing their political campaigns through other avenues such as the ALP, or as independent activists. Their advocacy of militant industrial unionism was a feature they shared with numerous other trade union activists. However, their membership of the CPA added an important political dimension to their trade union activity that distinguished them from those who shared their industrial militancy. Many Communist union activists regarded themselves not only as industrial militants, but as political activists. They were armed with Sharkey's *The Trade Unions* for theoretical guidance, and their main role was to politically educate their co-workers. Failure to achieve this was condemned by the party hierarchy as 'economism'. Yet, in order to maintain their roles as union officials they had to repeatedly demonstrate that their skills as orthodox trade officials surpassed their opponents. At the same time, the party leadership was constantly demanding that the trade unions increase their involvement in political campaigns and that communist union officials prioritise this activity. The dilemma between the two approaches was never fully resolved by many communist union officials. The fact that there was no disciplinary action taken against those who failed to meet the demands of the party leadership, despite the frequent criticisms, suggests that they had a degree of autonomy from strict party control. Many had a strong personal support base in their unions, and irrespective of any disciplinary action against them, most could have continued in their positions despite CPA disapproval.

Those communist union officials who submitted fully to CPA policy often paid a heavy price. As we have seen, Ernie Thornton, the FIA general secretary, declared at the 1948 party congress that the union's polices were determined in consultation with the leaders of the CPA, and not the ALP. The declaration was an act of a communist union official determined to prove his loyalty to the CPA and its program. At the time the FIA leaders were facing an increasing challenge to their positions from a well organised opposition. The FIA leadership responded by imposing a rigid authoritarian structure onto the union. In a union without a strong radical tradition and with only a narrow base of support for the CPA it was doomed to failure. Within four years every single communist official in the union had been defeated.

Other communist union officials drew the appropriate lessons from this defeat. In 1956 J.J. Brown regained his position as the Victorian state secretary of the ARU that

he had lost two years previously. His earlier terms were marked by a political stridency that resembled that of Thornton's. However, in order to ensure re-election, Brown was obliged to build an alliance with individuals who did not share his political philosophy. This reduced, but did not end, the union's support for political issues which were now expressed in more moderate ways. Brown's situation was similar to those of other communist union officials. In all CPA-led unions, communist officials were a minority on leadership bodies. Their continued survival rested on their co-operation with non-communists. This meant that the extent to which they could involve their union in political issues was circumscribed by the necessity to maintain such alliances with non-communists.

One of the main ways by which the political consciousness of trade unionists could be raised was through union journals and newspapers. During the 1950s *Common Cause*, *Maritime Worker* and the *Seamen's Journal* (and others) reported frequently on political events in Australia and overseas that often had no direct connection to workplace issues. It was hoped that in the process of reading these articles unionists would start to understand and fight against the injustices of the capitalist system. In each of the unions that published these papers there were strong radical traditions that predated the formation of the CPA. This gave the CPA a much firmer base to build support for its political campaigns. However, each union also had a long history of rank-and-file control of the decision making process and the unions' leadership could never be certain that its recommendations would be accepted. A common feature that linked the three unions was the intensity of the bitter struggles they fought against employers for improvements in working conditions. It instilled in the unions' membership an industrial militancy that was not always in conformity with the more disciplined CPA approach. At times this would frustrate communist union militants as they tried to impose, sometimes unsuccessfully, a more disciplined and scientific approach to the class struggle.

The action by Port Phillip waterside workers in refusing to supply labour to the *Shenandoah*, an American Confederate cruiser, in 1865, was a prelude to trade union opposition to Australian involvement in overseas wars that stretched back to the Sudan and Boer Wars. Thus, when the CPA initiated the formation of the APC in July 1949 it could, with justification, argue that its actions were consistent with Australian trade union traditions. Communist-led union involvement in the peace movement varied in its intensity. Shortly after his appointment as a BWIU organiser, Tom McDonald was instructed that one of his main tasks was the collection of signatures for the Peace Council's Stockholm Petition against the A-bomb. This integrated his dual roles as a union organiser and communist activist. He understood and accepted

that party membership involved raising political issues with their co-workers. The threat of another war had a particular meaning for members of the Seamen's Union. During World War II they had suffered heavy casualties as they transported war materials into the dangerous war zones. This made the union's membership more receptive to peace-related issues. In other unions, such as the Victorian ARU, rank-and-file communists would move motions in workplace meetings in support of the peace movement. These would be later endorsed by the union executive which then could be used to build further support for the peace movement.

The focus of communist union peace activism in the 1950s was mainly on educational and propaganda activities. This involved the distribution of peace movement literature and encouraging co-workers to sign petitions against the use or production of atomic weapons. Wherever possible communist union activists would establish workplace-based peace auxiliaries that would elect delegates to represent them at the various peace congresses held during the 1950s. At each congress there was usually a trade union commission; this allowed trade unionists from around Australia to formulate common approaches to peace policy to take back into the workplace. This helped cement a close relationship between the peace movement and the trade unions. Their identity as trade union activists therefore gave many communists an additional entry point into the peace movement that may otherwise have been blocked to them.

When the CPA attempted to move beyond propaganda activity in support of peace it suffered major setbacks. In 1947 communist-led building unions in Victoria called for a ban on the construction of the Woomera Rocket Range. It was a decision that taken unilaterally by the Victorian CPA without consultation with the national leadership of the party. However, it does indicate that communist union activists were prepared to develop policy without waiting from directions from the national leadership. At this time the national leadership was not prepared to make a final break with the federal Labor government and it quickly rejected the call. As a result the building unions abandoned their proposal. Despite this the Chifley government introduced the Approved Defence Projects Protection Act which imposed heavy penalties on organisations or individuals who hindered defence preparations. The limited response by the the union movement to this curtailment of trade union activity demonstrates how isolated the CPA was on this issue. Moreover, the close connection between the CPA and the APC led the ALP to proscribe the latter organisation. This circumscribed the ability of communists in the APC from reaching significant numbers of trade unionists who faced expulsion from the ALP, even if they represented their union at a peace event.

In July 1950 the Menzies government declared its support for the United Nations action in Korea and sent Australian troops. In response, the leaderships of the Miners'

Federation, Seamen's Union and the WWF called on their memberships to ban the transport of war materials to Korea. The recommendation can be seen as part of their obligation to defend 'socialist' North Korea. Against a background of intense anti-communist sentiment the proposed bans were rejected by the membership of all three unions, which clearly indicated the limits of CPA-initiated trade union peace activism. On the other hand, after the rejection of the bans the unions continued to be involved in the peace movement without substantial protest from the rank-and-file. In the subsequent union elections, all three leaderships that had recommended the bans were returned to office. What was at issue was that the rank-and-file was not prepared to use its industrial strength to oppose the Korean War. It was a major blow to the CPA's support for revolutionary trade unionism.

The 1955 split in the ALP opened up the possibility of building a broader based peace movement. A section of the labour movement returned to its traditional concerns about peace related issues. The 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress was endorsed by the ACTU executive and the Grouper-controlled NSW ALP Central Executive sent an official observer. However, in order to maintain this new found unity the CPA had to abandon all its previous support for trade union industrial action in support of peace related issues. At the trade union session, Jim Healy successfully led the opposition to a proposal for the closure of the war industry and union stoppages when France next conducted a nuclear test. His stance indicates the flexibility that many communist union officials adopted to maintain their unity with non-communist union officials. But in effect it meant the abandonment of the revolutionary essence of Marxist trade unionism. Henceforth until the Vietnam War the CPA would limit its activity to routine propaganda and episodic bans on shipping by the Seamen's Union and the WWF.

From its inception the CPA adopted an internationalist perspective. It broke decisively with the dominant working class racism prevalent within the Australian labour movement. From the 1920s onwards it condemned the White Australia Policy as antagonistic to working class interests. During the same period it recruited significant numbers of non-Anglo Saxon workers attracted by its support for the Soviet Union and its opposition to fascism from which many of the migrants had fled. Its political outlook was in sharp contrast to the ALP which continued to maintain its support for racist policies. Between 1948 and 1952 the CPA reversed its previous consistent internationalist outlook on migration. It condemned East European and German refugees who arrived in Australia as part of the mass immigration program. These refugees were strongly anti-communist and had refused to return to their countries now ruled by Soviet imposed regimes. This provided the only basis for the CPA's opposition to their arrival. In order to buttress its campaign the CPA utilised many of

the traditional labour movement racist arguments against migration. This included claims that migrants received preferential treatment, were a threat to living standards, and frequently collaborated with fascism during the war. communist-led unions such as the Miners' Federation, FIA and the Victorian ARU either sought to prevent their entry into the workplace or acted to ensure they were confined to the lowest paying jobs. Similarly, as we saw, the BWIU conducted a campaign against the construction of migrant hostels claiming that it was diverting resources away from building housing for Australians. The campaign against these refugees attracted strong support from trade unionists who were not normally CPA supporters. This could have only been on the basis of its explicit racist character and, subsequently, some communist union activists conceded that the campaign had been a mistake.

In contrast to the campaign against East European and German migrants, the CPA welcomed the arrival of migrants from other countries. It honoured its commitment that once in Australia they should have the same rights as other workers. The CPA remained a multi-ethnic party and many of the new arrivals joined because of its internationalist outlook. Once members there were not insurmountable barriers to them assuming important leadership positions within the party structures. The real test for the CPA came during the recessions in 1952 and 1961 when unemployment increased. During the Great Depression many unions had blamed migrants for the crisis and had attempted to exclude them from the workforce. However, communist-led unions responded positively to demands by Italian migrants during the postwar recessions for employment. In doing so they offered a positive affirmation of their commitment to migrants.

For most of the 1950s the CPA was the only organisation in the labour movement that consistently supported the struggles by Aborigines for an end to the oppressive regulations that governed every aspect of their lives. When the Aboriginal station hands in the Pilbara went on strike in 1946, the CPA mobilised its resources to support them. A ban on the transport of wool by the Seamen's Union was the decisive factor in the settlement of the strike three years later. Similarly, the communist-led NAWU supported strikes by Aboriginal workers in Darwin in late 1950 and early 1951.When Fred Waters, an Aboriginal leader, was forcibly removed from Darwin the union fought his case all the way to the High Court. However, these strikes were to end in defeat. In December 1952 the communist-led union leadership was defeated which brought to an end the union's support for Aboriginal workers. Other communist-union officials, such as Tom Wright and Jim Healy, earned the respect of Aboriginal activists for their long-standing commitment to the Aboriginal cause which, in turn, led some Aboriginal activists to join the CPA. Once they joined the party it gave them

a political education and the confidence to organise campaigns. It was also a party where they found respect and an absolute commitment to equality for all members, irrespective of ethnic origin. Many of them eventually left the CPA to concentrate their political activity directly in the Aboriginal community. One of the reasons for departure was the narrow and rigid definition of what constituted an Aboriginal person; this was derived from the international communist movement and did not start to change until the mid-1950s. However, few Aboriginal activists regretted the time they had spent in the party fully acknowledging the contribution it had made to their political development. They also continued to work with the CPA since many communist-led unions were strong supporters of the Aboriginal movement.

Throughout the 1950s the CPA succeeded, although not uniformly, in attracting support from trade unionists for the political issues it raised in the trade union movement. This was particularly true for the peace and Aboriginal human rights movements. However, the CPA failed in the central task it had set itself — that of transforming the political consciousness of significant numbers of Australian workers and convincing them of the need of a socialist revolution. Yet the period was not one of total defeat for the CPA and its advocacy of political trade unionism. The CPA did keep alive the vision of a broader role of trade unions in capitalist society. This is the essence of Marxist views on the role of trade unions. The period underlined the difficultly of applying this theory when the time was not receptive to revolutionary politics. Apart from the anti-communist atmosphere generated by the Cold War, the long postwar economic boom removed another of the factors that often radicalised people — the fear of mass unemployment and falling living standards. The legacy of the 1930s with terrible impact of the Great Depression and the rise of fascism faded from the memories of many workers.

But even when workers were drawn into campaigns supported by the CPA they maintained their illusions in capitalist society. Only a relative handful took the next step and joined the CPA. It's a perennial problem in most advanced capitalist countries where the revolutionary alternative has seldom gained significant support. However, the question of what role for trade unions in a modern industrial society .remains valid today as it was in the past. In a society were workers are increasingly disenfranchised they need to find organisations that represent their interests. It's not utopian to suggest that trade unions can assume this role. The CPA demonstrated with the union-led campaigns against Japanese militarism in the 1930s and Dutch colonialism in the 1940s, that unionists can have an impact on the political process. In the radical upsurge of the 1960s trade unions engaged in widespread political trade unionism. The challenge for trade unionists today is to find new ways of developing political trade unionism. ■

List of Abbreviations

AAF	Australian Aboriginal Fellowship
AASW	Australian Association of Scientific Workers
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ADPPA	Approved Defence Projects Protection Act
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AMIEU	Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union
APC	Australian Peace Council
ARU	Australian Railways Union
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
AWU	Australian Workers' Union
BLF	Builders Labourers' Federation
BWIU	Building Workers' Industrial Union
CAR	Council For Aboriginal Rights
CDRHWU	Coastal Dock Rivers and Harbour Works Union
CNDR	Committee for the Defence of Native Rights
COM	Committee of Management
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPUSA	Communist Party of the United States
DRC	Democratic Rights Council
EYL	Eureka Youth League
FCAA	Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement
FCAATSI	Federal Council for The Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
FIA	Federated Ironworkers Association
HCRU	Hotel Club and Restaurant Employees Union
IRO	International Refugee Organisation

IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
JCCFAS	Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism
NAWU	North Australian Workers' Union
NTCAR	Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights
RSD	Rolling Stock Division
SEC	State Electricity Commission
SMWU	Sheet Metal Workers' Union
SUA	Seamen's Union of Australia
UWM	Unemployed Workers' Movement
WAASRE	West Australian Society of Railway Employees
WFSW	World Federation of Scientific Workers
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WPC	World Peace Congress
WST	Wireless Signals & Telegraph
WWF	Waterside Workers' Federation

Notes

(CPD = Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates; MLA = Mitchell Library Archives; NAA = National Archives of Australia; UMA = University of Melbourne Archives; UT = Unpublished thesis; VUA = Victoria University Archives)

1. Introduction

1. Turner, *Room For Manoeuvre*, p. 134.

2 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 230.

3 Pollitt, *Serving My Time*, p. 126. Shortly after he joined the Communist Party Pollitt was one of the central organizers of the campaign to ban the shipment of British armaments to Poland which was then at war with the Soviet Union. His acknowledgement of his 'failings' emphasizes that for communists trade union campaigns, not matter how militant, unless they were directly linked to raising the political awareness of those involved only had limited value. This campaign will be discussed in Chapter Four.

4 See Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*.

5 Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol.5, pp. 347-529.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 427. Emphasis in original.

7 Childe, *How Labour Governs*.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

9 Ross Dowson, 'The Rise and Fall of the Third International' in Mandel (ed.), *Fifty Years of World Revolution (1917-1967)*, pp. 96-106; Hallas, *The Comintern: The History of the Third International*; Mandel, *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism: The Bitter Fruits of 'Socialism in One Country'*, pp. 9-41.

10 McQueen, *A New Britannia*.

11 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History*.

12 Bacon, *Outline of the Post-War History of the Communist Party of Australia*.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-21

14 Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

16 Campbell, *History of the Australian Labor Movement*; Henry, *25 Years of the Australian Communist Party*; Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*.

17 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. ix.

18 Macintyre, *The Reds*.

19 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*.

20 O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 64-66.

22 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*.

23 Aarons, *What's Left?*; Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*; Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*.

24 Cited in Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 354.

25 O'Lincoln, *The Militant Minority Movement*.

26 Gould (ed.), *The Sharkey Writings*, p. 9.

27 Sharkey, *The Trade Unions*.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 15.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

31 McPhillips, *Communists and the Trade Unions*.

32 Hill, *Looking Backward: Looking Forward*, p. 35. Hill was the leader of a breakaway group from the CPA that supported the Chinese leadership.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

35 Silverman, 'Australian Political Strikes', pp. 28-40.

36 *Ibid.*, p.31.

37 *Ibid.*, p.39.

38 Lockwood, *The Story of Jim Healy*, p. 11.

39 Sharkey, *The Trade Unions*, p. 29.

40 Silverman, 'Australian Political Strikes', pp. 28-29.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 34. The campaign will be discussed in the next chapter.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

43 Silverman implies that communist-led unions abandoned the bans in response to the government's legalization. In fact they were dropped before this. This is discussed in Chapter Four.

44 Mallory, *Uncharted Waters: Social Responsibility in Australian Trade Unions*.

45 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*.

46 Fitzpatrick & Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia 1872: A History*.

47 Kirkby, *Voices from the Ships: Australia's Seafarers and Their Union*.

48 Beasley, *Wharfies: The History of the Waterside Workers' Federation*.

49 Sheridan, *Australia's Cold War: The Waterfront Under Menzies*.

50 Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*.

51 Daphne Gollan, 'Balmain Ironworker Battles' in Curthoys & Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1949*, Vol. 2, pp. 18-37.

52 Greenland, *Red Hot*; McClelland, *Stirring the Possum*; Short, *Laurie Short*.

53 Saunders & Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement*.

54 Chris Healy, 'War Against War', in Burgmann, *A Most Valuable Acquisition, Sydney*.

55 Harris, *The Bitter Fight*.

56 McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850-1975*.

57 Burgmann, *Revolutionary Trade*

Unionism.

58 Forrester, *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*.

59 Wright, *New Deal For Aborigines*.

60 Peel, *Isles of The Torres Strait*.

61 Bob Boughton, 'The Communist Party of Australia's involvement in the Struggle for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Rights, 1920-1970' in Markey (ed.), *Labour & Community*, pp. 263-294.

62 Andrew Markus, 'Talka Longa Mouth: Aborigines and the Labour Movement', in Curthoys & Markus (eds.), *Who are Our Enemies?*, pp. 138-157.

63 Middleton, *But Now We Want the Land Back*.

64 Brown, *The Black Eureka*.

65 Alcorn, *The Struggle of the Pilbara Station Hands For Decent Living Conditions and Human Rights*.

66 McLeod, *How the West Was Lost*.

67 Read & Coppin, *Kangkushot*; Palmer & McKenna, *Somewhere Between Black and White*.

68 Markus, 'Labor and Immigration: Policy Formulation 1943-1945', pp. 21-33; Markus, 'Labour and Immigration 1946-49', pp. 73-90.

69 This will be discussed fully in Chapter Five.

2. Communism and the Unions

1 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 90-91; Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 12; O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp. 48-51.

2 Davidson, *Communist Party*, p. 98. It changed back to CPA in 1951. This work will use the term Communist Party of Australia when referring to the party except when quoting directly from a document of this era.

3 *Tribune*, August 14, 1945, p.3. The paper reported that were 3000 people packed into the town hall with another 2000 listening to the broadcast of the congress outside.

4 Donald, *Organising the Second Round of the Victory Campaign*, p.2; Communist Party of Australia Central Committee, 'Report of the Work of the Cental Committee From the 13th to 14th National Congress', pp. 15-18.

5 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 170; Hagan, *The History of the ACTU,* p. 122; Santamaria, *The Price of Freedom*, p. 20; Turner, *In Union is Strength*, p. 98.

6 Jupp, *Australian Party Politics*, p. 91; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 133.

7 Deery & Redfern, 'No Lasting Peace?', p. 68; Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 125.

8 Rawson, *Unions and Unionists in Australia*, p. 103.

9 Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 347.

10 Hagan, *The ACTU*, p. 53.

11 Lang, *Communism in Australia*, pp. 103-115; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp. 130-131; Santamaria, *The Price of Freedom*, p. 19.

12 Cleary, *Ballarat Labor From Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age*, pp. 107; Hurley, *Catholics, Communists and Fellow*

Travellers, pp. 23-24 & p. 26.

13 Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton 1947-51*, pp. 56-57.

14 Noble, 'Peak Labour Organisation in the Hunter Valley of New South Wales' (UT), pp. 113 & 125.

15 Hagan, *The History of the ACTU*, p. 236.

16 Markey & Nixon, 'Peak Unionism in the Illawarra', in Ellem, Markey & Shields (eds.), *Peak Unions in Australia*, p. 170.

17 Sharpley, *The Great Delusion*, p. 52.

18 Thornton, *Trade Unions and the War*.

19 Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, pp. 2-3; Sharkey, *The Trade Unions*, p. 43, Davidson, *Communist Party*, p. 82; O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp. 48-51.

20 Where this chapter refers to the party leadership and/or hierarchy it is a reference to the secretariat.

21 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 99.

22 These reports and the comments that followed can be found in the *Communist Review*s of the period.

23 Wood, *The Life Story of L.L. Sharkey*, p. 5.

24 Dixon, 'Early Years in the Party', pp. 48-54.

25 Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp. 115 & 176.

26 Beasley, *The Missos*, p. 19; Wood, *The Life Story of L.L. Sharkey*, p. 8.

27 Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 115.

28 *Ibid*. Dixon's original name was Clifton Walker. The name was changed after his return from an educational course in the Soviet Union.

29 Blake, *Revolution From Within*, p. 9; Kane, *Exploding the Myths*, p. 9. Blake's original name was Fred Airey.

30 Blake, *Revolution From Within*, p. 9.

31 Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, pp. 70-71.

32 McEwan, *Once A Jolly Comrade*, pp. 51-63.

33 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p. 13.

34 Wood, *The Life Story of L.L. Sharkey*, p. 8.

35 Moss, *Sounds of Trumpets*, p. 352.

36 Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, p. 164.

37 Donn, *The Australian Council of Trade Unions*, p. 76; Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p. 204; Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 204; Turner, *In Union is Strength*, pp. 98-101.

38 For the British strike wave, Leeson, *Strike*, pp. 164-186; Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, pp. 234-235; Wrigley, *British Trade Unions Since 1933*, p. 43; for the USA strike wave, Brecher, *Strike*, pp. 226-230; Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, pp. 257-283; see also Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War*, p. 167; Donn, *The Australian Council of Trade Unions*, p. 74.

39 Bacon, *Outline of the Post-War History of the Communist Party of Australia*, pp.10-14; Davidson, *Communist Party*, pp.130-137; O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp. 54-57.

40 McMullin, *The Light On The Hill*, p.2

41.

41 Sharkey, *The Trade Unions*, p. 19.

42 Deery, *Labour in Conflict*, pp. 1-20; Butlin & Schedvin, *War Economy 1942-1945*, pp. 446- 447.

43 Rex Mortimer, 'Dilemmas of Australian Communism', in Mayer (ed.), *Australian Politics*, p. 385; Sheridan, 'Labour v. Labour' in Iremonger, Merritt, Osbourne (eds.), *Strikes*, p. 183.

44 Hagan & Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1891-1991*, p. 154.

45 Wright, 'ACTU Congress', p. 684.

46 *Ibid*. Wright lost 176 to 138 and Healy lost by a similar margin.

47 Macintyre, *Reds*, pp. 142-145, & pp. 183-185.

48 Dixon, 'Building the People's Mass Movement', p. 166.

49 Sharkey, 'The Reformists Serve Reaction', p. 112.

50 Crowley (ed.), *Modern Australia in Documents*, Vol. 2, p. 144. At this time the Communist Party was still calling for an alliance between the two working-class parties and it was therefore the ALP that was the first to reject such an alliance.

51 McCalman, *Struggletown*, p. 228.

52 *Standard Weekly*, April 9, 1948, pp. 1, 6.

53 Deery, *Labour in Conflict*, pp. 47-61.

54 Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia*, p. 198.

55 Macintyre, *Militant*, p. 104.

56 Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, p. 130.

57 Lockwood, *Black Armada*, p. 93.

58 *Tribune*, August 23, 1945, p. 3; September 6 & 11, 1945. For an early indication of CPA support for Indonesian independence see Dixon, 'Australia and the Indonesians', pp. 375-378.

59 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 232.

60 Aarons, *What's Left?*, p. 64; Lowenstein & Hills, *Under the Hook*, pp. 116-117; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp. 236-237.

61 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 126.

62 Beasley, *Wharfies,* p. 128.

63 Oomes, 'The Waterfront Boycott of Dutch Shipping 1945-1949' (UT), p. 1.

64 Beasley, *Wharfies*, p. 127.

65 News-Weekly, January 12, 1949, pp. 1 & 4.

66 Weller & Lloyd (eds.), *Federal Executive Minutes 1915-1955*, p. 339.

67 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, pp. 126-127.

68 Lowe, *Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle'*, p. 21.

69 *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

70 Cain, *The Australian Security Intelligence Service*, p. 66.

71 Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 293.

72 P.H. Partridge, 'Depression and War 1929-1950', in Greenwood (ed.), *Australia*, p. 402.

73 Buckley, Dale & Reynolds, *Doc Evatt,* p. 218; David Day, *Chifley*, p. 423; Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 293.

74 Tennant, *Evatt*, p. 185.

75 Williams, *The Years of Big Jim*, p. 62.

76 Macintyre, *Militant*, p. 104.

77 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, pp. 126-127.

78 This will be examined in Chapter Four.

79 Sharkey, *For Australia Prosperous and Independent*, pp. 5-6; Dixon, 'Building the People's Mass Movement', p. 166.

80 Bacon, *Outline of the Post-War History,* p. 14.

81 Gollan, *Revolutionaries & Reformists*, p. 156.

82 Crisp, *Ben Chifley*, p. 299; Macintyre, *Concise History of Australia,* p. 203.

83 Wrigley, *British Trade Unions Since 1933*, p. 41.

84 *Tribune*, August 21, 1945, p. 3.

85 Moss, Representatives of Discontent, p. 30; Bacon, *Outline of Post-War History*, pp. 15-16.

86 Saunders & Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement*, p. 32.

87 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 43-65; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp. 19-32; Macintyre, *Reds*, pp. 203-243.

88 Purdy, 'Conference of Sydney Communists', p. 504.

89 Dixon, 'The Economic Crisis', pp. 683-84.

90 *Ibid.*, p. 783.

91 Dixon, 'Stem the Advance of Reaction', p. 747.

92 Communist Party of Australia, *The Way Forward*, p. 9.

93 Freehill, 'Depression Preview', pp. 370-73; Blake, 'Economic and Inflationary Trends', pp. 67-70.

94 Taft, 'The Economic Crisis', p. 615.

95 Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, pp. 257-258,

96 Bacon, *Outline of the Post-war History*, p. 15.

97 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p. 150; Brown, *The Communist Movement*, p. 166.

98 Sharkey, *For Australia Prosperous and Independent,* p. 15.

99 Communist Party of Australia, Resolutions of the 15th Congress; Sharkey, *For Australia*, p. 3.

100 Sharkey, *For Australia*, p. 25.

101 *Ibid.*

102 Thornton, 'Unions and the Party', pp. 207-208.

103 Murray and White, *The Ironworkers*, p. 174.

104 Thornton in his speech claimed that at least 5000 union members would direct their levy to the Communist Party.

105 Thornton, 'Unions and the Party', p. 208.

106 Sharkey, *For Australia*, p. 25.

107 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, pp. 116, 187, 233-234.

108 Bull, *Politics in a Union*; Williams, *The Years of Big Jim*, pp. 178-189.

109 Thornton, 'Unions and the Party', p. 208.

110 Daphne Gollan, 'Balmain Ironworker Battles, 1945-49' in Curthoys & Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War 1946-1959*, Vol.2, pp. 18-37; McClelland, *Stirring the Possum*, pp. 84- 102; Short,

Laurie Short, pp. 66-146.

111 Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, pp. 57-58.

112 Cribb, 'State in Emergency', in Iremonger, Merritt, & Osborne, *Strikes*, p. 247; Evans, 'Fred Paterson Bashing' in Evans & Ferrier (eds.), *Radical Brisbane*, pp. 226-230; Fitzgerald, *Fred Paterson, the People's Champion*, pp. 190-198; Hayden, *Hayden*, p. 57.

113 Evans & Ferrier, *Radical Brisbane*, p. 226.

114 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p. 120.

115 Aarons, 'Party and Mass Education', p. 114.

116 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*.

117 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 225. Sheridan prefers to use 'may have' increased the strength of the CPA rather than my similar, but stronger 'almost certainly' strengthened the CPA. To a large extent the growth of the CPA during World War Two was artifical based on little more than admiration for the Red Army's resistance to fascism. By the late 1940s with the onset of the Cold War the resignation of these mainly middle class elements meant that CPA's resources were not diverted to bitter internal divisions over policy. It also strengthened the role of industrial workers within the CPA at a time when the CPA was increasingly directing its attention to this area.

118 O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, p. 63.

119 Louis, *Menzies' Cold War*, pp. 24-27, Bruce McFarlane, 'Australian postwar economic policy, 1947-1953', in Curthoys & Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War 1945-1953*, Vol 1, pp. 41-45.

120 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 120.

121 Louis, *Menzies' Cold War*, p. 28.

122 Fred Wells, 'The Communist Party of Australia', in Mayer (ed.), *Australian Politics*, p. 396.

123 Brown, 'Why Particular Factories?', pp. 25-29.

124 Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, pp. 24-25.

125 McEwan, *Once a Jolly Comrade*, pp. 11-21.

126 Borke, *In and Out of Port*, pp. 59-60.

127 *Ibid.*, pp. 60-70.

128 *Guardian*, November 9, 1949, p. 1; *Age*, March 24, 2005, p. 22.

129 *Communist Review*, April 1947, p. 503.

130 *Ibid.*

131 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 99.

132 Australian Communist Party, *Strengthen the Party*, p. 2.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

134 *Communist Review*, October 1951, p. 645.

135 Richard Stevens, 'Cold War Politics: Communism and Anti-Communism in the Trade Unions', in Campbell, Fishman & McIlory (eds.), *The Post-War Compromise*, p. 173.

136 Raphael Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism*, p. 21.

137 Stevens, 'Cold War Politics', p. 173.

138 Their role will be discussed later in this chapter.

139 Lindsay, 'On Factory Organisation', p. 700.

140 Damousi, *Women Come Rally*, p. 127.

141 McEwan, *Once a Jolly Comrade*, p. 21; Damousi, *Women Come Rally*, p. 127

142 Lindsay, 'On Factory Organisation' p. 701.

143 McEwan, *Once A Jolly Comrade*, pp. 13-17.

144 Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, pp. 25-28.

145 *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

146 Branch Executive, 'Branch Life On the Waterfront', p. 167. The branch location is not specified.

147 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

148 *Ibid.*

149 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

150 Read, *Marksy*, p. 62.

151 Lenore Layman, 'Labour organization: An industrial stronghold for unions', in Bertola & Oliver (eds.), *The Workshops*, pp. 188-189.

152 Menghetti, *The Red North*.

153 Henderson, *The Election of Fred Paterson to Queensland Parliament*, pp. 1-14.

154 Sir Charles Lowe, Report of Royal Commission, p. 30

155 *Ibid.*

156 McDonald, *FEDFA*, p. 149.

157 George Seelaf, Ken Mansell Collection MLA, Seelaf Tape 1, 202/1- 74. In 1948, Laurie Carmichael who was to emerge as the key communist activist in the metal trades industry was a shop steward at the Williamstown Dockyards. See McDonald, *Australia at Stake*, p. 9.

158 Healy (ed.), *The Lifeblood of Footscray*, pp. 41 & 95.

159 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

160 Spaull, 'Teachers and Politics' (UT), pp. 48 & 53.

161 Spierings, *A Brush With History,* pp. 157-158.

162 Inglis, *The Hammer & Sickle and the Washing Up*, p. 32.

163 *Ibid.*

164 Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp. 122-123.

165 Mills, 'A Weapon For Building the Party', p. 87.

166 Aarons, 'For Higher Ideological Level of Party Education', p. 16.

167 *Ibid.*, pp. 349-350; Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia,* p. 61.

168 Taft, 'Victorian Educational Conference', p.55.

169 Samuel, *Lost World of British Communism*, p. 126.

170 Sharpley, *The Great Delusion*, p. 61.

171 Taft, 'Victorian Educational Conference', p. 57.

172 *Ibid.*, pp. 60-65; Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, pp. 44-49.

173 Blake, 'Report on the Tasks of the Party in the Struggle for Peace', p. 651.

174 Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, pp. 30-31. The students included Laurie Carmichael, Frank Bollins, Keith Wilson, and Ken O'Hara.

175 Gould, 'Party Education', pp. 164-167.

176 Aarons, 'For Higher Political Level of Party Education', p. 18.

177 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

178 Rawson, 'The ALP. Industrial Groups' in Isaac & Ford (eds.), *Australian Labour Relations*, pp. 166-167.

179 Ellem (ed.), *The Great Labour Movement Split in New South Wales,* p. 7.

180 Markey, *In Case of Oppression*, p. 307.

181 *The Socialist*, April 14, 1947.

182 Gerard Henderson, 'The Catholic Church and the Labor Split', in Davidson (ed.), *The Sydney-Melbourne Book*, p. 121.

183 Santamaria, *The Movement*, p. 14.

184 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

185 Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy?*, p. 157.

186 Moore, *The Right Road?*, p. 97.

187 Kane, *Exploding the Myths,* p. 34.

188 *Ibid.*

189 Rawson, *Unions and Unionists*, pp. 104-105.

190 As late as mid 1949 secretaries of seven large Victorian unions continued to hold life appointments; they were generally conservative-led: J.D.Blake, *Communist Review*, June 1949.

191 Australian Communist Party, *Communist Leaders Speak*, p. 19; Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 184.

192 *Ibid.*, p.185.

193 *Communist Review*, April 1947, p. 503.

194 Hill, *Looking Backward*, p. 81. Hill's pamphlet was part of a sustained campaign to provide political justification for his role as leader of communists who had left the CPA to establish a pro-Chinese party.

195 Bialoguski, *The Petrov Story*, p. 59; Murphy, 'Loyalty and Communists', p. 114.

196 *Ibid.*

197 *Tribune*, November 9, 1949, p. 1.

198 Penny, 'Becoming a City in the Country', p. 279.

199 *Guardian*, May 3 & 17, 1946, p. 8

200 Hill, 'Debate with Mr Keon, M.L.A.', pp. 302-304; *Age*, July 23, 1946, p.1; *Herald*, July 22, 1946, p. 5.

201 *Catholic Weekly*, September 30, 1948, pp 1-2, 4, 19; *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 24, 1948, p. 1; Ross, *Of Storm and Struggle,* p. 113.

202 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp. 110-111.

203 Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, pp. 54-55.

204 George Seelaf, Ken Mansell Collection, Tape 1 (MLA).

205 *Guardian*, November 18, 1949, p. 4.

206 McLaren, *Free Radicals*, p. 73.

207 Aarons, *What's Left?*, pp. 57-58; Bacon, *Outline of the Post-War History,*

pp. 9-10; Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, pp. 161-62; Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p. 116; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp. 163-165; Moss, *Representatives of Discontent*, p. 30; Ross, *Of Storm and Struggle*, p. 168; Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, pp. 16-17.

208 Inglis, *The Hammer Sickle & the Washing Up*, pp. 21-22.

209 Moran, *Reminiscences of a Rebel*, pp. 39-48.

210 Macintyre, *Militant*, p. 109; Read, *Marksy,* pp. 83-84.

211 Moss, *Representatives of Discontent*, p. 31.

212 *Ibid*.; Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, p. 55.

213 Aarons, *What's Left?*, pp. 59-60.

214 Ellem, 'Ideology and Union Purpose', p. 346.

215 *Ibid.*, p. 348. As a member of the CPA's central committee Hughes would have been under similar obligations as Bill Gollan to pursue party policy in the trade unions.

216 Best, *The History of the Liquor Trades Union in Victoria*, p. 182.

217 Macintyre, *Militant*, pp. 112-113.

218 Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, pp. 57-58.

219 Blake, 'The Party Branch and the Political Struggle', p. 527.

220 Dixon, 'Building The People's Mass Movement', p. 167.

221 Bourke, 'Nature of Reformism', p. 306.

222 O'Hara, 'Unity of Theory and Practice', p. 694.

223 Dixon, 'Building The People's Mass Movement', p. 167.

224 See this work, p. 46.

225 Aarons, *What's Left?*, p. 57; Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 116; Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p. 43; Hewett, *Wild Card*, p. 112; Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, pp. 91-92.

226 Moss, *Representatives of Discontent*, p. 31.

227 Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, p. 17.

228 Ross, *Of Storm and Struggle*, p. 168.

229 Sharkey, *The Trade Unions*, pp. 18-22.

230 Murray & White, *The Ironworkers,* pp. 126 & 128; Short, *Laurie Short*, pp. 66-67.

231 Duclos, 'The Dissolution of the Communist Party of the United States', pp. 541-547.

232 Sharkey, 'The American Errors and Our Congress', pp. 567-570.

233 *Tribune,* August 14, 1945, p. 1.

234 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 91; Short, *Laurie Short*, p. 86.

235 Sharkey, *The Trade Unions*, p. 14. After the defeat of the communist leadership in 1952 the reference was removed from subsequent editions.

236 Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia*, p. 386; Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 409.

237 Holt, *A Veritable Dynamo*, pp. 69-78.

238 Hearn, *Working Lives*, pp. 85, 88.

239 Metcalfe, *For Freedom and Dignity*, pp. 108-09; Ross, *History of the Miners' Federation*, p. 404.

240 Sharkey (1961), *The Trade Unions*, p. 24.

241 Lowenstein & Hills, *Under the Hook*, p. 123.

242 This issue will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

243 Maher, 'Trends in the Trade Union Movement', p. 203.

244 *Ibid.*

245 *Communist Review*, July 1948, p. 208.

246 Macintyre, *Militant*, p. 139.

247 *Ibid.*

248 McDonald, *Australia at Stake*, p. 77.

249 Sharkey to Political Committee, January 10, 1948, MLA, p. 50, ML 5021 ADD-ON 1936 5 (76); see also Johnson, *Bread & Roses*, p. 140.

250 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 71; Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 171.

251 Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 171.

252 Bialoguski, *The Petrov Story*, p. 103; Gee, *Comrade Roberts*, p. 189; Gust, *Such Was Life*, p. 212; Johnson, *Bread & Roses*, p. 140.

253 Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.3 29.

254 Ellem (ed.), *The Great Labour Movement Split*, pp. 14-15; Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 242.

255 Ellem (ed.), *The Great Labour Movement Split*, p. 13.

256 Bandler & Fox (eds.), *The Time was Ripe*, p. 49; Fox, *Australians on the Left*, pp. 76-79; Johnson, *Bread and Roses*, pp. 130-131. Wright's role in the Aboriginal movement will be discussed in full in Chapter Five.

257 Communist Party of Australia, *The Way Forward,* pp. 6-7; Sharkey, *For Australia: Prosperous and Independent*, pp. 12-15.

258 *Ibid.*, p. 25. The issue will be discussed in full in Chapter Four.

259 Blake, 'Party Tasks in the Struggle For Peace', pp. 645, 650. The attempt to develop industrial action against the Korean War will be discussed in Chapter Four.

260 *Ibid.*, pp. 649-650.

261 Blake, 'Some Problems in the Development of the Mass Movement for Peace', p. 634.

262 Olive, 'The Battle for Peace and Political Leadership in the Unions', p. 632.

263 *Ibid.*, p. 631.

264 Blake, *Communist Review*, September 1950, p. 645.

265 Weller & Lloyd (eds.), Federal Executive Minutes 1915-1975, p. 420.

266 Communist Party of Australia, *Australia's Path to Socialism*, p. 20.

267 Communist Party of Australia & Sharkey, *Report of L.L. Sharkey. Resolution, a land of plenty, free from war*, p. 33.

268 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

269 *Ibid.*

3. Peace is Union Business

1 Lockwood, *The Story of Jim Healy*, p. 11.

2 Chris Healy, 'War Against War', in Burgmann & Lee (eds.), *Staining the Wattle*, pp. 209-210.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

5 Hearn & Knowles, *A History of the Australian Workers' Union 1886-1994*, p. 90.

6 Connolly, 'Class, Birthplace, Loyalty', p. 210.

7 Churchward, *Australia and America 1788-1972*.

8 Harris, *The Bitter Fight*, p. 141.

9 Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', in Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics*, p. 306.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

11 McKinlay, *The ALP*, p. 38.

12 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, pp. 92-93.

13 Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labour Party 1901-1951*, p. 100.

14 Mandel, *From Stalinism to EuroCommunism*, p. 9.

15 *Ibid.*

16 For a statement on the dissolution of the Comintern see Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party*, pp. 81-83.

17 Braunthal, *History of the International 1914-1943*, Vol. 2, pp. 540-541.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 539.

19 Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, p. 228.

20 Isaac Deutscher, 'The Cold War in Perspective' in Deutscher, *Marxism, Wars and Revolutions*, p. 73.

21 Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, pp. 59-60.

22 This will be discussed in Chapter Four.

23 It had claimed to have destroyed a total of 506 German divisions and out of a total of 13.6 million German casualties and prisoners, 10 million occurred on the Eastern Front. See Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, p. 465.

24 *Ibid.*, p.466.

25 Brian Fitzpatrick, 'Peace Movements in Australia', *The Bulletin*, (Letters), July 7, 1949, p. 32; Hartley, *The Truth Shall Prevail*, p. 251; Gibson, *One Woman's Life*, p. 66.

26 Cavanagh, *Margaret Holmes*, p. 150.

27 For an overall view of this position see Forrester, *Fifteen Years of Peace Fronts*.

28 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p. 105.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Saunders & Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement*, *passim*.

31 Hartley, *The Truth Shall Prevail*, p. 244.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 277.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 277.

35 *Ibid.*

36 Johnson, *Fly a Rebel Flag*, p. 249.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 193

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 205-217.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 244.

40 Turner, *Room For Manoeuvre*, pp. 131-135. See also Deery, 'Shunted: Ian

Turner's "industrial experience"', 1952-53, pp. 14-28.

41 Holmes, *One Man's Way*, p. 32.

42 *Ibid.*, pp.33-36.

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

44 Owen, *The Road to Peace*, pp. 4-5.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

48 Ross, *Of Storm and Struggle*, p. 159; Deery, 'War on Peace', pp. 248-269.

49 Heard, 'The Communist Party and Peace in Victoria 1948-1951' (UT), p. 25.

50 *Tribune*, October 26, 1949, p. 3.

51 Ralph Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council and the Anti-Communist Milieu 1949-1965' in Chatfield & van den Dungen (eds.), *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*, p. 240.

52 *Guardian*, February 18, 1949, p. 1.

53 Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo 1947-51*, p. 17.

54 Hurley, 'Catholics, Communists and Fellow-Travellers', p. 30.

55 *Guardian*, November 4, 1949, p. 6.

56 *Guardian*, February 24, 1950, p. 6.

57 Butler-Bowden, *In the Service?*, p. 99; Hogan, *What's Wrong With Australia?*, p. 17.

58 Butler-Bowden, *In the Service?*, p. 106.

59 *Guardian*, October 21, 1949, p. 3.

60 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 120.

61 Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, p. 228.

62 *Common Cause*, June 17, 1950, p. 6.

63 *Guardian*, March 31, 1950, p. 7. The paper reported that delegations had already been appointed from the Victorian branches of the Ship Painters and Dockers, Engine Drivers, and the Firemen's unions. There was also a delegation from the Wonthaggi Women's Miners' Auxiliary as well as delegations from other Wonthaggi-based unions. In addition there were already 70 union delegates coming from New South Wales. Both the Ship Painter's and the Wonthaggi Auxiliary would have included in their leadership a number of communists.

64 For a brief outline of this media coverage see Jordan, The Trojan Dove? (UT), pp. 49-60.

65 The Story of the Congress, in Victorian Peace Council, UMA, 80:68, Box 6, File 2, Peace Congress 1950.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

70 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 263.

71 Zhdanov, *The International Situation*, p. 23.

72 *Ibid.*

73 Sharkey, *For Australia*; Bacon, *Outline of the Post-war History of the Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 14-15.

74 *Age*, June 30, 1950, p. 3; *Argus*, June 30, 1950, p. 3; *Herald*, June 30, 1950, p. 3; *Sun*, June 30, 1950, p. 10; *Guardian*, July 7, 1950, p. 3. The *Guardian* reported that Smith was a returned soldier from

World War Two.

75 *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 15, 1951, p. 4.

76 Robertson, 'CPA in the Anti-War Movement', pp. 42-43.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

78 *Ibid.*

79 W. Gollan, Corrected Manuscript of Interview conducted by Laurie Aarons, Gollan 4, 1980(c), p. 7, Laurie Aarons Collection, MLA, ML MSS 6436,

80 Weller & Lloyd (eds.), *Federal Executive Minutes 1915-1975*, p. 420.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 436.

82 Rev. F.J. Hartley to President Joliot-Curie, Victorian Peace Council, UMA, 80:68, Box 6, File 1, Democratic Rights and the Beginning of the Peace Movement 1948-49.

83 *Ibid.*

84 Moss, *Sound of Trumpets*, p. 368.

85 The submission is reprinted in Hartley, *Truth Shall Prevail*, pp. 246-251.

86 Chapple had moved from the Victorian branch of the union to the national office in 1923. He was both a superb advocate of his members' interests and a committed socialist. See Butler-Bowdon, *In the Service?*, pp. 42-43.

87 Jim Hagan & Josie Castle, 'The Political Expression of Community 1940-1980', in Hagan & Lee (eds.), *A History of Work and Community in Wollongong*, p. 133.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Murray, *The Split*, p. 25.

90 Hagan & Castle, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

91 *Ibid.*

92 Craig Clothier & Ben Maddison, 'Unions and Community 1940-1980', in Hagan & Lee (eds.), *A History of Work and Community*, p. 115.

93 Raymond Markey & Shirley Nixon, 'Peak Unionism in the Illawarra' in Ellem, Markey & Shields (eds.), *Peak Unions in Australia*, p. 170.

94 Guy, *A Life on the Left*, p. 133.

95 D.W. Rawson, 'The A.L.P. Industrial Groups', in Isaac & Ford (eds.), *Australian Labour Relation Readings*, pp. 216-217.

96 Reply to Victor James, Victorian Peace Council, UMA, Box 6, File 1, Democratic Rights and Beginnings of Peace Movement 1948-49.

97 *Ibid.*

98 Macintyre, *Militant,* p. 99; McKenzie, A Fantastic Dad and His Romantic Daughter, p. 347; Peachey, *The Burkes of Western Australia*, p. 69.

99 Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo*, p. 9.

100 Oliver, *Unity is Strength*, pp. 159-160.

101 *Ibid.*, pp. 193-206.

102 Purdham, *A Century of Struggle*, p. 61.

103 Bessant & Spaull, *Teachers in Conflict*, p. 26.

104 Nolan, *You Only Pass This Way Once*, p. 110.

105 Fitzpatrick & Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia 1872-1972*, pp. 121-122.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

107 *Ibid.*; Borke, *In and Out of Port*, p.

111.

108 *Ibid.*

109 Bull, *Life On the Waterfront*, pp. 53-54.

110 Fitzpatrick & Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*, p. 151.

111 Borke, *In and Out of Port*, p. 69.

112 *Ibid.*, pp. 106-107.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

115 Elliot, Seamen's Union Annual Report 1952-53, pp. 1-9.

116 Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War*, pp. 78-84.

117 Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World,* p. 14.

118 Morton, *Fire Across the Desert,* p. 12.

119 Jean Buckley-Moran, 'Australian Scientists and the Cold War', in Martin, Baker, Manwell & Pugh (eds.), *Intellectual Suppression*, p. 12.

120 *Ibid.*

121 *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 15, 1948, p. 3.

122 Jean Moran, 'Scientists in the Political and Public Arena' (UT), p. 209.

123 *Canberra Times*, November 6, 1948, p. 3.

124 Schedvin, *Shaping Science and Industry*, p. 338.

125 Moran, 'Scientists in the Political and Public Arena' (UT), p. 5.

126 Wittner, *One World or None*, p. 103.

127 *Ibid.* pp. 173-174.

128 *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

129 Moran, 'Scientists in the Political and Public Arena' (UT), p. 204.

130 *Ibid.*, p. 208.

131 *Ibid.*, p. 238.

132 Wittner, *One World or None*, p. 184.

133 *Ibid.*, pp. 184-185.

134 Ellem, 'Ideology and Union Purpose', p. 346.

135 Aarons, *What's Left?*, p. 81.

136 Borke, *In and Out of Port*, pp. 111-112.

137 The delegates concerned were Wally O'Brien, Bert Brandie, Les Golding, and Gordon Horn. At the time of the congress the FIA was under almost total control of the Communist Party and it is reasonable to assume that the four concerned were members of the party. See National Council of the Ironworkers' Association, *Ironworkers Speak For Peace*.

138 Cain, *The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation*, p. 101.

139 Ellem, *Ideology and Union Purpose*, p. 346

140 Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, pp. 175-229.

141 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 124.

142 Healy, *Artist of the Left*, p. 10.

143 *Labor News*, April 2, 1952.

144 McDonald & McDonald, *Intimate Union*, p. 57.

145 McDonald, *Australia at Stake*, p. 82.

146 *Ibid.*

147 Hagan, *The History of the ACTU,* p. 234; Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, pp. 178-179.

148 Mitchell, *On Strong Foundations*, p. 69.

149 *Ibid.*, p. 21; McDonald & McDonald, *Intimate Union*, p. 68.

150 Mitchell, *On Strong Foundations,* p. 120.

151 McDonald & McDonald, *Intimate Union*, p. 65.

152 Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia*, pp. 501-502; Thomas, *The Coalminers of Queensland*, p. 645.

153 Ross, *Of Storm and Struggle*, pp.131 & 133.

154 Walker, *Coaltown*, p. 77.

155 *Ibid.*, p.88.

156 Gollan, *The Coal Miners of New South Wales*, p. 221.

157 Metcalfe, *For Freedom and Dignity*, p. 107.

158 Day, *Chifley*, p. 479.

159 Andrew Reeves, 'Industrial Men' (UT), p. 384.

160 Ross, *History of the Miners' Federation*, p. 434.

161 Craig Clothier & Ben Maddison, 'Unions and Community 1940-1980', in Hagan & Lee (eds.), *A History of Work and Community in Wollongong*, p. 14.

162 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 124.

163 Thomas, *The Coalminers of Queensland*, p. 645.

164 *Ibid.*, p.141.

165 *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

166 *Common Cause*, May 22, 1948, p. 4.

167 *Common Cause*, January 17, 1948, p. 2.

168 *Common Cause*, January 24, 1948, p. 6.

169 *Common Cause*, July 31, 1948, p. 2.

170 *Common Cause*, February 26, p. 2; March 26, p. 2; April 2, p. 2 ; April 23, 1949, p. 2;

171 *Common Cause*, October 22, p. 2; October 29, p. 5; November 5, p. 5; November 12, p. 6; November 26, p. 2; December 3, p. 2; 1949; February 25, p. 2; March 16, p. 11; April 1, 1950, p. 4.

172 *Common Cause*, October 22, 1949, p. 2.

173 *Ibid.*

174 George Seelaf, Ken Mansell Collection, Seelaf (1), Mitchell Library Oral History Collection (MLOH) 202/1-74 (MLA).

175 Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs*, p. 37.

176 George Seelaf (2), Ken Mansell Collection, Seelaf (2), MLOH 202/2-74 (MLA).

177 *Ibid.*

178 Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union Victorian Branch Minutes, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA), 85:81, 1/2/4, September 6, 1949, p. 37.

179 *Ibid.*, March 21, 1950, p. 61.

180 *Ibid.*, May 16, 1950, p. 69.

181 *Ibid.*, November 28, 1950, p. 94.

182 *Ibid.*, May 29, 1951, p. 111.

183 *Ibid.*, October 2, 1950, p. 128.

184 *Ibid.*, November 27, 1951, p. 134.

185 *Ibid.*, May 1, 1951, p. 108.

186 *Ibid.*, October 16, 1951, p. 129.

187 Brown, 'What I Saw in the Soviet Union', pp. 959-960.

188 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 185.

189 *Ibid.*, p. 187; Murray, *The Split*, p. 17.

190 Cooney, *Handing Out Change*, p. 94.

191 McLean, 'Sources of Militancy in the Victorian Branch of the Tramways Union, 1939-1957' (UT), pp. 7-8.

192 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 185.

193 *Ibid.* This feature continued well into the early 1990s. Personal knowledge of author.

194 Cooney, *Handing Out Change*, p. 94.

195 Australian Tramways and Motor Omnibus Employees' Association (ATMOEA) (Victorian Branch), UMA, 74/103, Box 6, Victorian Branch Executive Minutes, 1/1/2/13, 21 February 1950, p.34.

196 C. O'Shea, Manuscript of interview conducted by Dr. John Merritt, UMA,Clarrie O'Shea 88/101, Box, File 2/1/4.

197 *Ibid.*

198 ATMOEA UMA, 74/103, Box 6,Victorian Branch Executive Minutes, 1/1/2/13, 10 January 1949, p. 3.

199 *Ibid.*, September 6, 1949, p. 129.

200 *Ibid.*, October 31, 1949, p. 151.

201 The *Guardian*'s coverage of the dispute was extensive and supportive. This was despite the possible negative impact the strike may have had on attendance at the APC Congress.

202 ATMOEA, UMA, 74/103, Box6, Victorian Branch Executive Minutes, 1/1/2/13, 13 April 1950, p. 66.

203 *Ibid.*, May 30, 1950, p. 150.

204 Turner, 'My Long March', p. 133.

205 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, pp. 187-191.

206 Butler-Bowdon, *In the Service*, p. 126.

207 Sharkey, *The Trade Unions*, p. 14.

208 *Railways Union Gazette*, June 1947, p. 2.

209 *Ibid.,* July 1947, p. 2.

210 *Ibid.*, July 1948, p. 5; November 1948, p. 7; April 1949, p. 5.

211 *Ibid.*, November 1949, p. 4; December 1949, p. 2; February 1950, p. 4; June 1950, p. 6; March 1951, p. 4; April 1952, p. 2.

212 *Ibid.*, January 1949, p. 16.

213 *Ibid.* Nolan can be viewed as a representative of the militant traditions of the Australian labour movement. One indication of this is shown by his opposition to the CPA's flirtation with the ideas of Earl Browder, secretary of the CPUSA who proposed that the wartime collaboration between communists and capitalists continue and that the party abandon the struggle to establish a communist society. Nolan calls this policy 'the complete negation of the class struggle'. See Nolan, *You Only Pass This Way Once*, p. 113.

214 *Railways Union Gazette*, June 1950, p. 6.

215 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

216 Holt, *A Veritable Dynamo*, p. 111.

217 *Ibid.*, p. 75; Davidson, *The Communist Party*, p. 90; Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 409.

218 *Melbourne Herald*, April 15, 1950, p.

6.

219 Holt, *A Veritable Dynamo*, p. 123.

220 Macintyre, *Militant*, p. 186.

221 *Ibid.*, p. 135.

222 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

223 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

224 *Ibid.*

225 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

226 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

227 *Ibid.*, p. 112. The secretary may have been Communist and former journalist Keith Andrew Connolly who commenced full time work for the Peace Council in 1950. See *Age*, December 20, 2005, p. 10.

228 *Ibid.*

229 *Ibid.*

230 *Ibid.*, p. 179.

231 Read, *Marksy*, p. 61.

232 *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

233 Bobbie Oliver, 'Shades of the Cold War: the role of communist workers at the Midland Railway Workshops', in Patmore, Shields & Balnave (eds.), *The Past is Before Us*, p. 183.

234 *Ibid.* Quinn was still politically active in the anti-Vietnam, trade union and Trotskyist movements in the 1970s. Personal knowledge of author.

235 Holt, *A Veritable Dynamo*, pp. 112-113.

236 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, p. 139; Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo*, p. 33.

237 Andrew Reeves, 'Industrial Men: Miners and Politics in Wonthaggi 1909-1968' (UT), p. 384.

238 'The Story of the Congress' in VPC, UMA, 80:68, Box 6, File 2 Peace Congress, 1950.

239 Healy, *The Lifeblood of Footscray*, p. 40.

240 *Ibid.*

241 Ralph Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council and the Anti-Communist Milieu 1949-1965' in Chatfield & van den Dungen (eds.), *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*, p. 240.

242 Johnson, *Bread and Roses*, p. 154.

243 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

244 McDonald & McDonald, *Intimate Union*, p. 44.

245 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 120.

246 Bevege, James & Shute (eds.), *Worth Her Salt*, p. 127.

247 *Ibid.*, pp. 127 & 132.

248 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

249 *Ibid.*

250 See this work, p. 67.

251 Barbara Carter, 'The Peace Movement in the 1950s' in Curthoys & Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War: 1945-1959*, Vol 2, p. 61.

252 Bevege, James & Shute, *Worth her Salt*, p. 132.

253 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

254 Butler-Bowden, *In the Service*, p. 107.

255 *Ibid*.

256 Santamaria, *The Price of Freedom,* p.27; see also Rigg, *The History of the Victorian Railways ALP Industrial Group, 1945-1975*. For the CPA attitude see North Rail Branch of the Communist

Party, *'The Movement' in the Railways*.
257 Santamaria, *The Price of Freedom*, pp. 23-26.
258 Turner, *Room For Manoeuvre*, p. 131; See also Deery, 'Shunted: Ian Turner's "industrial experience" 1952-53'.
259 Turner, *Room For Manoeuvre*, p. 133.
260 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
261 Australian Railways Union, UMA, 88/131, Box 9, 1/3/7, State Branch Executive, henceforth SBE, Minutes, January-December 1946, November 19, 1946.
262 SBE, April 6, 1948.
263 SBE, July 29, 1948.
264 Lucy Taska, 'Workplace, Community, Mobilisation and Labour Politics at the Eveleigh Railway Workshops' in Markey (ed.), *Labour and Community*, p. 53.
265 Hearn, *Working Lives*, p. 87.
266 *Ibid.,* pp. 87-88.
267 Kisch, p. 94.
268 Hearn, *Working Lives*, p. 94.
269 Crowley (ed.), *Modern Australia In Documents*, Vol. 2, p. 144.

4. Industrial Action for Peace

1 Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, Vol. One, pp. 133-134; Klugmann, History of the Communist Party of Great Britain ,Vol. 1, p. 80; Morton & Tate, *The British Labour Movement*, p. 287; Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, p. 164.
2 Pollittt, *Serving My Time*, p. 116-117.
3 Bullock, *Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, p. 134; Evans, *Bevin,* pp. 83-84; Weiler, *Ernest Bevin*, p. 20.
4 Cole, *A Short History of the British Working Class 1789-1927*, Vol. III, pp. 174-175; Klugman, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 83;
5 Cole, *A Short History*, p. 175; Evans, *Bevin*, p. 84; Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 85.
6 Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime*, p. 183.
7 *Argus*, August 20, 1920, p. 7; *Mercury*, August 21, 1921, p.7; Farrell, *International Socialism and Australian Labour*, p. 106.
8 Cole, *A Short History*, p. 175; Klugmann, *History of Communist Party of Great Britain*, pp. 164-165; Morton & Tate, *The British Labour Movement*, p. 288.
9 Blake, *War, What For?*, p. 11.
10 In November 1947 Jack Blake described the policies of Bevin and Evatt as 'anti-Soviet'. See Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 203.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
12 Bird, *SS Silkworth Dispute of 1937*.
13 Beasley, *Wharfies 1996*, p. 106; Lowenstein & Hills, *Under the Hook*, p. 83; Nelson, *The Hungry Mile*, pp. 25 & 74; Williams, *The Years of Big Jim*, pp. 40-41.
14 Lockwood, *War on the Waterfront*; Len Richardson, 'Dole Queue Patriots' in Iremonger, Merritt, & Osborne (eds.), *Strikes*, pp. 143-158.
15 Stan Moran, a Sydney wharfies and communist, claimed that he was the originator of the epithet 'Pig-Iron Bob'

used to describe Robert Menzies. See Moran, *Reminiscences of a Rebel*, pp. 17-18.

16 Beasley, *Wharfies*, p. 108.

17 Macintyre, *The Reds,* p. 308; Mallory, *Uncharted Waters,* pp. 39-48.

18 Beasley, *Wharfies*, p. 107; Silverman, 'Australian Political Strikes', p. 33; Williams, *The Years of Big Jim*, p. 40.

19 Audrey Blake, 'Some Problems In The Movement For Peace', pp. 633-635; Blake, 'A Government of National Betrayal', pp. 451-452; Blake, 'Report On The Tasks Of The Party In the Struggle For Peace', pp. 643-652; Taft, *Crossing the Party Line*, pp. 57-58.

20 Mallory, *Uncharted Waters*, p. 42.

21 Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines August 1945-August 1947' (UT), p. 10.

22 Day, *Chifley*, p. 433.

23 Japanangka & Nathan, *Settle Down Country*, p. 50.

24 Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb*, Ch.3; Broinowski, *Fact or Fission?*, p. 13.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 26; Tennant, *Evatt*, p. 201.

26 Buckley, Dale, & Reynolds, *Doc Evatt*, pp. 286-287; Cain, *The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation*, p. 33; Day, *Chifley*, p. 451; Lowe, *Menzies and the Great World Struggle*, p.18.

27 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 250; Schedvin, *Shaping Science and Technology*, p. 334.

28 Byrne, *Communism and Us*, pp. 27-28.

29 *Guardian*, March 14, 1947, p. 8.

30 Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council' in Chatfield & van den Dungen (eds.), *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*, p. 235.

31 H.V. Evatt, *Hands Off the Nations Defences*, Canberra, Federal Capital Press, 1947, pp.1-2.

32 H.V. Evatt, 'Defence Projects and Boycott Propaganda', *Australian Observer*, May 31, 1947, p. 37.

33 Moore, *The Quest For Peace As I Have Known It in Australia*, p. 152; *The Beacon*, April 1947, p. 3.

34 Watt, Rocket Range Threatens Australia. Also see Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp.126-127; Moss, *Representatives of Discontent*, p.31; Katharine Susannah Prichard, *Straight Left*, Sydney, Wild & Wolley, 1969, pp.96-100.

35 Watt, *Rocket Range Threatens Australia*, p. 6.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 11-16.

37 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 105.

38 Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 274; Horner, *Vote Ferguson, Vote Ferguson For Aboriginal Freedom*, pp. 142-143; Toomay, 'Red on Black' (UT), p. 11.

39 Horner, *Seeking Racial Justice*, p. 15.

40 Gray, 'Aborigines, Elkin and the Guided Projectiles Project', p. 157; Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines' (UT), p. 26.

41 Attwood, *Rights For Aborigines*, pp. 121-122.

42 Wise, *The Self-Made Anthropologist*, pp. 199-200.

43 *Argus*, May 13, 1947.

44 *Transcontinental*, August 23, 1946, p. 4.

45 *Ibid.*, November 29, 1946, p. 5.

46 Sendy, *Comrades Come Rally*, pp. 35-36.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 33. Santamaria lists the Council as 'communist controlled'. See Santamaria, *Santamaria*, p. 71.

48 *Guardian*, March 28, 1947, p. 1. The short report only mentions that the rocket range was part of the 'imperialist war preparations'. It fails to address any of the other issues that may have been involved.

49 W. Bottomley, 'Dangerous Trends', *The Beacon*, no. 90 (New Series), April 1947, p. 1.

50 Hartley, *The Truth Shall Prevail*, p. 67; Jordan, 'The Trojan Dove?' (UT), pp. 36-37.

51 Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines' (UT), p. 64.

52 Attwood, *Rights For Aborigines*, p. 122.

53 Moran, 'Scientists in the Political and Public Arena', pp. 208 &211.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 208.

55 Horner, *Vote Ferguson*, p. 144. Ferguson had been a decades-long Aboriginal activist as well as an Australian Workers' Union and ALP member and would have been able to draw in some independent activists.

56 Johnson, *Bread & Roses*, p. 154.

57 *Maritime Worker*, January 1947, p. 2.

58 Day, *Chifley*, pp. 452-453.

59 Wright, 'Fight For The Aborigines', p. 500.

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61 Clark, *Pastor Doug*, pp. 145-146; Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp. 126-127; Horner, *Vote Ferguson*, p. 142.

62 Clark, *Pastor Doug*, p. 147.

63 Tennant, *Evatt*, p. 201.

64 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 101-102; Deery & Redfern, *'No Lasting Peace?'*, pp.68-73; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 203; O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp. 57-59.

65 Clark, *Pastor Doug*, p. 146; Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalions*, p. 90.

66 *Guardian*, March 28, 1947, p. 1; *News-Weekly*, May 21, 1947, p. 1.

67 Spierings, *A Brush With History*, p. 143.

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69 *Herald*, May 14, 1947, p. 2.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Argus*, May 13, 1947, p. 1.

72 *Age*, May 12, 1947, p. 2; *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 13, 1947, p. 1.

73 John Iremonger, 'Cold War Warrior' in Radi & Spearitt (eds.), *Jack Lang*, p. 245.

74 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 133; Moran, 'Scientists in the Political and Public Arena', p. 215; Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 63.

75 Weller & Lloyd (eds.), *Federal Executive Minutes 1915-1955*, p. 347.

76 McManus, *The Tumult and the Shouting*, p. 61.

77 Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901-1949*, Vol. 3, p. 347.

78 *Ibid.*, pp. 437, 442.

79 *Age*, May 14, 1947, p. 1; *Guardian*, May 6, 1947, p. 1;

80 *Guardian*, May 6, 1947, p. 1.

81 *Guardian*, May 23, 1947, p. 1.

82 *Railways Union Gazette*, June 1947, p. 2.

83 *Ibid.*

84 Wright, 'Evatt Attacks Civil Liberties', p. 628.

85 Sharkey, *For Australia Prosperous and Independent*, p. 25.

86 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp. 149-151.

87 Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick*, p. 210; Wright, 'Evatt Attacks Civil Liberties', pp. 627-629.

88 CPD, House of Representatives, Vol. 192, June 5-6, 1947, pp. 2659-3657.

89 *Guardian*, June 27, 1947, p. 3.

90 *Guardian*, July 4, 1947, p. 3.

91 *Argus*, August 19, 1947, p. 19.

92 *Argus*, June 12, 1957, p. 4.

93 Saunders, *Quiet Dissenter*, pp. 340-341.

94 *The Beacon*, July 1947, p. 5.

95 *Argus*, June 12, 1947, p. 4.

96 Watson, *Brian Fitzpatrick*, p. 210.

97 Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 63; Wright, 'ACTU Congress', p. 685.

98 *Guardian*, June 6, 1947, p. 3; June 13, 1947, p. 1; July 4, 1947, p. 3; Sheridan, *Division of Labour*, p. 63.

99 *Guardian*, June 20, 1947, p. 1.

100 *Ibid.*; Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton*, p. 19.

101 *Canberra Times*, September 18, 1947, p. 4.

102 *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 23, 1948, p. 3.

103 Robertson, 'CPA in the Anti-War Movement', pp. 39, 41-44; Turner, *Room For Manoeuvre*, pp. 126-129.

104 *The Examiner* (Launceston), April 17, 1950, p. 8; *Geelong Advertiser*, April 17, 1950, p. 1; *Mercury* (Hobart), April 17, 1950, p. 2; *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 17, 1950, p. 4.

105 [Australian Peace Congress], 'Resolutions of Australian Peace Congress', p. 553.

106 *Tribune*, April 29, 1950, p. 7.

107 Blake, 'Speech of J.D. Blake on Behalf of the Communist Party Delegation', p. 556.

108 Dodkin, *Brothers*, p. 34; Murphy, *Imagining the Fifties*, p. 93.

109 Frank Cain & Frank Farrell, 'Menzies' War on the Communist Party 1949-1951' in Curthoys & Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War*, Vol. 1, p. 120; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp. 257-258.

110 *Age*, September 4, 1950, p. 1.

111 Webb, *Communism and Democracy*, p. 25.

112 Cain & Farrell, *Menzies' War on the Communist Party*, p.123; Lowe, *Menzies and the 'Great World Struggle'*, p 9.

113 The Communist Party later claimed that plans for the 'fascist bill' were drawn up in Washington and it was rushed

through Parliament to thwart potential opposition to the Korean War which had already been planned in advance by the Americans. See E.W. Campbell, *Hands off Korea! Sydney*, pp. 9-10.

114 *Tribune*, April 12, 1950, p. 4.

115 *Tribune*, April 26, 1950, p. 2.

116 L.L. Sharkey, 'Foreword', in Blaschke, *Freedom For Malaya*, p. 2.

117 *Tribune*, April 15, 1950, p. 1.

118 Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, pp. 97-114; Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 78-79; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp. 80-86, 91-98; Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp. 381- 419.

119 *Tribune*, June 28, 1950, p. 1.

120 *Tribune*, July 5, 1950, p. 2.

121 *Tribune*, July 8, 1950, p. 2.

122 *Tribune*, July 1, 1950, p. 1.

123 Bullock, *Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, p. 135.

124 *Tribune*, July 5, 1950, p. 1.

125 CPD., (HOR), Vol. 208, 6 July 1950, pp. 4839-4841, 4844-4941; Crisp, *Chifley*, pp. 288, 378-379; Murphy, *Harvest of Fear*, p. 52.

126 Crisp, *Chifley*, p. 290.

127 Brown, *Governing Prosperity*, p. 37.

128 McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p. 258; Murray, *The Split*, p. 82.

129 Campbell, *Hands of Korea*, p. 1.

130 *News-Weekly*, July 12, 1950, p. 1. For an outline of Chifley's position see Chifley, *Things Worth Fighting For*, pp. 341-343.

131 Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy?*, p. 147.

132 Santamaria, *Santamaria*, pp. 104-109; Thomson, 'To Be or Not to Be' (UT), p. 19.

133 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 235.

134 *Argus*, August 23 & 25, 1950; *Mercury*, August 25, 1950, p. 1; *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 23 & 25, 1950.

135 *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 24, 1950, p. 2.

136 Trembath, *A Different Sort of War*, pp. 65-66.

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138 *Ibid.*

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141 *Communist Review*, April 1951, p. 739.

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144 Turner, *Room for Manoeuvre*, p. 129.

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148 Bull, *Life On the Waterfront*, p. 50.

149 *Ibid.*

150 Healy, *Lifeblood of Footscray*, p. 40.

151 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, pp. 237-238.

152 Burchett, *Passport*, pp. 182- 183.

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154 Hurley, 'Catholics, Communists and Fellow-Travellers' (UT), p. 29.

155 Markey, *In Case of Oppression*, p. 329.

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160 *Tribune*, July 5, 1950, p. 1.

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162 *Sunday Herald* (Sydney), July 23, 1950, p. 8; A*rgus*, July 27, 1950, p. 5.

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168 Ross, *A History of the Miners' Federation of Australia*, p. 434.

169 *Ibid.*, p. 438.

170 Reeves, 'Industrial Men' (UT), p. 384.

171 Thomas, *The Coalminers of Queensland*, Vol. 2, p. 13.

172 Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 353.

173 Thomas, *The Coalminers of Queensland*, Vol. 1 p. 122.

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175 *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 142.

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177 Thomas, *The Coalminers of Queensland*, Vol. 1, p. 151.

178 Max Griffiths, *Of Mines and Men*, pp. 39-40;

179 CPD, HOR, September 24, October 15, 1953, pp. 664-665, 1409-1411.

180 *Courier Mail*, October 14, 1953, p. 3.

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182 *Tribune*, June 3, 1950, p. 3.

183 *Ibid.*

184 *Ibid.*

185 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 282.

186 McDonald & McDonald, *Intimate Union*, p. 69.

187 Greenland, *Red Hot*, pp. 195-196; Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, pp. 178-182; Short, *Laurie Short*, pp. 103-106.

188 *Tribune*, March 22, 1950, p. 4.

189 *Common Cause*, May 13, 1950, p. 2. Bill Parkinson was a Communist Party member on the South Coast of NSW who was successively district and national president of the Miners' Federation.

190 *Common Cause*, May 13, 1950, p. 2.

191 *Ibid.*, July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29; August 5, 12, 26; September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1950.

192 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1950, p. 2. Emphasis in original.

193 *Ibid.*, July 22, 1950, p. 1.

194 *Ibid.*

195 *Ibid.*, July 15, 1950, p. 1.

196 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1950, p. 6.

197 *Ibid.*, July 22, 1950, p. 5.

198 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1950, p. 2.

199 *Ibid.,* July 22, 1950, p. 5.

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201 *Ibid.*, July 29, 1950, p. 4.

202 *Ibid.*

203 *Ibid.*, August 19, 1950, p. 6.

204 *Sydney Morning Herald,* August 11, 1950, p. 3.

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210 *Ibid.*, July 29, August 18, 1950; *Sydney Morning Herald,* August 11, 1950, p. 3.

211 Elliott, 'Annual Report', p. 7.

212 *Seamen's Journal*, June 1950, pp. 6-7.

213 Fitzpatrick and Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia*, p. 198.

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217 *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 11, 1950, p. 4.

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219 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

220 *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 17, 1950, p. 1.

221 Frank Cain & Frank Farrell, 'Menzies' War on the Communist Party 1949-1951' in Curthoys & Merritt (eds.), *Australia's First Cold War*, Vol. 1, p. 123; Louis, *Menzies' Cold War*, p. 42; *Tribune*, July 22, 1950, p. 1.

222 *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9, 1950, p. 4.

223 Fitzpatrick & Cahill, *Seamen's Union of Australia*, p. 201.

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225 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

226 *Ibid.*, July 12, 1950, p. 1.

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228 *Tribune*, July 12, 15, 1950.

229 Fitzpatrick & Cahill, *Seamen's Union of Australia*, p. 200.

230 *Ibid.,* pp. 202-203.

231 Elliott, 'Annual Report', p. 7.

232 *Seamen's Journal*, May 1982.

233 *Tribune*, July 11, 1950, p. 8.

234 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1950, p. 2.

235 *Maritime Worker*, July 15, August 12, 1950.

236 Gaby, *The Restless Waterfront,* p. 249; Sheridan, *Australia's Own Cold War*, p. 62.

237 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 133; *News-Weekly*, July 10, 1950, p. 1.

238 Lowenstein & Hills, *Under the Hook*, pp. 127-129.

239 Trembath, *A Different Kind of War*, pp. 63.

240 *Maritime Worker*, June 24, 1950, p.

8.

241 *Tribune*, July 19, 1950, p. 1.

242 *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 24, 1950, p. 1.

243 Sheridan, *Australia's Own Cold War*, p. 105.

244 *Maritime Worker*, April 15, 1954, p. 1; Sheridan, *Australia's Own Cold War*, p. 155.

245 Beasley, *Wharfies*, p. 158; Sheridan, *Australia's Own Cold War*, p. 154.

246 Blake, 'Report on the tasks of the party in the struggle for peace', p. 650.

247 *Ibid.*

248 *Ibid.*

249 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 120.

250 McLaren, *Free Radicals* , pp. 147-150; *Outlook*, Vol. 3, No. 6, December 1959, p. 1; Summy, 'The Australian Peace Council' in Chatfield & van den Dungen (eds.), *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*, pp. 249-250.

251 *Guardian*, September 10, 1959, p. 3.

252 Ralph Summy & Malcolm Saunders, 'The 1959 Peace Congress: culmination of anti-communism in Australia in the 1950s', in Curthoys & Merritt, *Australia's First Cold War*, Vol. 2, p. 76.

253 Dodkin, *Brothers*, pp. 47-48; Jack Heffernan, 'Struggles in the Unions', in Ellem (ed.), *The Great Labour Movement Split in New South Wales*, pp. 17-18.

254 *Ibid.*, p.17. For details of the MTHC and the split see Cathy Brigden, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall and the Split' in Costar, Love & Strangio (eds.), *The Great Labor Schism*, pp. 140-161.

255 *Guardian*, June 11, 1959, p. 1.

256 Santamaria, *The Peace Game*, p.4. O'Brien was assistant secretary of the Victorian ARU, and McSween an official in the Victorian Clothing Trades Union. Both were long-term ALP activists.

257 Holt, *A Veritable Dynamo*, p. 123; Santamaria, *The Peace Game*, p. 6.

258 *Guardian*, November 26, 1959, p. 3.

259 Dodkin, *Brothers*, p. 47.

260 Uren, *Straight Left*, p. 115.

261 Heffernan, 'Struggles in the Unions', in Ellem (ed.), *The Great Labour Movement Split in New South Wales*, pp. 17-18.

262 *Seamen's Journal*, November 1959, p. 301.

263 *Guardian*, November 19, 1959, p. 5.

264 Summy & Saunders, 'The 1959 Melbourne Peace Congress', p. 89.

265 *Outlook*, December 1959, p. 9.

266 *Ibid.*, February 1960, p. 12. Petersen had been a member of the CPA between 1943 and 1956 when he resigned after the party supported the Soviet Union's invasion of Hungary. See R. Petersen, 'Obituary: George Petersen (1921-2000)', *Illawarra Unity*, Vol. 2, Issue 2, 1999, pp. 34-35.

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5. Calwell's 'Baltic fascists' are not welcome

1 Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p. 80.

2 *Ibid.*, p.70.

3 *Ibid.*, p.89.

4 Richards, *Destination Australia*, p. 82.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

6 Hearn & Knowles, *One Big Union*, p. 184.

7 Crisp, *Ben Chifley,* p. 35; Day, *Chifley*, p. 231.

8 Tennant, *Evatt,* p. 60.

9 Macintyre, *Reds,* p. 131.

10 Price, *South Europeans in Australia*, p. 303.

11 Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp. 80-100.

12 Applegard, *British Emigration to Australia*, p. 31; Hammerton & Thomson, *Ten Pound Poms*, p. 29.

13 Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, p. 72.

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16 Richards, *Destination Australian*, p. 106.

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the 'White Australia' Policy, p.86.

35 McMullin, *Light on the Hill*, p. 310; Rawson, *Labor in Vain?*, pp. 115-116.

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38 Jupp, *Immigration*, pp. 82, 112.

39 McQueen, *Gallipoli to Petrov*, p. 148.

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Representatives of Discontent, p. 31; Short, *Laurie Short*, p. 98; Tennant, *Evatt*, pp. 190-191.

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223 *Ibid.*

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252 Margaret Bridson Cribb, 'The Mount Isa Strikes, 1961, 1964,' in Murphy (ed.), *The Big Strikes*, pp. 270-297; Fitzpatrick & Wheelwright, *The Highest Bidder*, p. 162; Hearn & Knowles, *One Big Union*, pp. 270-277; Mackie & Vassilieff, *Mount Isa*, pp. 488-490.

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259 Wilton & Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australians*, 1984, p. 85.

260 Hearn, *Working Lives*, p. 146.

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263 *Railways Union Gazette*, January 1948, p. 12.

264 *Railways Union Gazette*, February 1949, p. 4.

265 *Railways Union Gazette*, February 1948, p. 12. One of those deported in 1946 despite the fact that he had an Australian wife and children was ARU member Lorenzo Gamboa, a former US Army sergeant who was born in the Philippines. He was able to return to Australia a limited number of times to visit his family. He waged a prolonged campaign with union support to win the right to permanent residence in Australia. See Kiernan, *Calwell*, pp. 143-4, 147-148 & 153; Klaus Neumann, 'Guarding the Floodgates: the Removal of the Non-Europeans', in Crotty & Roberts (eds.), *The Great Mistakes of Australian History*, pp. 187, 189-190, & 193; Richards, *Destination Australia*, p. 193.

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308 *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

309 McDonald, *Australia at Stake*, p. 111.

310 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 120.

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317 *Tribune*, March 21, 1947, p. 7.

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321 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 158; Stein, *A Glance Over an Old Left Shoulder*, p. 87.

322 *Tribune*, April 2, 1952, p. 7, April 9, 1952, p. 9, December 3, 1952, p.4.

323 Martin, *Community and Identity*, p. 16.

324 Cigler, *The Czechs in Australia*, p. 67.

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326 Sutalso, *Croatians in Australia*, p. 207; Tkalcevic, *Croats in Australia*, p. 27.

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328 *Communist Review*, September 1950, p. 653.

329 See Chapter Three for an overall analysis for the CPA's role in the peace movement.

330 *Communist Review*, September 1950, p. 653.

331 Wittner, *One World Or None*, p. 180.

332 'Declaration on Yugoslavia', *Communist Review*, August 1948, p. 234.

333 Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p. 203.

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335 Blears, *Together with Us*, p. 52.

336 Hobsbawm, *Interesting Times,* p. 192.

337 Michael Blakenay, 'The Australian Jewish Community and Postwar Mass Immigration From Europe' in Rubinstein (ed.), *Jews in the Sixth Continent*, p. 332.

338 Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, Vol. II p. 411.

339 Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p. 167.

340 Stone, 'Mass German Immigration and Australia's Future', p. 18; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?, p. 428.

341 Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp. 190-191.

342 *Jewish Herald*, October 13, 1950.

343 Norman Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, p. 15; Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, pp. 12, 402.

344 Gust, *Such was Life*, pp. 210; Philip Mendes, 'Jews and the Left' in Levey & Mendes (eds.), *Jews and Australian Politics*, p. 72; Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*, p. 12.

345 Mendes, 'Jews and the Left', pp. 74-75.

346 Shephard, *The Long Road Home*, pp. 118-125.

347 Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall*, p. 45.

348 Mandel, *The Meaning of the Second World War*, pp. 163-164.

349 Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, p. 32.

350 Lampugnani, 'Postwar Migration Policies With Particular Reference to Italian Migration to Australia', p. 203; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?', p. 427.

351 Aarons, *Sanctuary*, p. xiv.

352 Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985*, p. 200.

353 McKenzie, *Weimar Germany*, p. 239.

354 Holz, *Too Young To Be A Hero*.

355 *Ibid.*, p. 226.

356 *Ibid.*, p. 230.

357 Borke, *In and Out of Port*, pp. 206-224.

358 Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, p. 32; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?', p. 427.

359 Blakenay, 'Australian Jewish Community and Postwar Immigration', p. 327.

360 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 159.

361 Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p. 411.

362 Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp. 192-193; Aarons, *Sanctuary*, p. 126.

363 Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria*, p. 200.

364 Aarons, *Sanctuary*, pp. 124-127; Stone, 'Mass German Immigration', pp. 23-25.

365 *Guardian*, May 15, 1952, p. 1.

366 Nicholls, *Deported*, pp. 74-75.

367 Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', p. 84.

368 *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 11, 1951.

369 Stone, 'Mass German Immigration', pp. 25-26.

370 Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', p. 84.

371 McGillick, *Comrade No More*, p. 240; Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p. 411.

372 *Ibid.*, p. 411.

373 Burchett & Shimmin (eds.), *Rebel Journalism*, pp. 31-50; Heenan, *From Traveller to Traitor*, pp. 83-86; Perry, *The Exile Burchett*, pp. 99-100.

374 Heenan, *From Traveller to Traitor*, pp. 93, 257.

375 Burchett, *Passport*, pp. 181-183; Heenan, *From Traveller to Traitor*, pp. 93-94.

376 McGillick, *Comrade No More*, p. 240; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?', p. 432.

377 *Tribune*, March 2, 1951.

378 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 90; Mitchell, *Teachers, Education and Politics*, p. 145.

379 O'Brien, *A Divided Unity!*, p. 6; Mitchell, *Teachers, Education, and Politics*, pp. 163-175.

380 O'Brien, *A Divided Unity!*, p. 6. Mitchell, *Teachers, Education, and Politics*, p. 175.

381 *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

382 Blakeney, 'The Australian Jewish Community', p. 331; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', pp. 83, 84.

383 McGillick, *Comrade No More*, p. 240; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis, and Communists Down Under', p. 83.

384 Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?', p. 433.

385 See this work, p. 123.

386 Beazley, *Father of the House*, p. 121; Macintyre, *Militant*, p. 128.

387 Tennant, *Evatt*, p. 262.

388 Cathy Brigden, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall and the Split', in Costar, Love & Strangio (eds.), *The Great Labor Schism*, pp. 140-161; McKinlay, *The ALP*, pp. 108-109.

389 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, pp. 267-268; McKinlay, *The ALP*, pp. 109-110; Tennant, *Evatt*, pp. 282-286.

390 *Tribune*, March 2, 1951.

391 Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p. 411.

392 Aarons, *Sanctuary*, p. 15; Gust, *Such Was Life*, p. 215; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', pp. 86-88; Rothfield, *Many Paths to Peace*, p. 38; Rubinstein, *Jews in Australia*, p. 411; Sauer, 'Model Workers or Hardened Nazis?' pp. 430-431.

393 Blakenay, 'Australian Jewish Community', p. 331; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists', pp. 88-90.

394 Gust, *Such Was Life*, pp. 215-216; McGillick, *Comrade No More*, pp. 241-242; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis Communists Down Under', p. 91. Mendes gives the reason for the expulsion as a demonstration against the new West German ambassador so it is likely that the two events occurred at the same time.

395 Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', p. 89.

396 Mendes, 'Jews and the Left', p. 74.

397 Gust, *Such Was Life*, pp. 214-216.

398 *Ibid.*, p. 214; Mendes, 'Jews, Nazis and Communists Down Under', pp. 90-91.

399 Blakenay, 'The Australian Jewish Community', p. 331.

6. 'They will make splendid allies'

1 Morrison, *Stories of the Waterfront*, pp. 65-72.

2 *Herald,* January 23, 1950.

3 Gordon, *The Embarrassing Australian*, p. 141.

4 Lockwood, *Ship to Shore*, pp. 273-281.

5 Morrison, *Stories of the Waterfront*, p. 65.

6 *Ibid.*, p.66.

7 Gould, 'Questions and Answers', p. 92.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

9 Gibson, *The Fight Goes On*, p. 118.

10 Bruce, 'An Approach to the Migrants', p. 114.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Stein, 'Notes on the Immigration Drives', p. 502.

13 Stein, 'Our Tasks in Relation to Migrant Workers', pp. 246-249.

14 *Ibid.*

15 Bruce, 'An Approach to Migrants', p. 115.

16 Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, p. 128.

17 Sharkey, 'A Talk to Migrant Workers', p. 12.

18 Macintyre, *Militant*, p. 102.

19 *Ibid.*

20 McLaren, *Free Radicals*, pp. 108-109.

21 Cahill, 'Geo-Politics of a Soul, pp. 248-251.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 109.

23 Read, *Marksy*, pp. 84-85.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Humphrey McQueen, 'Glory Without Power' in Playford & Kirsner (eds.), *Australian Capitalism*, p. 353.

26 Moore, 'Charles D'Aprano', p. 4.

27 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 213,

28 Murphy, *Imaging the Fifties*, p. 158.

29 Dixon, 'Report of R. Dixon', p. 299.

30 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 320; Rowe, '"New" and "Old" Australians', p. 337.

31 Rowe, '"New" and "Old Australians"', p. 338.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 338-339.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 339.

34 *Ibid.*

35 Gould, 'Questions and Answers', p. 93.

36 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 141; Gibson, *Fight Goes On*, p. 120; Lopez, *Origins of Multiculturalism*, pp. 145-146; Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities,* p. 123.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

38 C. Allimones, 'Greek Communist Activity in Melbourne 1917-1970' (UT), p. 103.

39 See below for further details of the demonstration and the CPA's role.

40 Lopez, *Origins of Multiculturalism*, p. 148; Sgro, *Mediterranean Son*, p. 45.

41 Sgro, *Mediterranean Son*, pp. 45-46; Spierings, *Brush With History*, pp. 37, 68, 115-117.

42 Sgro, *Mediterranean Son*, p. 45.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

44 Lopez, *Origins of Multiculturalism*, p. 149; Sgro, *Mediterranean Son*, p. 47.

45 Lockwood, 'Unemployed Pool For War', p. 25.

46 R. Dixon, 'Report of R. Dixon', p. 299.

47 Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 270; Louis, *Menzies' Cold War*, pp. 28-34; O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, p. 75.

48 McQueen, *Social Sketches of Australia 1888-2001*, p. 179.

49 *Ibid.*

50 Louis, *Menzies' Cold War*, p. 58; *Sydney Morning Herald,* July 24, 1952,

p. 1.

51 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 320; Rowe, '"New" and "Old" Australians', p. 337; *Tribune*, November 5, 1952, p. 1.

52 Venturini, *Never Give In*, p. 776.

53 *Guardian*, July 17, 1952, p. 1.

54 Lampugnani, 'Postwar Migration Policies', p. 205.

55 NAA, A6122, Item 384: CPA Interest in Migrant Communities Migrant Hostel Bonegilla Victoria.

56 *Ibid.*, Appendix "C": An interview between (blanked) of the Victorian Office, ASIO and Giuseppe Gueli, Patrolman at CIC, at Bonegilla, Vic., p. 1.

57 *Ibid.*, Appendix 'B': Interview between (blanked) of the Victorian Office, ASIO and the Chief Patrolman, Frattura, Galvan and Pavan at CIC, Bonegilla, Victoria, p. 1.

58 Casey, *Australian Foreign Minister*, p. 51.

59 Richards, *Destination Australia*, pp. 228-229; Sgro, *Mediterranean Son*, p. 27; Sluga, 'Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre', p. 112.

60 NAA, A6122, Item 384, 'Resume of events immediately preceding and leading up to a demonstration at the Administrative Office, Commonwealth Immigration Centre (CIO.), Bonegilla, Victoria, which took place on Thursday, 17th July and in which approximately 1000 recently arrived Italian migrants took part'.

61 NAA, A6122, 384, 'Memorandum for: Headquarters', ASIO (2), July 17, 1952.

62 NAA, A6122, 384, 'Letter from J. O' Connor to Officer in Charge CIB Special Branch'. July 18, 1952.

63 Venturini, *Never Give In*, pp. 707-717.

64 Moore, 'Interview with Charles D' Aprano', p. 2; Venturini, *Never Give In*, p. 783; Zelda D'Aprano makes a brief reference to the events at Bonegilla without mentioning her then husband's involvement; see D'Aprano, *Zelda*, p. 71.

65 Venturini, *Never Give In*, p. 764.

66 NAA, A6122, Item 384, 'Letter from J. B. Lopatko to Director, CIC, Bonegilla', July 15, 1952.

67 *Ibid.*, 'Memorandum From H.G. Wright to Headquarters ASIO', November 3, 1952.

68 *Ibid.*, 'Memorandum From T.H.E. Hayes to Director-General, Attorney-General's Department', 'D' Branch. Dated October 9, 1952.

69 *Tribune*, July 23, 1952, p. 2.

70 Blears, *Together With Us*, p. 141; NAA, A6122, Item 384, 'Memorandum from H.G. Wright', p. 1.

71 Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, p. 281.

72 *Queensland Guardian*, August 6, 1952.

73 *Ibid.*

74 NAA, A6122, Item 384, 'Resume of events', p. 4.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

76 English translation located in ASIO file.

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid*.

80 NAA, A6122, Item 384, 'Memorandum for; Headquarters ASIO', September 2, 1952.

81 *Ibid.*, Letter from Attorney-General's Department to Chief Commissioner of Police, Special Branch, August 7, 1952.

82 *Argus*, July 22, 1952, p. 2.

83 *Ibid.*, August 27, 1952, p. 2.

84 *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 25, 1953, p. 1.

85 Aarons. 'Build the Party', p. 176.

86 Murray & White, *The Ironworkers*, pp. 222-229.

87 John McQuilton, 'Community 1940-1980' in Hagan & Lee, *A History of Work and Community in Wollongong,* p. 144.

88 NAA, A6122, Item 384, 'Memorandum', November 3, 1952, p. 5

89 *Ibid.*, p. 5; Sgro, *Mediterranean Son.*

90 NAA, A6122, Item 384, 'Memorandum', November 3, 1952, pp. 1, 5-6.

91 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

92 *Tribune*, October 29, 1952, p. 10.

93 *Ibid*.

94 *Ibid*.

95 *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 31, 1952, p. 1.

96 Lever-Tracy & Quinlan, *A Divided Working Class*, p. 125.

97 *Sydney Morning Herald,* November 23, 1952, p. 3.

98 *Ibid.*, October 31, 1952, p. 1.

99 Morgan (ed.), *B.A. Santamaria*, p. 69.

100 Rowe, '"New" and "Old" Australians', p. 339.

101 *Ibid.*

102 Hagan, *History of the ACTU*, p. 213.

103 Moss, *Sounds of Trumpets*, p. 384.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 216; McKinlay, *The ALP*, pp. 123-124.

105 McMullin, *Light on the Hill*, pp. 291-292.

106 *Tribune*, April 5, 1961, p. 11.

107 *Ibid.*

108 *Ibid.*, May 24, 1961, p. 9.

109 *Guardian*, May 25, 1961, p. 1.

110 *Tribune*, June 14, 1961, p. 1.

111 *Guardian*, July 6, 1961, p. 8.

112 *Tribune*, July 19, 1961, p. 5.

113 *Guardian*, July 27, 1961.

114 Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p. 172: Richards, *Destination Australia,* p. 230.

115 *Guardian*, July 20, 1961, p. 3; *Tribune*, July 19, 1961, p. 12.

116 Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, p. 432.

117 *Guardian*, July 26, 1961, p. 1.

118 *Guardian*, August 10, 1961, p. 1; *Tribune*, August 9, 1961, p. 5.

119 *Tribune*, August 2, 1961, p. 12.

120 *Tribune*, July 26, 1961, p. 1.

121 *Tribune*, August 9, 1961, p. 8.

122 *Ibid.*

123 *Guardian*, August 17, 1961, p. 8.

124 *Ibid.*, April 26, 1961, p. 8.

125 Ibid., 17 May 1961, p.4.

126 Stein, 'Our tasks in Relation to Migrant Workers', p. 249.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 247.

128 *Maritime Worker*, August 1945.

129 Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial*

Unionism, pp. 196-197; McQueen, *A New Britannia*, p. 54.

130 Lockwood, *Ship to Shore*, p. 275.

131 Parkes, 'The Australian Waterfront', p. 8.

132 *Ibid.*

133 Fernandez-Armesto (ed.), *The Times Guide to the Peoples of Europe*, p. 197.

134 Parkes, 'The Australian Waterfront', p. 8.

135 *Ibid.*

136 Lowenstein & Hills, *Under the Hook*, pp. 105, 119. At the time the Melboune WWF was led by Grouper supporters. It remains unclear whether the collection was official/unofficial and who was the driving force behind it. After joining the union Calleja associated with the left and this may indicate that the left may have played an important role in the collection.

137 *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120, 175

138 Barry York, 'Idealist who helped fellow migrants cross language and cultural barriers', *Age*, October 14, 2009, p. 19.

139 Zangalis, *Migrant Workers and Ethnic Communities*, pp. 435, 437.

140 Milner, *Fighting Films*, p. v.

141 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

142 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

143 *Ibid.*, pp. 35, 61-62.

7. They have lit a fire

1 Macintyre, *The Reds,* p. 128.

2 Markus, 'Talka Longa Mouth', p. 142.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

4 Bob Boughton, 'The CPA's Involvement in the Struggle' in Markey (ed.), *Labour & Community*, p. 266.

5 Nollau, *International Communism and World Revolution*, pp. 78-79.

6 McDermott & Agnew, *The Comintern*, p. 79.

7 Boughton, 'The CPA's Involvement in the Struggle', p. 265.

8 Markus, 'Talka Longa Mouth', p. 147. The IWW condemned British imperialism for destroying Aboriginal societies but believed (wrongly) that Aboriginal labour had no industrial significance. See Burgmann, *Revolutionary Industrial Unionism*, p. 85.

9 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 38-39, 48-55; Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, p. 21; Macintyre, *The Reds*, pp. 130-163; O'Lincoln, *Into the Mainstream*, pp. 35-36.

10 Middleton, *But Now We Want Our Land Back*, pp. 130-131.

11 Boughton, 'CPA Involvement in Aboriginal Rights', p. 267.

12 Davidson, *Communist Party of Australia*, p. 51; Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 163.

13 Markus, 'Talka Longa Mouth,', p. 148.

14 *Workers Weekly*, September 24, 1931.

15 Cannon, *The First Ten Years of American Communism*, p. 229.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 229-243; Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia*, pp.

315-356; Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, pp. 29-66.

18 Degras (ed.), *The Communist International 1919-1943: Documents* Vol. III, pp. 124-126.

19 Simons & Simons, *Class & Colour in Southern Africa 1850-1950*, pp. 386-415.

20 Farrell, *International Socialism and Australian Labour*, pp. 126-143.

21 Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. 2, p. 354.

22 See Chapter 4.

23 CPA of Australia, 'A United Working Class and a National Front For Victory: Resolution, 13th Congress, CPA of Australia, March 19,20, 21, 1943' in Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian CPA*, p. 66.

24 Wright, *New Deal For the Aborigines*.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 30-32; this allowed to be published with the claim that it was endorsed by the Council.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 14-19, 22-25, 31.

29 Russell, 'On Policy For the Australian Aborigines', pp. 214-215.

30 Jolly, 'Some Clarity on the Question of Tribalized and De-Tribalized Aboriginals', p. 269.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 270.

32 *Ibid.*

33 'Kit Carey', 'Aboriginals and Democracy', pp. 430-431.While the article has some positive features it is considerably weakened by the use of chauvinistic language such as 'lubra'.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 431.

35 Devanny, *Bird of Paradise*, p. 11.

36 *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

38 Peel, *Isles of the Torres Strait*, p. 12.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 115. Peel does not identify the trade unionists as communists but it can be assumed that many of them were in fact members of the CPA. As we have seen the communist parties believed struggles of national minorities or colonial people had to be subordinate to the overall goal of defeating the fascist powers.

43 *Ibid.*, p. 10. Emphasis in original.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

47 *Taffe*, Black and White Together, p. 219.

48 Miles, *Jobs, Freedom, Progress*, p. 10.

49 Australian CPA, Resolutions of the 14th Congress of the Australian CPA, p. 9.

50 *Ibid.*

51 Henry, 'Henry's Speech to London Conference', p. 517.

52 CPA of Australia, *Program of the CPA of Australia* (16th Congress), pp. 16-17; CPA of Australia, *Program of the CPA of Australia* (17th Congress), pp. 13-14.

53 Curthoys, *Freedom Ride*, p. 11.

54 'A New Stage in the Development of

Aboriginal People', pp. 26-30.

55 Lyon & Parsons, *We are Staying*, p. 21.

56 CPA of Australia, *Full Human Rights for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*, p. 14.

57 Central Committee of the CPA of Australia, *Communist Policy on the Aborigines of Australia*.

58 *Ibid.*, p.18.

59 CPA of Australia, *Full Human Rights For Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders*.

60 Middleton, *But Now We Want Our Land Back*, p. 132.

61 CPA of Australia, *Full Human Rights*, pp. 16-18. The difference between the two provides the key to understanding the CPA's position on Aborigines. Assimilation, which is often forced, means the destruction of the culture of a minority group as they enter the society of the dominant group. Integration, allows for the entry of a minority group into that of a dominant group on their own terms and freely choosing what elements of their own culture to maintain. By adopting this policy the CPA could continue to recognise Aboriginal people as an oppressed national minority within the Australian nation.

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19. Emphasis in original.

63 *Tribune*, January 19, 1955.

64 *Ibid.*, January 30, 1957, p. 3.

65 CPA of Australia, *Full Human Rights*, p. 20.

66 Brown, *The Communist Movement and Australia*, p. 247.

67 Curthoys, *Freedom Ride*, p. 11.

68 Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, p. 339.

69 G.C. Bolton 'Black and White after 1897' in Stannage (ed.), *A New History of Western Australia*, p. 151.

70 Barrett, *We Were There*, pp. 60, 125; Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, p. 187; Jackomos & Fowell, *Forgotten Heroes*, pp. xi-xii; Sharp, *Stars of Tagai*, p. 221.

71 Armstrong, *Frank Hardy and the Making of Power Without Glory*, p. 19-20; Hocking, *Frank Hardy*, pp. 31-35.

72 McDonald, 'Ron Hancock', pp. 279-281; McDonald & McDonald, *Intimate Union*, pp. 46, 83; Murray Norris, 'Rebuilding the North Australian Workers Union' in Alexander & Griffiths (eds.), *A Few Rough Reds*, p. 65.

73 Alcorn, *The Struggle of the Pilbara Station Hands*, p. 5; Donovan, *At the Other End of Australia*, p. 153; Middleton, *But Now We Want Our Land Back*, pp. 80-81; John Wilson, 'The Pilbara Aboriginal Social Movement: An Outline of its Background and Significance' in Berndt & Berndt (eds.), *Aborigines of the West*, p. 158;

74 Cited in Wells, 'The Long March' (UT), p. 65.

75 Hocking, *Frank Hardy*, pp. 35-36.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 36.

77 Peel, *Isles of the Torres Strait*, p. 115.

78 *Ibid.* The CPA often used the term 'militant trade unionists' to describe either members of the CPA or close

supporters.

79 Sharp, *Stars of Tagai*, p. 232.

80 Brown, *The Communist Movement*, p. 125; Gibson, *My Years in the CPA*, p. 101; Moss, *Representatives of Discontent*, p. 28

81 Aarons, *What's Left?*, p. 56; McManus, *The Tumult and Shouting*, p. 30.

82 Brown, *The Black Eureka*, p. 124.

83 McClelland, *Stirring the Possum*, pp. 63-64.

84 Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians*, p. 291; Jackomos & Fowell, *Forgotten Heroes*, p. 14; Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League, *Victims or Victors*, p. 40.

85 Mick Armstrong, 'Aborigines: problems of race and class', in Kuhn (ed.), *Class and Struggle in Australia*, p. 146; Horner, *Vote Ferguson*, Middleton, *But Now We Want Our Land Back*, p. 95; Morgan, *Unsettled Places*, p. 47.

86 Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy*, p. 262.

87 Biskup, *Not Slaves Not Citizens*, p. 201.

88 *Ibid.*

89 Read & Coppin, *Kangkushot*, p. 47; Hess, 'Black and Red', p. 66.

90 Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p. 211; Franklin, *Black and White Australians*, p. 135; Kinnane, *Shadow Lines*, p. 336.

91 Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p. 211.

92 Brown, *The Black Eureka*, p. 90.

93 *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

94 Read & Coppin, *Kangkushot*, pp. 47-48; Palmer & McKenna, *Somewhere Between Black and White*, pp. 57- 69.

95 Crisp, *Australian Federal Labor Party*, pp. 252-254; Day, *Chifley*, pp. 399-400; McKinlay, *The ALP*, pp. 88-89; McMullin, *Light on the Hill*, pp. 231-232; Tennant, *Evatt*, pp. 159-162.

96 Morgan, Mia, & Kwaymullina, Blaze, (eds.), *Speaking From the Heart*, p. 19.

97 Brown, *CPA of Australia*, p. 131; Day, *Chifley*, p. 400; Gibson, *My Years in the CPA*, pp. 101-102

98 Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, p. 78

99 Day, *Chifley*, p. 433.

100 Wright, 'Fight For Aborigines', p. 499.

101 Ramsland & Mooney, *Remembering Aboriginal Heroes*, p. 193.

102 Gordon, *The Embarrassing Australian*, p. 135.

103 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

104 *Ibid.*

105 Clark, *Aborigines & Activism*, p. 4.

106 Devanny, *Bird of Paradise*, p. 59; Harrison, *Dark Man, White World*, pp. 49-50.

107 Thaiday, *Under the Act,* pp. 23-24.

108 '"Outcast" Aborigines stage red desert walkout', *Age*, February 13, 2010. Almost 70 years later Banjo Morton, who was one of the leaders of the 1942 walkout, led his people away from the Aboriginal community at Ampilatwatja in a protest against federal intervention in the Northern Territory.

109 Lyon & Parsons, *We are Staying*, p. 30.

110 Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness*, pp.

97-98.

111 Fox, *Broad Left, Narrow Left*, p. 165-167; Fox, *Australians on the Left*, pp. 76-77.

112 McGinness, *Son of Alyandabu*, p. 57.

113 Peel, *Isles of the Torres Strait*, p. 12.

114 Johnson, *Bread and Roses*, pp. 130-131.

115 Middleton, *But Now We Want Our Land Back*, p. 131.

116 Fox, *Broad Left, Narrow Left*, pp. 165-166; Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 267.

117 Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines*, pp. 54-55; Macintyre, *The Reds*, p. 318, Middleton, *But Now We Want Our Land Back*, pp. 71-72.

118 Irving & Cahill, *Radical Sydney*, p. 218.

119 Brown, *Communist Movement and Australia*, p. 58; Markey, *In case of Oppression*, pp. 262, 264-265.

120 Brown, *The Black Eureka*, p. 108.

121 Middleton, *But Now We Want Our Land Back*, pp. 130-131.

122 Alison Holland, 'Saving the Race: Critics of Absorption – Look for an Alternative' in Rowse (ed.), *Contesting Assimilation*, p. 92; Johnson, *Bread & Roses*,

123 Fox, *Broad Left, Narrow Left*, p. 166; Rowse, *Contesting Assimilation*, p. 91.

124 Wright, 'Fight for Aborigines', pp. 500-501.

125 Bandler, *Turning the Tide*, pp. 30-31.

126 'The Unions Must Help Aborigines',

Common Cause, January 29, 1949, p. 1.

127 *Tribune*, March 24, 1954.

128 Rowley, *The Remote Aborigines*, p. 263; *Tribune*, January 23, 1957, p. 1.

129 Rowse, *Contesting Assimilation*, p. 92.

130 Ferrier, *Jean Devanny*, p. 265; Pink, 'An Open Letter', pp. 444-447.

131 McLeod, *How the West Was Lost*, pp. 41-42.

132 Biskup, *Not Slaves, Not Citizens*, p. 212; Mandle, *Going it Alone*, pp. 172-173.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

134 *Ibid.*, p. 173; Reed & Coppin, *Kangkushot*, p. 52.

135 McLeod, *How the West was Lost*, p. 37, Read & Coppin, *Kangkushot*, p. 52.

136 Alcorn, 'The Struggle of the Pilbara Station Hands', p. 6.

137 McLeod, *How the West was Lost*, p. 37.

138 Read & Coppin, *Kangkushot*, p. 54: Palmer & McKenna, *Somewhere Between Black and White*, pp. 71-72.

139 Stannage, *A New History of Western Australia*, p. 152.

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Appendix 'B': Interview between Victorian Office, ASIO and the Chief Patrolman, Frattura, Galvan and Pavan at CIC, Bonegilla, Victoria.

Appendix 'C': An interview between (blanked) of the Victorian Office, ASIO, Giuseppe Gueli, Patrolman at CIC, Bonegilla, Vic.

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Acknowledgements

This work examines the political activity of the Communist Party of Australia in the trade union movement between 1945 and 1960. It represents the first systematic analysis of this activity. The historiography of the CPA has generally focused on the industrial activity of CPA trade union members and has neglected this dimension.

Author Douglas Jordan draws on CPA newspapers and journals, congress resolutions, the publications of communist-led unions and numerous secondary sources to argue that explicit political activity in the unions was often central to CPA activity in this period. The approach was consistent with orthodox Marxism, which regards trade unions as a preparatory school for increasing the political consciousness of workers as a prelude to an anti-capitalist revolution. This political trade unionism distinguished the CPA from other political currents in the labour movement which may have accepted its militant unionism, but not its advocacy of political trade unionism.

Jordan examines three areas of this political unionism: the attempt to build trade union support for the peace movement, the attitudes towards the post-war mass immigration program, and the emerging Aboriginal civil rights movement. The prevailing anti-communist atmosphere generated by Cold War tensions limited but did not prevent CPA trade union activists from pursuing political issues in their unions. These activists often faced criticism from the CPA leadership that they avoided raising political issues; a claim that this work refutes.

Their activity was shaped not only by the CPA's links to the Soviet Union, but also by Australian radical traditions. The relationship between these two factors was not constant but each was important in shaping the scope and nature of political trade union activism.

Resistance books