

# **The Red North**

**The Popular Front in  
North Queensland**

**Diane Menghetti**

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## List of Abbreviations

AEU .....	Amalgamated Engineering Union
ALP .....	Australian Labor Party
AMIEU .....	Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union
ARU .....	Australian Railways Union
ASP .....	Australian Socialist Party
AWA .....	Amalgamated Workers' Association
AWU .....	Australian Workers' Union
CPA .....	Communist Party of Australia
CPSU .....	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSR .....	Colonial Sugar Refining Company
ECCI .....	Executive Committee of the Comintern (Communist International)
ILD .....	International Labour Defence
IWW .....	Industrial Workers of the World
MAWF .....	Movement Against War and Fascism
MMM .....	Militant Minority Movement
OBU .....	One Big Union
QSL .....	Queensland Socialist League
RILU .....	Red International of Labour Unions
SRC(F) .....	Spanish Relief Committee (Fund)
UWM .....	Unemployed Workers Movement
WPC .....	Women's Progress Club
WWF .....	Waterside Workers' Federation

# Introduction to *The Red North*

By Jim McIlroy

Referring to North Queensland as the “Red North” might seem strange to most people in Australia right now. Queensland as a whole is better known in the South as the land of the reactionary Joh Bjelke-Petersen regime of the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently as the centre of Pauline Hanson’s racist One Nation Party — especially now that One Nation is making a comeback in Queensland state as well as federal politics.

This identification continues despite the fact that, since the early 1990s and the fall of Joh and his National Party, the long run of predominantly Labor Party state governments in Queensland, interrupted by a short period under Liberal National Party Premier Rob Borbidge in the 1990s and a disastrous one-term LNP regime under former Premier Campbell Newman until 2015, means that Queensland has overall seen a majority period of ALP social-democratic reformist administrations in recent decades. Nevertheless, the identification persists in the national consciousness of Queensland as a right-wing stronghold in the country.

This is particularly the popular image of central and northern Queensland, viewed from the “deep south”. However, there is another political side of Queensland, one which has seen a number of the most important class struggles and social upheavals in Australian history.

Three particular special periods in Queensland’s past come to mind:

1. The great shearers’ strikes of the early 1890s, the biggest industrial confrontations in the country’s history, and a turning point in the direction of the labour movement nationally.

2. The “Red Flag Riots” of 1919, in the aftermath of World War 1 and the Russian Revolution of 1917, when right-wing gangs attacked a community of Russian Bolshevik

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*Jim McIlroy* is the author of the pamphlet *The Red North* (Resistance Books, 2017) and a member of the Socialist Alliance.

refugees in Brisbane, and the Russians and their local labour movement allies fought back.

3. The era of the “Red North” in the 1930s and 1940s, when North Queensland (meaning the area north from Mackay to Cairns) developed as the single strongest base of the Communist Party of Australia in the country, and Fred Paterson became the only communist ever elected to an Australian parliament, as the member for the seat of Bowen in the Queensland state legislature from 1944 to 1950.

It is this period of the “Red North” which is the theme of Diane Menghetti's pathbreaking book, *The Red North: The Popular Front in North Queensland*, originally published in 1981, by the James Cook University History Department. Resistance Books is re-publishing it precisely in order to help a contemporary national audience to understand the fact that northern Queensland has had a radical past, as well as a reactionary history.

The above three periods are by no means the be-all and end-all of radical upheavals in Queensland. There have been many other progressive struggles and confrontations, including the anti-Vietnam War campaign of the 1960s and early 1970s; the Springbok anti-apartheid confrontation of 1970; the protests against Joh's anti-street march laws in the 1970s; the SEQEB (South East Queensland Electricity Board) industrial dispute of the 1980s, which became a challenge to the Bjelke-Petersen government itself; the various campaigns protesting Aboriginal deaths in custody, in particular concerning Daniel Yock in the early 1990s and Mulrunji Doomadgee in the mid-2000s; and more recent environmental battles, especially to protect the Great Barrier Reef and against the Adani mega-coal mine in central Queensland.

Overall, in studying the lessons of our past, the history of Queensland is especially instructive, as the contrast between radical struggle and right-wing reaction has nowhere been more glaringly displayed than in that state.

## Early days

In her introduction to *The Red North*, Menghetti notes:

The period chosen for the study, July 1935 to June 1940, did not constitute the period of maximum communist support in North Queensland; this occurred in the following decade. Nevertheless there is evidence that it was during this period that public distrust of the party was gradually eroded ...

The aspects chosen for examination: the Weil's Disease strike, the Spanish Relief Campaign, the anti-fascist movement, women's activities, the party's social role and the communist press are those which are perceived to have contributed to the erosion of public prejudice ...

[The conclusions drawn] suggest that during this period popular antagonism was modified both because of the party's identification with issues important to some sections of the northern community, and because of the nature and extent of its interaction with that community. Furthermore, the Communist Party may seem to have made a valuable contribution to North Queensland society, in terms of both concessions won, and more importantly, the effects of its campaigns on community attitudes.

It is important to emphasise that the success of the CPA in North Queensland in the 1930s and 1940s was largely based on its ability to identify with, and campaign around, the particular issues of the time in that region, and its capacity to integrate itself into the political and social life of those communities, with their unique characteristics.

This was indeed “Real Socialism (or Real Communism), with North Queensland characteristics”.

In the first chapter (The origins of the North Queensland Communist Party) Menghetti notes that in the early days of the CPA nationally, “Organisation in Queensland was considerably in advance of its federal counterpart, which was plagued by the struggle between the old socialist parties competing for recognition as the official communist party ... It is likely that the official branches in Cairns and Townsville, which were set up by a touring organiser early in 1922, actually predated the establishment of a national party structure.”

By 1924, northern branches existed in at least Cairns, Innisfail, Townsville, Collinsville, Scottville and Mount Mulligan.

Growth was slow but steady during the 1920s. In 1933, the Queensland party reorganised into two districts —number 3 centred on Brisbane, and number 9, covering Mackay and all areas north.

By 1934, the growth of the party in the north was reflected in substantial support gained in federal elections for three party candidates.

## Weil's Disease

Most importantly, the party played a key role in the struggle of the sugar workers, notably over the issue of Weil's Disease.

In the dedication to her novel, *Sugar Heaven*, Jean Devanny, the Communist Party writer and well-known orator, wrote that the sugar workers' strike of 1935 over Weil's Disease was “Not a struggle for wages but for life; for the living labour forces upon whose backs the tentacles of the giant sugar industry of the northlands are fastened.”

Weil's Disease is a plague-like fever, spread by rats, which affected canecutters in north Queensland from 1933-34. Severe illness and some deaths occurred in that

period, provoking a crisis in the canefields.

Caneworkers demanded the cane be burnt before harvesting, to remove the cane trash, which attracted the rats. Because burning resulted in a reduction in sugar content, the employers insisted on a lower rate of pay at this time.

The struggle occurred over the workers' campaign for burning orders and for limitations on the pay cuts. A fierce battle ensued, which finally resulted in orders for burning being handed down in 1936.

The dispute highlighted an intense struggle for leadership of the sugar workers between the CPA and the right-wing Australian Workers Union (AWU) officialdom, who constantly sought to sell out the workers and restrain the militancy of the campaign.

The CP's progressive role on an issue which involved the whole sugar industry; the fact that the bureaucratic stranglehold of the AWU leaders was much despised by the northern rural workers; and the anti-racist stance of the CPA in supporting Italian and other migrant workers, were all critical factors in building its influence in the north.

Another overall factor which facilitated the growth in influence of the CP was the fact that the ALP had been in power in the state virtually continually since 1915. The Labor Party's conservative policies had caused deep disillusionment among the working-class sugar and mining communities of the north.

The combination of entrenched AWU and ALP domination of the state created fertile soil for the CPA, which increasingly sank deep roots into the northern communities.

During the Weil's disease dispute, an indication of the battle between the AWU and CPA is this example of coverage in the competing presses of the two organisations. The AWU newspaper, *The Worker*, headlined its report on the early days of the 1935 strike: "The Communist Party's latest stunt", while the CP's *Workers Weekly* alleged: "This [strike] action has been taken in opposition to the traitorous AWU officials, who have openly sided with the courts and the employers."

A further aspect of the CPA's intervention which developed strongly during the sugar strike was work among women.

Jean Devanny played a key role in building this support, which led to the formation of the first Women's Progress Club in Innisfail to organise support for the strike. The WPC later spread to Townsville and other centres, and became a catalyst for the formation of other women's organisations.

## Italian migrants

Another significant development was the CP's role in building a strong base among the non-Anglo sugar workers, in particular the Italians, and forging unity between



Anglo and non-Anglo workers — a major achievement, given the history of racism in the region.

Whereas the AWU leadership encouraged hostility among Australians to the new Italian workers, claiming they were taking Anglo jobs, the CPA supported the migrant workers' involvement in the struggle. (Between 1921 and 1930, some 20,000 Italians had settled in north Queensland, mainly to work in the sugar industry.)

Many were fleeing Mussolini's fascism and were ready recruits to the CPA, but there were battles with fascist supporters as well. (A branch of the Italian fascist party was established in north Queensland at the time.)

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 led to a strong solidarity campaign being launched by the CPA, which was particularly well-developed in the north. During this period, public meetings of the Spanish Relief Committee were held all over the north, with disproportionately large amounts of funds being raised. In addition, a relatively high number of the anti-Franco volunteers who went to fight in Spain from Australia came from the north Queensland region.

## Women

Nationally, by the mid-1930s, the Communist Party had adapted, under the influence of international Stalinism, to the ideologically retrogressive position that women's struggles must be subordinated to the class struggle "in general".

According to Menghetti: "In North Queensland, however, a remarkably strong and independent women's movement grew up during the late 1930s and early 1940s."

This seems a "paradox", Menghetti notes, because "neither local party members nor the northern community in general were more liberal in their attitudes to women than other Australians."

Jean Devanny described the north Queensland Communists as "backward" in their attitudes to women.

Specific factors which influenced the growth of the women's movement in north Queensland included the important leadership role played by Devanny herself, the fact that the movement arose from the wives of the Weil's Disease strikers (rather than from any central party directive), and the rather more "relaxed" approach to party discipline adopted in the north, compared to southern regions.

The first Women's Progress Club was formed in Innisfail during the 1935 strike, followed by Tully, Townsville and others. While much of the WPC's work was directed toward "social welfare" issues, they took up many other party campaigns, including the anti-fascist struggle, support for the Waterside Workers' Federation ban on the export of pig-iron to Japan, May Day and other issues.

While the WPCs did do considerable work in “support activities”, such as “street stalls and provid[ing] suppers at dances and balls”, the Communist women were “also engaged in direct political action, both as Communist Party representatives at women’s functions, such as International Women’s Day, and as office bearers within the party”.

The work of the WPCs was successful in gaining new “public utilities relevant to women and children in the the district”, including a free library and a children’s hospital in Townsville. This work was crucial in laying the groundwork for a massive recruiting campaign by the CPA during the years of World War II, in north Queensland and nationwide.

The Unemployed Workers’ Movement, formed in the 1930s by the CPA to organised the unemployed during the Great Depression, was a remarkably effective organisation, both in fighting for the rights of the jobless, and in recruiting to the party.

In north Queensland, branches were established in many towns, and carried on excellent work, campaigning around relief work for the unemployed, and against victimisation of the relief workers themselves. The UWM also built close links with the unions and provided direct financial assistance to the impoverished families of the region.

Fred Paterson established his base in the region in the first place as a lawyer, providing free legal representation to the unemployed and poor citizens.

## Party press

Circulation of the party press was always a major priority of the old CPA. In the 1930s and again in the 1940s (following the un-banning of the CP after 1942), the Red North always had the second largest circulation of the national party paper, *Workers Weekly*, after the Sydney district. By the end of 1936, 3000 copies of each edition were circulated in north Queensland — making it proportionately the highest sales per capita in the country.

On May Day 1937, the region launched its own newspaper, the *North Queensland Guardian*, with the founding editor being Fred Paterson. Its first editorial declared it was to wage “a crusade against poverty; a crusade against war; a crusade against governmental tyranny and despotism”. Circulation of the northern CP paper reached 5000 at one stage.

The signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact in August 1939, which stunned CPA members, effectively ended the Popular Front period, which had begun in 1935. It led to the banning of the CPA and its publications, and forced a rapid reorganisation of the party’s operations. The CP was forced to operate underground, following raids on members’ homes and party offices, bans on CP meetings etc.

From June 1941, when Hitler's armies invaded the Soviet Union, the CPA line changed again — to support the Allied war effort against fascism.

Ironically, during 1942, when the party was still proscribed, popular support for the CPA increased markedly, and a national recruitment drive was highly successful. 1943 was the high point of Communist Party membership in this period.

## **Fred Paterson**

“Electoral support increased remarkably during the war”, Menghetti notes. Paterson received over 47% of the vote in a two-candidate contest with the ALP for the state seat of Bowen in 1941.

Paterson had previously been elected to the Townsville City Council in April 1939, with 47% of the vote. He was re-elected in 1943 with 67% of the vote. Several other Communists were also elected to the Townsville and Collinsville councils during this period — another degree of electoral success unique to the Red North in CPA history.

In 1943, Paterson received more than 20,600 votes in the seat of Herbert in the federal elections. In 1944, he was elected — as Australia's only ever Communist MP — for the state seat of Bowen. He was re-elected for Bowen in 1947.

Paterson gave up his legal practice and campaigned strongly for improved public educational and medical facilities for his electorate; as well as speaking vigorously for “the principles of socialism”, wherever he was able to. He also gave regular reportback meetings to the community in towns and small centres around the Bowen region.

In 1948, the great Queensland rail strike broke out. The Hanlon Labor government moved to crush the strike, and Paterson spoke up strongly for the strikers. On St Patrick's Day, 1948, while observing a march of strikers and their supporters, Paterson was struck down by a police baton and severely injured — affecting him for the rest of his life.

In 1950, the ALP state government gerrymandered the Bowen electorate to split strong CPA-supporting centres in two — and Paterson was defeated. It is notable that Labor's gerrymander system was later used by Joh Bjelke-Petersen to establish his reactionary rule over Queensland for two decades!

So, the period of the Red North effectively ended around this time, with the Cold War anti-communist crusade rolling back most of the gains and popular support won by the CPA in the period 1930-50.

However, the lessons of this period deserve serious study by socialists today — both for their positive and negative conclusions.

## United front work

Looking back a little further, we can begin to see the process of development of the Red North after a difficult period in previous years.

In her review of Menghetti's *Red North* in *Australian Left Review* (Vol. 1, No. 80), Carmel Shute points out that the imposition of the Stalinist Third Period line from Moscow on the CPA in the late 1920s and early 1930s had had a "devastating impact on the fledgling north Queensland organisation".

The adoption of a rigid "social fascist" line towards the Australian Labor Party had decimated or extinguished a number of CPA branches. The "social fascist" line was relaxed after Hitler came to power in 1933 and Communists were able to win increasing support for their militancy in the mines and on the canefields.

Under the capable leadership of Jack Henry, a cane-cutter, and Fred Paterson, a barrister, the CPA in north Queensland was in the process of recovering by the mid-1930s. However, its rapid growth from 1935 was the result of more complex factors: greater opportunities for industrial militancy; a conservative state Labor government and an even more conservative leadership of the Australian Workers' Union, both remote from the realities of life in the north; the presence of large migrant groupings, which became increasingly active in response to the rise of fascism in Europe; the evolution of a distinctively "indigenous" style of political work; and the creative application of the "united front" policy.

The decision to form a "united front" of the working class was not formally taken by the Queensland branch of the CPA until January 1936 ... In any case, communists in north Queensland had started to build a "united front" well before the policy was formally initiated. They were also in the process of extending this to a "popular front" which included "intellectuals", "working farmers", and small shop-keepers.

Shute points out that Menghetti tends to use the terms "united front" and "popular front" interchangeably. In reality, it would appear that the relative success of the CPA in the Red North was the fact that in practice they implemented a policy of pursuing a "united front" of class struggle, rather than a class-collaborationist "popular front" of subordination to capitalist forces and interests.

What this means is that whatever the limited or partial nature of the demands taken up in the short term, they were pursued through a process of united struggle of the community, rather than being restricted to the reformist outlook of the ALP leadership or a liberal section of business elites.

Bearing this in mind, it is significant that Menghetti concludes in her epilogue to the book:

During the popular front period the CPA had come to be regarded by some North

Queenslanders as their party. It had espoused local causes when other groups ignored or rejected them; had fought against Weil's Disease in the face of the ALP as represented by the AWU; had supported friends and relatives in Spain when both government and opposition parties advocated "non-intervention"; had assisted in the harassment of fascist consuls apparently backed by the Australian government; and later had fought for the release of husbands and neighbours interned by the government.

Many community gains were perceived to have resulted wholly or in part from communist campaigns: in Townsville alone these included the provision of the women's retiring rooms at Flinders Street, a public swimming pool, a free library, shelters at bus stops, a system of council-operated retailing of electrical equipment, and, during the war, a municipal ice works and a fruit market.

What happened to the Red North and the Communist Party influence in northern Queensland after the 1950s? Their decline is largely a result of the Cold War offensive that battered the CPA nationally, and gradually undermined its base in the local communities (not to mention mainstream political life nationally).

Of course, the twists and turns of Stalinism, and the political problems it caused the CPA in general, contributed strongly to the decline. The CPA eventually broke with Moscow and moved in a Eurocommunist direction, suffered splits, and eventually dissolved itself in 1990.

The evolution of the CPA (including its north Queensland section) is a matter for analysis elsewhere. But whatever the later developments, this cannot negate the amazing success of the Red North in its day, or detract from its important place in Australian left and labour history.

## Lessons for today

Today in Australia, the original Communist Party has gone, and the socialist left is in the process of re-building after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the challenges facing the socialist movement in a period of neoliberal capitalist offensive. The question arises: What can we learn today from the rich experiences of the Red North, when the CPA built such a strong base in the mixed rural and mining communities of north Queensland?

In the first place, it is clear from Diana Menghetti's well-researched book that the Communist Party based its success in the Red North on a deep implantation in the working-class and farming communities of northern Queensland. In particular, the special highly-proletarianised character of the Queensland sugar and mining industries provided the social base for the growth of the CPA in the north in that period.

Moreover, north Queensland possessed then, and still does, particular social

characteristics in the sense that Queensland is the most decentralised state — a higher proportion of the population reside outside the capital city, Brisbane, and in the regional cities such as Townsville, Cairns, Mackay and so on, than in other states.

It is also significant to highlight the important issues and areas that were the key to the success of communist work in the Red North: The Weil's Disease dispute was not only an industrial conflict in the traditional sense, but also raised questions of occupational health and safety (OH&S), and the environment in the broader picture.

The party also defended the rights of migrant workers and communities, especially the anti-fascist Italians, which is an early example of “progressive multiculturalism” in practice. Today, the issues of migrant and refugee rights are a critical question in contemporary Australian politics.

A related topic is the priority given to international solidarity, especially in the case of support for Spanish Relief providing aid for the anti-fascist and democratic republican cause against General Franco, and against the rising fascist and Nazi tide in Europe, as well as militarism in Japan. The anti-war movement in general was a key theme of communist work in the 1930s, and again during the Second World War.

A third vital area of CP involvement in the Red North was work among women, and support for improvement of women's lives in a number of areas, including public facilities. While the Communist Party line on women was problematical in some respects, in practice the party encouraged organisation among women in campaigning for their own interests.

Fourthly, the CPA built up a strong press circulation and influence in the Red North, with sales of the weekly *North Queensland Guardian* reaching 5000 in the late 1930s. Today, the role of print newspapers such as the socialist *Green Left Weekly* face challenges to adapt to an era dominated by digital media and communications. Nevertheless, the need for a clearly socialist voice in both the newspaper and social media areas is just as important as ever.

Finally, the key role of elected socialist representatives, as pioneered by Fred Paterson in the 1930s and 1940s Red North, is critical to building a popular platform as a base for progressive struggles. Paterson began his electoral career as a councillor in Townsville in 1939, before winning the state seat of Bowen in 1944, and holding it in the 1947 Queensland election.

Paterson campaigned tirelessly for “the principles of socialism” in all his council and parliamentary work, and demonstrated the important role that elected positions can play in providing a means to help build progressive campaigns in the community.

Today, there are signs of a revival of elected socialist representatives in Australian political life. Recently, Socialist Alliance councillors Sam Wainwright in Fremantle and

Sue Bolton and Sue Bolton in Melbourne's Moreland, and well as socialist councillor Steve Jolly in Yarra in Melbourne, have shown the vital importance of such positions as a megaphone and platform for helping to organise progressive social struggles.

Clearly, there is no primarily "parliamentary road to socialism", as the whole history of the Australian Labor Party and so many similar experiences overseas teaches us. But the notable achievements of Paterson and his comrades in the Red North show that a rounded strategy to rebuild the socialist movement in this country necessarily includes activity in all arenas of public life.

And recent experiences of the leading role of socialist councillors in a number of important campaigns, such as the successful halting of the East-West Link tollway in Melbourne and the Roe 8 roadway in Perth, underline the importance of elected representative positions in advancing the progressive cause in this country currently.

Other highlights include the struggle to defend public housing and oppose unfettered private development in Moreland, anti-racist campaigning, and the push to change the date from "Australia Day" (Invasion Day) January 26 in all three councils recently.

Another lesson of the Fred Paterson era is the importance of socialist representatives reporting back and holding public meetings with constituents on a regular basis, which is practised by socialist councillors today also. The need to emphasise direct democracy, genuinely involving communities in controlling their elected representatives in all forms of government, is a crucial lesson of the whole experience of the rise and fall of Soviet communism and of the worldwide communist movement in the past.

## What's left?

In an undoubted understatement, Menghetti notes in concluding her epilogue: "In retrospect, it is likely that the temporary alliances which produced the 'Red North' resulted in more substantial long term gains for the community than for the party. As Jack Henry frequently reminded his colleagues: 'It was not lost; no — nothing is ever lost.'"

The heritage of the Red North remains in the social gains won by working people and the community in northern Queensland, the base of which remain to this day — despite the unrelenting attacks on public facilities and services by neoliberal governments of all persuasions over the decades.

The most lasting heritage of the Red North, despite the setbacks represented by the rise of Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in north and central Queensland, is its potential as a symbol of the possibilities for a new radicalisation of the people of the north — and of the whole country — and the vital need to draw the key lessons of this

historic period of mass influence of left-wing politics in Australia.

Hopefully, the re-publication of Diane Menghetti's *Red North* will assist in spreading the message of that amazing period in our country's labour history. It should be widely read in schools and university courses as one of the most important examples of socialist struggle in Australia's history. ■

# "THE COMMUNIST"

A JOURNAL OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION.

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

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No. 2.

## Explanatory!

The demand for the extension of communist propaganda has again been demonstrated by the success attending the publication of the "Communist." It was the intention of the Brisbane Branch of the Australian Socialist Party to publish the magazine as the official organ of the Branch, this decision was dependent upon the endorsement of the Central Executive of the party. The Executive, after giving the matter due consideration, decided that at the present time there is not sufficient scope for such a magazine, and that its publication would possibly embarrass the party: therefore, the endorsement was withheld.

While respecting the decision of the Central Executive in this matter, we are of the opinion that the decision was not warranted by a full consideration of the position of the Labour movement in Australia at the present time. We consider the continued publication of the "Communist" a necessity, and its success or failure will be partly dependent upon the propaganda value of the magazine. While dissenting from the decision of the Central

Executive in this matter it becomes necessary in the interest of party discipline to dissolve the Brisbane Branch of the party, and to re-organise it as the nucleus of the Queensland Communist Group, of which the "Communist" will be the official journal.

The current issue of the journal is an enlargement upon our initial effort. We hope to continue this improvement, but success depends entirely upon the support given to us by the working class. An increased circulation assures the production of a larger magazine. The November issue will be a special "Russian Revolution" number, illustrated.

Finally, in appealing for your support, we would again remind you that the "Communist" is published for the purpose of propaganda, not profit. The members of our staff are not troubled with income tax returns, all work connected with the production of the magazine, with the exception of printing, is performed in an honorary capacity in the interests of Communism.—Editor.

## Japan and the World Revolution.

(By BUYEI NAKANO.)

An impenetrable veil of mystery surrounds the Orient in the minds of the western nations. The economic and social life of the Japanese proletariat is practically unknown to the European Labour movement, and yet it affords an example of intense capitalist development, which, if interpreted from a Marxian basis constitutes a most remarkable study of the sociological process of modern industry. The old and the new blend strangely together in the land of the Rising Sun. Commerce has broken down the feudal barriers of caste only

to build those of class. Religion is being superseded by modern science, and the screech of the factory whistle has sounded the "twilight of the gods." In order that we may thoroughly understand the significance of the most virile of all movements—the Labour movement of the Japanese proletariat—it is necessary to understand a little of the development of Japanese political movements and their place in history.

The modernist movement of Japan dates from the time of intimate intercourse with Euro-  
an



# Chronology

	<b>Date</b>	<b>International</b>	<b>Australian</b>
<b>1916</b>	Oct		Conscription referendum
	Nov		ALP split on conscription
	Dec		IWW proscribed
<b>1917</b>	Nov	Russian (Bolshevik) revolution	
	Dec		2nd conscription referendum
<b>1920</b>	Sep		CPA formed
<b>1922</b>	Oct	Mussolini called on to form a government	
<b>1923</b>	Oct		ALP introduces an anti-communist pledge
<b>1931</b>	Sep	Japan annexes Manchuria	
	Dec		UAP government led by Lyons comes to power
<b>1932</b>	Jun		ALP government led by Forgan Smith comes to power in Queensland
<b>1933</b>	Jan	Hitler appointed Chancellor	
	Mar	Japan withdraws from League of Nations	
	Oct	Germany withdraws from the League & claims right to rearm	
<b>1934</b>	Sep	USSR joins the League	
	Nov		UAP-Country Party

		coalition under Lyons
<b>1935</b>	Mar	Hitler repudiates the Treaty of Versailles by reintroducing conscription for military service
	Jul	Seventh Comintern Congress
	Oct	Mussolini invades Abyssinia
		Federal government passes Sanctions Act against Italy
<b>1936</b>	Mar	Hitler sends troops into the Rhineland
	May	Federal government's 'trade diversion' policy announced
	Jul	Spanish Civil War begins
	Oct	Rome-Berlin Axis formed
	Nov	Germany & Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact
<b>1937</b>	Jul	Japan invades China
	Nov	Rome-Berlin-Tokyo triangle formed
<b>1938</b>	Mar	Austria joins the Reich
	Apr	Lyons announces increased spending on defence
	Sep	Munich Conference
		Australia urges Britain to persuade Czechoslovakia to offer concessions to Hitler
	Nov	Anglo-German Peace Agreement
		Defence spending again increased — the highest in Australia's peacetime history. Port Kembla WWF refuses to load pig-iron for Japan. Menzies threatens to invoke the Crimes Act
	Dec	Franco-German Peace Agreement
<b>1939</b>	Feb	France & Britain recognise the

Franco government		
Mar	Spain signs Anti-Comintern Pact. Germany occupies Prague	Lyons declares that appeasement will not bring peace
Apr	Anglo-French pledge of support for Poland. Italy invades Albania. Britain introduces conscription. Germany & Italy sign a military pact	Menzies becomes prime minister. Favours reconciliation with Germany
May		National Register introduced
<b>1939</b> Aug	USSR and Germany sign a non-aggression pact. Anglo-Polish Mutual Assistance Treaty signed	Commonwealth Bank authorised to control foreign exchange
Sep	Germany invades Poland. Britain and France declare war on Germany. USSR invades Poland. Partition of Poland	Australia is at war. Internments begin under the newly introduced National Security Regulations. A section of the press accepts censorship
Oct		Compulsory military training introduced
Nov	Russia invades Finland	
Dec	USSR expelled from League	
<b>1940</b> Apr	Denmark & Norway invaded	Censorship of the press introduced
May	Belgium & Holland capitulate. Churchill replaces Chamberlain	Communist press banned
Jun	Fall of Paris. Italy enters the war	CPA & fascist parties banned. Internment of Italians begins
Jul		All media placed under the control of the Director-General of Information (Keith

			Murdoch)
	Sep	Japan occupies Indochina	Federal government returned without a majority
	Oct		All-party Advisory War Cabinet set up
<b>1941</b>	Jan		National Security regulations tightened
	Jun	Germany attacks USSR	
	Aug		Government falls
	Oct		ALP comes to power, led by Curtin
	Dec	Japanese attack Pearl Harbour USA enters war	
<b>1942</b>	Feb	Fall of Singapore	Darwin bombed. Internment of naturalised Italians & others begins
	Mar		Jehovah's Witnesses & Australia First Movement suppressed
	May	Battle of the Coral Sea	
	Nov	Kokoda recaptured	
	Dec		Ban on CPA lifted
<b>1943</b>	Jan		Australia & Russia exchange ministers
	May	Comintern dissolved	

# Introduction

“Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer, we'll keep the Red Flag flying here.”

The student of North Queensland history frequently encounters evidence of widespread political radicalism which is difficult to reconcile with his personal experience of the district. Aspects of this phenomenon range from the republican agitations of the Charters Towers miners in the 1890s to the militancy of the emerging trade union movement in the years preceding the Great War and to the early establishment of, and considerable public support afforded to the Communist Party in the region north and west of Mackay during the three decades after 1920. Although an analysis of the nature of what Bolton described as “... the old irreverent northern radicalism ...”<sup>1</sup> sections of the northern communities came to give their allegiance to international socialism.

The period chosen for the study, July 1935 to June 1940, did not constitute the period of maximum communist support in North Queensland; this occurred in the following decade. Nevertheless there is evidence that it was during this period that public distrust of the party was gradually eroded. The years cover the first popular front period, from the Seventh Comintern Congress which determined the policy, to its reversal, in September 1939, occasioned by the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact and the subsequent declaration of war. The time span has been expanded necessarily to begin with an outline history of the Communist Party in Queensland, so as to provide a background against which the significance of the popular front may be assessed. Little work is available on the subject, a notable exception being Andrew Jones' unpublished study of Paterson's electoral victory in Bowen.<sup>2</sup> A description of the popular front policy and the form in which it was adopted in Queensland has been included in this chapter. Reference has also been made to the eight months between the end of the popular front and the proscription of the Communist Party of Australia under the National Security Regulations.

The aspects chosen for examination: the Weil's Disease strike, the Spanish Relief Campaign, the anti-fascist movement, women's activities, the party's social role and the communist press, are those which are perceived to have contributed to the erosion of public prejudice. An important omission is communist trade union activities which have received attention only when they impinge on issues under review. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, only a detailed study would be of value to an attitudinal approach of this type; and secondly, it is likely that, outside the sugar industry, which has been examined in chapters two and three, much of the trade union activity resembled work being carried out elsewhere in Australia, and therefore a description would contribute little to a study of the special case of the party in North Queensland. A structure based on groups rather than events has presented formidable problems of chronology. While each chapter attempts to trace the group under consideration through the popular front period, cross membership often frustrates this aim. Nevertheless it has been possible to draw conclusions from the evidence assembled.

These conclusions suggest that during this period popular antagonism was modified both because of the party's identification with issues important to some sections of the northern community, and because of the nature and extent of its interaction with that community. Furthermore the Communist Party may be seen to have made a valuable contribution to North Queensland society, in terms of both concessions won, and more importantly, the effects of its campaigns on community attitudes. Interaction, however, does not only affect one of the groups involved; it impinges on all parties. The Communist Party's constant preoccupation with fund raising and social functions, leading gradually to ideologically questionable developments such as "Younger Sets", balls, and "Miss Spanish Relief" and "Miss Popularity" contests, suggests that it was undergoing a process of naturalisation. Yet another reason for the widespread acceptance of communism in North Queensland then, was that, despite the allegiance to Russia which was an article of faith for communists of the 1930s and 1940s, the CPA in the north was rapidly becoming an indigenous political party. ■

# 1. The Origins of the North Queensland Communist Party

“There is no reason why the workers of Townsville should not have a first-class revolution on high-class lines.”<sup>1</sup>

The earliest attempts of Queenslanders to take part in international socialism were made by the Lane brothers, William and Ernest, during the 1890s. In the bitter aftermath of the strikes of 1891, Brisbane journalist William Lane believed that Queensland was in a revolutionary situation. He decided therefore to send his brother to Paris to contact the French communists and form an international organisation. Nothing came of this as the younger Lane was unable to find a ship which would allow him to work his passage to France.<sup>2</sup> A new plan was then formulated, by which William Lane led his first group of colonists to Paraguay on the *Royal Tar* in 1895. The colony was called New Australia, and it was intended that within 30 years it would grow into a powerful communist state from which a large and disciplined army would lead the world revolution.<sup>3</sup> After Lane's departure the Social Democratic Vanguard, which he had founded, functioned solely as a propaganda organisation, and the socialist movement in Queensland made no further progress towards an international connection until the conscription struggles of the first World War.

The conscription campaigns caused deep divisions in the Labor Party, and even the large section which opposed conscription was split into pro-war anti-conscriptionist and antiwar groups. Alliances were formed on the one hand between the Parliamentary Labor Party and the Roman Catholic Church, and on the other between the militant trade unions, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)<sup>4</sup> and the Russian Association. It was this association which afforded the antiwar group its connections with European socialism.

The Russians had arrived in Queensland as political refugees, and had settled in various parts of the state. An unknown number worked as field hands on cane farms

in the Cairns and Innisfail districts, and Russian members dominated the IWW local which was established in Cairns early in 1915.<sup>5</sup> Other families lived at Chillagoe where the men worked in the smelters; about 18 more settled in Townsville and found seasonal employment at the meatworks.<sup>6</sup> The Russian Association was the creation of a group which had migrated to Brisbane, and its members forged links with indigenous militants through their enthusiastic participation in the anti-conscription campaigns.<sup>7</sup>

When the Bolshevik Revolution erupted in November 1917 news and propaganda were channelled into the state through the Russian Association, its accessibility improving when local Russians left Australia to play their part in European events. Theodore A. Sergayeff, who lived in Queensland from 1910 to 1917, became a member of the Comintern Central Committee,<sup>8</sup> but maintained contact with Brisbane. In his book, *Dawn to Dusk*, E.H. Lane boasted that one of his *Daily Standard* articles had been translated by Sergayeff and printed in a Russian newspaper.<sup>9</sup> From the north at least one family, the Pilenkenos of Chillagoe, returned to Russia after the revolution.<sup>10</sup> To disseminate the news from home the association established a newspaper, *Knowledge and Unity*; published in Brisbane, it printed the full texts of Soviet congress reports, while not neglecting Australian material which was largely One Big Union (OBU) propaganda.<sup>11</sup>

World War One ended on November 11, 1918. In Queensland it left in its wake widespread unemployment and great dissatisfaction with the continued enforcement of the War Precautions Act. In January 1919 the Russian Association, the Brisbane Industrial Council and the Queensland Socialist League (QSL) organised a series of protest marches which involved several thousand people. Among their grievances were censorship and Allied intervention in Russia, and the proceedings usually included three cheers for the Red Flag and the Bolsheviks.<sup>12</sup> The protests continued for several months, and during a demonstration in March 1919 a number of people were arrested and charged with unfurling the Red Flag. As a result the chairman of the Russian Association, Zuzenko, was deported and Russian nationals Herman Bykoff, Paul Leischman, Mark Ostapenko and Steve Tolstobroff were imprisoned. Another 11 political prisoners were sent to Boggo Road jail on the same charges, and the list includes the names of several men who later joined the Communist Party as well as others, such as R.J. Carroll and G. Taylor, who became prominent in the Australian Labor Party (ALP). During counter-demonstrations thousands of people marched on the Russian Association's rooms in Merivale Street and the *Daily Standard* office was stoned. One night 20 men were injured by gunfire.<sup>13</sup>

By March 1919 the alliance between the Russian Association and the militant unions appears to have been firmly cemented. *Knowledge and Unity* had become the



joint publication of the Russian Association and the QSL;<sup>14</sup> and the secretary of the league, E. Turner, was sharing an office with T. Moroney, secretary of the Queensland Railways Union and an ex officio of the OBU.<sup>15</sup> Although the newspaper was dominated by international news, local articles slowly began to appear. Herman Bykoff, still in Boggo Road Gaol, contributed an article on nihilism in March 1919, while E. Turner and feminist Jennie Scott-Griffiths were regular contributors. The paper fought for the recognition of Russian Association secretary, Peter Siminoff, as Soviet Consul-General, and claimed it had the support of federal Labor leader Frank Tudor and NSW Labor leader John Storey on this issue.<sup>16</sup> During 1919 the association, renamed the Russian Workers Association, devoted much energy to an attempt to persuade the Queensland government to assist its members' return to Russia.

The cost of publishing the paper was defrayed by the North Queensland Russian families, who sent their donations through the Russian Workers' Association. In September 1920 the paper acknowledged contributions from Townsville, Innisfail South (F. Folkin), Styx River (P. Kurtish), Mourilyan (W. Livtine) and Tarzali. Further lists published in November suggest that the publication was also being read in Cairns, Mossman and Babinda.<sup>17</sup> Despite the relatively strong organisation of the Russian Workers Association and kindred groups, however, the first Queensland Communist Party was formed by the Brisbane branch of the Australian Socialist Party (ASP).

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was founded at a unity conference of socialist groups held in Sydney on October 30, 1920, at which the Queensland ASP was represented by J.B. Miles. In his absence secretary W.J. Thomas declared his party to be the "Queensland Communist Group", and its journal, *The Communist*, thus became Australia's first communist newspaper.<sup>18</sup> When the Sydney headquarters of the ASP objected to the move made by its Queensland branch on the grounds that national Communist Party leader Jock Garden's OBU background was antipathetic to the aims of the ASP, the Queensland group was dissolved. On Miles' return to Brisbane his colleagues combined with members of the QSL and the Russian Association to form the Queensland Communist Party. *Knowledge and Unity* became the party's official journal in March 1921.<sup>19</sup> Delegates from Cairns and Innisfail attended the first State Conference held in Brisbane in 1921, at which a provisional executive was elected. It comprised A.G. Rees, J.B. Miles, H. Huggett, C. Wilson, W. Meers and N. Lagutin, and was based in the Brisbane Trades Hall<sup>20</sup>

Organisation in Queensland was considerably in advance of its federal counterpart, which was plagued by the struggle between the old socialist parties competing for recognition as the official Communist Party. Two Australian groups were represented at the Third Comintern Congress held in Moscow in 1921,<sup>21</sup> and the matter was not

settled until June 1922. Thus it is likely that the official branches in Cairns and Townsville which were set up by a touring state organiser early in 1922, actually predated the establishment of a national party structure. J.B. Miles, then secretary of the Brisbane Building Trades Council, represented Queensland at the first united Party Conference in December 1922.<sup>22</sup>

The Third Comintern Congress outlined a policy of isolation from social democratic parties, since designated the “united front from below”. It implied penetration of the labour parties with the intention of destroying their leadership and converting their rank-and-file members to international socialism. Neither the CPA nor the ALP appear to have recognised this manoeuvre until 1923 when the ALP removed Jock Garden from its NSW Executive, and expelled all known communists from the party. The Third Annual Conference<sup>23</sup> of the Communist Party of Australia was held in Sydney in December 1923; both Brisbane and North Queensland were represented,<sup>24</sup> and it would seem that this conference instituted the practice of secret membership in response to ALP hostility.

The interpretation of the united front policy which the delegates took back to Queensland probably had more relevance to the industrial than the political situation in that state. By 1924 the Queensland communists had become locked into the battle for control of the Labor Party which was being waged between the AWU and militant unions led by the Australian Railways Union (ARU).<sup>25</sup> In 1924, when the party journal *New Order*<sup>26</sup> began publication, its Russian editor persistently attacked the AWU leadership, and some success in infiltrating the union is suggested by the publication of contributions from Ingham under the signature of “F. Rylands, AWU representative”.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless in southern Queensland at least the party stressed the political aspects of the policy.

In Brisbane weekly classes in politics were being conducted by J.B. Miles, and in political economy by F.W. Paterson. H.J. Huggett conducted children’s classes every Saturday afternoon.<sup>28</sup> Little is known of activities in the north of the state during 1924, although branches existed in Cairns, Innisfail, Townsville, Collinsville, Scottville and Mount Mulligan.<sup>29</sup> At the end of the year a new organisation was established to spearhead the attempt to penetrate the Labor Party. In an article printed in *The Toiler*<sup>30</sup> in December 1924 its first president, Fred Paterson, outlined the aim of the Minority Labour Movement:

The immediate task of all militant workers is to get inside the ALP in order to show these workers how the reactionary leaders are betraying them and the cause of their class.

Readers’ responses to this statement suggest that even in 1925 there were many

members who did not find the policy acceptable. *The Toiler* published several letters from angry ideologists who believed that to work within the parliamentary system was to betray the revolution<sup>31</sup>

While the first united front policy aroused controversy, its effect on the Queensland membership was small compared with the problems it raised at the national level. NSW members were alienated to such an extent that in 1925 Central Committee member L. Barrachi moved that the CPA go into liquidation. Although the motion was defeated, most of the executive, including secretary Jock Garden, left the party.

Despite the wide distribution of *The Toiler*, the North Queensland unit of the party appears to have been undisturbed by ideological debate during this period. In September 1925 a national organiser, Norman Jeffrey, toured the north visiting Cairns, Mareeba, Mount Molloy, Mount Mulligan, Mossman, Port Douglas, Gordonvale, Babinda, Innisfail, Ingham, Halifax, Lucinda, Inkerman and Bowen.<sup>32</sup> The next year Townsville was visited by a representative of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Two thirds of the Townsville Russian families had joined the Australian Communist Party, although most of them spoke little English. These families met the Russian organiser at Alex Bordujenko's house in Stanley Street, and were invited either to return to Russia or to subscribe to post-revolution reconstruction there. Each family pledged the astonishing sum of £50, in some cases a third of their annual income. The money was sent to America where it purchased a tractor for a Soviet commune.<sup>33</sup>

The Townsville branch established its headquarters in the Meatworkers' (AMIEU) Hall in April 1926; then, amid deteriorating economic conditions, the party took part in the South Johnstone strike and railway lockout of 1927.<sup>34</sup> This dispute, and the victimisation which followed it had a devastating effect on the Communist Party in the far north. Several branches collapsed and organisation within the sugar industry did not recover until the 1930s.<sup>35</sup> When organiser Herbert Moxon visited the north that year he devoted his time to the expanding branches in Bowen, Collinsville and Townsville, where, as a result of his visit, a North Queensland Executive was established. The secretaryship was conferred on E.G. Tripp, a former member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, and an active and able leader.<sup>36</sup>

In the meantime the national executive was again preparing to tear itself apart. In October 1927 the ECCI, in cooperation with members of the CPA Central Committee, had drawn up a document known as the Queensland Resolution, which gave instructions on tactics to be used during the forthcoming state elections. These tactics amounted to a policy change based on a Comintern prediction that economic depression would shortly overtake the western capitalist nations. As the depression

was expected to create revolutionary conditions, the policy of working within the labour parties was to be abandoned, and organisation tightened to enable a direct challenge to the political system. The document was brought back to Australia by Norman Jeffrey and Jack Blake who attended a conference in Moscow in early 1928. In Sydney it became the focus of a power struggle within the Central Committee, which reached its climax at the 1929 Annual Conference, when Moxon and Sharkey emerged as the new leaders of the CPA.<sup>37</sup>

Despite Miles' support for the new leadership, reactions of the Queensland members to its policy were mixed. Its industrial and organisational aspects seem to have been acceptable, particularly in the north, where the party was making considerable progress within the trade unions. During 1929 Tripp was elected Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) representative on the Townsville Trades and Labor Council, where he worked in cooperation with the ARU, Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union (AMIEU) and Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) delegates.<sup>38</sup> There was however opposition, particularly from Paterson, to the withdrawal of support from the rank and file of the ALP, and Paterson was censured by the Central Committee, although he did not leave the party. Had he done so, the Queensland organisation would probably have split.

Within a year the new leaders completed their organisational reforms. The "bolshevisation" of the CPA involved building a hierarchical party structure, based on units established within industries. These were connected into groups known as districts, each of which elected a District Committee. Above these was the Annual Party Congress of district delegates, which elected the Central Committee. Above the Central Committee was the ECCI.

All lower bodies were bound to carry out the decisions of the higher body, ultimate control thus resting with the Comintern. Deviation from the Comintern line could, and often did, result in expulsions.<sup>39</sup>

Purges of "right deviationists" during 1930 removed Tripp from the party, and the loss of the northern leader combined with the harsh attitudes of party members, who regarded ALP trade unionists as "social fascists", to decimate the remaining North Queensland branches. The Collinsville and Scottville branches collapsed<sup>40</sup> and Townsville was considerably weakened. At the Christmas Conference of 1931 Queensland lost J.B. Miles who was elected federal general secretary of the party, an election necessitating a change in the party constitution which had previously limited eligibility for this position to members of the NSW party.<sup>41</sup>

As Miles moved to Sydney, a new leader was emerging in North Queensland. Jack Henry developed his political ideas as a canecutter in the Tully district and joined the

Communist Party in Brisbane during the slack season of 1931. He returned to the canefields for the 1932 cutting season and became the driving force of the party in North Queensland.<sup>42</sup> Henry left a strong impression on those who met him. He was a dedicated party worker who undermined his health cutting cane and organising for the party by day, and studying Marxism at night by the light of a candle balanced on his chest.<sup>43</sup> Under his direction the issue of British Preference in the sugar industry became a focus for rank-and-file discontent with the AWU leadership in the far north during 1932.<sup>44</sup> When, in 1933, the Queensland Party reorganised into two districts — Three, centred on Brisbane, and Nine, covering Mackay and all areas north — Henry was appointed District Nine leader.<sup>45</sup> During that year three northern branches reformed and a new one was created. In Collinsville mine office worker and former school teacher, Jim Henderson, reconstituted the Collinsville branch with an initial membership of nine, among them Tom (Bluey) Miller, later president of the Queensland Miners' Federation. Four kilometres away the little mining town of Scottville was inspired to reform its branch, largely with former members.<sup>46</sup> A new branch with predominantly Italian membership was established in Ingham in September, and in November the Innisfail branch reopened. Also in 1933 Fred Paterson moved to Townsville, affording the district an extremely able and well-balanced leadership. When the *Communist Review* congratulated District Nine on its organisation in March the following year, party members were given a great boost in morale.<sup>47</sup>

1934 was a successful year for the North Queensland Communist Party. Three candidates for the federal elections — Henry, Paterson and Jim Slater — demonstrated that electoral support was increasing; and militancy in the sugar industry continued to grow. During this year the focus of discontent was an outbreak of Weil's Disease in the Ingham district, and orders for burning the cane were won for the Victoria, Macknade, Mourilyan, South Johnstone and Goondi mill areas.<sup>48</sup> Rank and file committees were built up within those branches of the AWU in which sugar workers predominated. By July 1935, when the Seventh Comintern Congress announced its Popular Front tactic, the North Queensland Communist Party was politically and industrially organised to incorporate the new policy into its activities.

Although the new leaders undoubtedly contributed to the reconstruction of the North Queensland Party in these years, their work was assisted by a relaxation of the "social fascist" line during the years following Hitler's appointment to the German Chancellery.

The official policy change, however, was not made until 1935 when the Seventh Comintern Congress announced that from that date all Party activities were to be subordinated to the fight against international fascism. The new line was scarcely

more appropriate to Australian conditions than its predecessor; neither “revolutionary condition” nor “fascist threat” provided an adequate description of the realities of the political situation in this country. There were however three aspects of the new policy which proved to be effective in Australia.

Firstly, the struggle against fascism required the formation of a united front with the social democratic parties. Unlike the first united front which sought to undermine the influence of their leaders, this was to be a genuine attempt to cooperate with other working-class organisations, and was accompanied by the extension of the base of the party to include “intellectuals”, small shop-keepers and working farmers. Secondly the congress announced that from 1935 policy for each country would be determined individually, taking into account “national peculiarities”. In the years preceding the congress all communist policy had been formulated on the basis of an expert analysis of the international economic situation. After the Seventh Congress, although the aim of the policy remained the same for all members of the International, individual parties acquired greater flexibility in the formulation of policies to achieve this aim. Thirdly, the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) was dissolved, allowing all trade union policy to be determined by the national parties.

In late December 1935 the Eleventh Annual Conference of the Communist Party of Australia officially adopted the policy, which had already influenced local decision making for some months. Australian policy centred on a proposed alliance with the ALP to remove the ruling UAP federal government from office. At the meeting moves were made towards an approach to the ALP on the subject of CPA affiliation,<sup>49</sup> and for the first time in its history the party called for a Labor government to replace Lyons. The official report of the conference expressed optimism on the outcome of this line; Dixon wrote:

The time is arriving, however, when it [the ALP] will not be able to [ignore our requests for unity] ... when acceptance will be necessary. We look forward to that moment and work for it daily.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless a more realistic appraisal of the situation was implied by the new slogan: “A United Front Against *War and Fascism*,” [author’s italics] and by the stress given by the delegates to trade union strategy. Work within the unions was to undergo several fundamental changes. The general strike tactic was dropped, and the conference announced that from that date each dispute was to be considered on its merit. A more flexible attitude to ALP unionists was urged, and control through communist industrial organisations such as the Militant Minority Movement (MMM) was to be replaced by the use of central trade union machinery.

The popular front policy was formally adopted in Queensland in January 1936,

Sharkey himself attending the District Nine Conference to explain the new developments to northern delegates.<sup>51</sup> In that state however the situation was complicated by two factors: firstly the ALP was in power and indeed held all the North Queensland seats in the Legislative Assembly. Furthermore, that party held a decidedly isolationist view of foreign policy, and the process of simplification which linked the Lyons government with war and fascism and called for unity with the Labor Party to bring it down was not possible in the north. Secondly, much of the political conflict in Queensland hinged on the struggle for control of the political wing of the labour movement between the conservative and radical trade unions. The policy which emerged, therefore, was one of opposition to conservative or corrupt leaders within the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Dixon outlined this in a speech given at the Southern and Northern Conferences of the Communist Party on “The immediate program for communists in Queensland”. He told delegates:

We communists are anxious to see the bad situation in the Labour (sic) Party corrected above all because of the menace to the working class from war and fascism ... A united labour movement politically active, would be the most effective defence of the people's interest. Working-class unity is the burning need of the moment ... We declare our readiness to affiliate with the Labour Party for establishment of a lasting unity ...<sup>52</sup>

It was within the framework of this policy that, between 1935 and 1939, the popular front emerged in North Queensland.<sup>53</sup> ■

## 2. The Sugar Workers' Strike of 1935

“Not a struggle for wages but for life; for the living labour forces upon whose backs the tentacles of the giant sugar industry of the Northlands are fastened.”<sup>1</sup>

Possibly the Australian Communist Party district for which the aims of the united front against war and fascism were most attractive was District Nine in North Queensland. In this district even sections of the Labor Party's rank and file found the Communist Party's proposals to affiliate with the ALP seductive. Despite ALP rules, dating back to the mid-1920s, precluding communists from party membership, these sections became increasingly disenchanted with the Queensland Central Executive's (QCE) rigid stand on the question. North Queenslanders traditionally distrusted the state government which was often regarded as neglecting northern development in favour of southern interests. Paradoxically, almost continuously since 1915, this government had been formed by the ALP, relying heavily on the vote of northern and western Queensland. It was understandable therefore that some of the distrust should focus on the ALP leadership, especially the influence of Clarrie Fallon and the AWU machine which exerted its authority from its Elizabeth Street headquarters in the Workers Building. In time this attitude led to electoral support for a variety of rebel groups not only in provincial cities but also in the capital itself: none of them conservative but all expressing discontent with the QCE.<sup>2</sup>

A similar situation existed in the industrial wing of the labour movement. Many North Queensland trade unionists were seasonal workers, for whom continuity of employment was never assured. Therefore action for improved wages and conditions was sometimes less cautious and controlled than elsewhere, and industrial policy was likely to be accepted on the basis of short-term gains. The dominant union however was the AWU, a body which was deeply conservative and committed to arbitration.



Its leaders were often career unionists, many of whom regarded their work as a springboard to a political future. Thus, while cooperation with the Communist Party was anathema to the AWU leadership, for many rank-and-file members the immediate policy was the deciding factor, and the origin of such policy a matter of some indifference.

Another condition which favoured the united front in the north was the existence, at least in the sugar districts, of an unusually clearly defined class system.

On one side stand the bosses; on the other the men. We haven't the complicating factors they've got down south in the industrial areas. The non-party workers can see the struggle, therefore it's easy to wage it.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in North Queensland there was a high concentration of working-class people for whom fascism had real meaning: the Italians, Yugoslavs and Spaniards of the sugar areas. A significant number of these were refugees from fascism,<sup>4</sup> and many communicated regularly with relatives and friends in the fascist countries. These four factors emerged during the first campaign of the popular front period: the Weil's Disease strike of 1935.

Weil's Disease was the name given by canecutters and local doctors to fevers caused by three varieties of leptospirae (including leptospira icterohaemorrhagiae: classical Weil's Disease) encountered in the sugar areas during the 1930s. Fevers had always been a problem in North Queensland, but diagnoses were often imprecise. Local legend insists that, during the construction of the Mourilyan Harbour tramway in 1883, a man died for every sleeper laid, and in 1886 at least 50 of the 76 inhabitants of Burketown died of an unidentified fever.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly leptospirae were among the viruses responsible for diseases diagnosed as "typho-malaria", coastal fever or cane fever before 1933. However the first clinical diagnosis of Weil's Disease was made by Gordon Morrissey, an Ingham doctor, during the 1933 cane crushing season.<sup>6</sup> The summers of 1933 and 1934 were unusually wet in the Ingham district, and the town and surrounding farms were invaded by a plague of rats. By October Dr. Morrissey was treating cases of fever among the canecutters, and by the end of the season these numbered 40. The patients complained of fever, muscular pains, intense headache and extreme mental depression. Sixteen of them became jaundiced, and in the worst cases the symptoms included internal haemorrhages and black vomiting. Four cases developed acute mania and died at the end of the second week. When the 1934 season opened in June, 36 new cases appeared within a month, two of them proving fatal. Postmortems revealed haemorrhages of the kidneys, lungs and bowel wall, and the spleens were found to have disintegrated. In August 80 cases were reported in ten days, and a further six in September. All the patients were healthy adult males, and all

were working in the sugar cane.

Both Morrissey, the local clinician, and Tim Cotter of the Commonwealth Health Laboratory in Townsville reported that the virus was spread by rats urinating in the wet ground and on the cane stalks, and invaded the cutters through abrasions received while handling the cane trash. They considered that if the cane were to be burned before harvesting the trash would be removed and both the cane and ground would acquire a degree of sterility. After a short but effective strike in the Ingham canefields, during which emotion ran high and sporadic violence occurred, the AWU applied to the industrial magistrate for an order to burn the cane in the Victoria and Macknade mill areas. This was gazetted on September 1, 1934, and the cutters agreed to accept one shilling per ton less for cutting burned cane.<sup>7</sup> The growers, however, did not consider this adequate compensation. During burning a proportion of the sugar content was lost, and in addition there was a danger of losing stands which could not be harvested immediately after the burn. Therefore an appeal was lodged against the order, and this was heard during September. At the hearing E.S. Smith, appearing for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR), gave evidence that Weil's Disease was a mild illness contracted from contaminated water in creeks outside the canefields. Nevertheless members of the bench were "... of the opinion that we would not be justified at the present time in rescinding our order ...". On October 27 orders to burn cane in the Mourilyan, South Johnstone and Goondi Mill areas were handed down, and the cutting price was set at the Ingham rate. At the end of the 1934 crushing season the Cane Growers Association approached the court again, and this time was successful in having the orders revoked.<sup>8</sup>

The following June the sugar workers' award was changed so that the Ingham rate only applied to specific stands of cane burned on the written order of the Health Inspector. When the State Sugar Industry Award for the 1935 season was handed down later that month, clause 19 (3) stipulated:

Burnt cane 20% per ton less than the above rates in case of crops 10 tons to the acre and over; in the case of crops 10 tons to the acre 15% less than the above rates.

In the meantime however, the AWU had successfully applied to have the order to burn cane in the Ingham area reinstated, and the price in that district restored to green cane price less one shilling a ton.<sup>9</sup> Thus, at the beginning of the 1935 crushing season all cane in the Victoria and Macknade mill areas (Ingham District) was to be burnt before cutting, and the cutters were to receive what came to be known as "the Ingham rate". In all other areas cane would only be burned on the written order of the Health Inspector. Payment for such cane would be at green cane rates less 20%.

Devanny claimed that strike action to obtain burning orders was decided on by the

Mourilyan Italians before the 1935 season opened. Certainly the Italian farmers had anticipated disturbances after the sign on. There were migrations within the district as farmers gathered their families around them: the Guerra brothers for instance, left their own farms and took their families to live on the large (2000 acre) property of the oldest brother Ferruccio near Mourilyan. One sister-in-law recalled:

It is clear that Ferruccio foresaw (*premuniva*) something, because he insisted that we leave everything and go to his farm.<sup>10</sup>

Fear of Weil's Disease was intense, and there was a general lack of understanding about its symptoms and likely results. As late as August 27 the *Workers Weekly* called on "sugar field comrades" to supply more details so that readers' inquiries might be answered".<sup>11</sup> Stories circulated that the disease recurred years after infection, and that death could result from such "relapses". In Tully a woman claimed that her child had died from the disease during the previous season.<sup>12</sup> Three factors were clearly perceived by the cancutters: that Weil's Disease was incurable (some years later it was discovered to be susceptible in its early stages to penicillin);<sup>13</sup> that it was preventable through burning the cane; and that Health Inspectors were unlikely to sign burning orders until after the disease had broken out in the district concerned. Shortly before the season opened fear was heightened by the discovery of infected rats in the Cairns and Innisfail districts.<sup>14</sup>

A week before the start of the Mourilyan crushing season on July 28, the local Communist Party secretary Karl King called a meeting of all sugar workers to discuss tactics. The 300 cutters and mill hands in attendance elected an Area Committee and decided to approach the Cane Growers Association and the AWU to obtain a burning agreement. The approaches failed; the Cane Growers Association stood firm, and the AWU organiser understandably regarded the formation of the Area Committee with some indignation. A further meeting of cutters was scheduled for August 4, when King addressed the men on the issue, and Ernie Baratto outlined their grievances in Italian for non-English speaking workers. After a fiery meeting they voted to declare all unburned cane "black". At this stage, however, the Mourilyan mill workers had not been consulted, even though King himself was a mill hand. When they were asked not to handle unburned cane they voted 62 to 53 to treat the 1100 tons already in the mill yard, but to refuse to handle "black" cane. In the event the Mourilyan mill did not strike, for after another cutters' meeting had confirmed the stoppage on August 6, the management notified its employees that the mill had been closed indefinitely.<sup>15</sup>

On August 11 a meeting was held at Tully, where both cutters and mill hands decided to strike, thus bringing out another 800 men.<sup>16</sup> The next day a conference of delegates from Mourilyan, Tully, Goondi and South Johnstone was held at Innisfail.

No decision was reached, but Goondi went out on August 21 and South Johnstone the following day. Thus by late August more than 2000 cutters were “on the grass”: in a normal season 300 cut in the Mourilyan area, 400 at Goondi, 600 at South Johnstone and 700 at Tully.<sup>17</sup> With four mills out of production and the farmers thus immobilised, some 4000 people were affected. Strike committees were formed in each centre, the most important being at Innisfail and Tully, both of which had strong Communist Party branches. The centres were linked by a coordinating committee which quickly called for a combined meeting at Innisfail. This was chaired by the president of the Goondi strike committee Les Sullivan, and was addressed by Karl King, J. Jessup and Lino Cazzolino from Mourilyan, and Angelo Biletta, Con Doyle and Jack Henry from Tully. All the speakers were communists except Jessup who joined the party during the strike and later became secretary of the Innisfail branch. Henry, leader of CPA District Nine, analysed the strike in terms of the international sugar industry and the world class struggle. Apparently by this time the leaders had realised that a quick victory was improbable. Indeed, since the campaign had been organised in opposition to the wishes of the AWU some of them must have been aware that victory of any sort was unlikely. The main purpose of the meeting therefore was the formation of relief committees,<sup>18</sup> funds for which were already being received from other unions. The first donation was £100, sent by the Collinsville Miners’ Federation.

This, together with the efficiency and speed with which the separate districts were organised and coordinated suggests that the Communist Party had orchestrated the strike in advance of the season. An important part of the preparations was the organisation which had been carried out among the Italians, without whose cooperation success would have been impossible, particularly in the Innisfail district.

On August 27, while the Brisbane Trades and Labor Council adopted a resolution condemning the Communist Party for its tactics in the sugar strike, an attempt was being made to extend that strike further north to Cairns. There, 250 men attended a stop work meeting which carried a resolution of no confidence in the AWU, and called on the government to direct the Industrial Court to sit in North Queensland and receive evidence on the incidence of Weil’s Disease. The meeting, which consisted of sugar workers from the Hambleton mill area, declared that it would strike if the arbitration machinery had not been put in motion within five days. Their stand influenced a meeting of 700 canecutters in the South Johnstone district, who, on the following day, decided against any return to work.<sup>19</sup>

The Hambleton cutters met again on September 1 and 108 of them signed a requisition for an AWU meeting, which was subsequently handed to the union organiser. Supporting resolutions were carried by the crews of the sugar lighters *Time*,

*Ulloolo, Manoora, Kypara* and *Wortana*,<sup>20</sup> all of which were manned by AWU members. The requisition was refused, and thus the strike was temporarily extended to the Cairns district. Alarmed by developments, the AWU secretary Clarrie Fallon<sup>21</sup> travelled to North Queensland to take charge of the campaign, and called a union meeting in Cairns for September 4. When AWU organisers attempted to hold a secret ballot 300 of the cutters walked out, and those remaining declared the strike off. Within two days the entire Hambleton mill area was back at work, and with the refusal of the Babinda cutters to come out, the perimeters of the strike were set within the mill areas of Mourilyan, South Johnstone, Goondi and Tully.

Meanwhile the Canegrowers Association was determined to open one of the mills to cope with cane cut by the farmers and their families. Farmers had met on September 3 and pledged themselves to work a mill, preferably Mourilyan, if labour was not made available. Extra police were moved into the district. The industrial court announced a compulsory conference and secret ballot for September 7, and both sides began a series of tactical manoeuvres. On the one hand an attempt was made to split the strikers by ordering simultaneous but separate meetings at Goondi and Innisfail, and, on September 6 the government enacted an Order in Council, which was paraphrased by the *Workers Weekly*:

Any person who is guilty of inciting any person not to attend a compulsory conference or not to take part in a ballot or who induces any person to refrain from accepting any work covered by an award of the Court is liable to a penalty of up to £100 fine.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, the strike committee countered with an attempt to unite the strikers. It distributed leaflets calling on the workers to reject the secret ballot on the grounds that it “imputed cowardice to the workers”; the slogan for the day was announced: “Unity means victory! No secret ballot! No scabs!”

Six hundred mill hands and cutters in the Mourilyan area were transported by truck to Innisfail where the meeting was to be held at the Regent Theatre. No trucks were provided at Goondi where the meeting was to be held at the mill. Instead of walking to the mill however, they marched into Innisfail led by Les Sullivan, and joined the Mourilyan men who were singing the *Marseillaise*, the *Internationale* and the *Red Flag* from the trays of their council lorries. At least 1000 workers formed up at the river end of Edith Street where banners were produced. These declared: “War on all rats!” (illustrated with caricatures of rats with the faces of AWU leaders and members of the Canegrowers Association); and “United they stand ... and how!” (drawings of the Canegrowers Executive, AWU officials and millers in close embrace). The men marched up Edith Street singing, although their banners were confiscated by police en route. At the Regent Theatre the Mourilyan men went inside. The Goondi marchers were

reinforced by a contingent from Tully and another from South Johnstone during their two mile walk back to the mill. These contingents continued their singing but remained outside the conference room. Sullivan was restrained by the police from addressing the crowd from the back of a truck.

The strike committee's tactics were only partly successful. At the Regent Theatre meeting, when the industrial magistrate W. Rillie, assisted by Italian and Sicilian interpreters, announced the secret ballot, pandemonium broke out. It was later alleged that only 36 votes were cast,<sup>23</sup> and though the majority of these favoured a return to work, this result was ignored by the strikers. At Goondi, however, a significant number of cutters voted, and the poll favoured ending the strike. The committee lost little time retrieving the initiative. The same afternoon it convened a meeting in Innisfail of 1000 men from every district. The resolution:

That in the event of the Goondi mill management and farmers endeavouring to man the mill with "scab" labour, we workers of all the strike area give our wholehearted support to those engaged in the Goondi struggle to fight it to a finish.<sup>24</sup>

was carried, precipitating a new phase in the struggle, as reports announced that a large force of police was being sent from Brisbane to North Queensland.<sup>25</sup>

On Monday, September 9 36 canecutters returned to work in the Goondi fields; they were joined the following day by another 30. Pickets arrived from Tully, Silkwood and Mourilyan, and stationed themselves on the roads leading into the paddocks. On Tuesday the police reinforcements, numbered by the *Workers Weekly* at 150,<sup>26</sup> arrived from Brisbane. Striking cutters were evicted from the Goondi barracks and some of the police were billeted with the volunteers.

Despite the success of a public meeting held at the Innisfail Park on Wednesday night, and attended by 1500 people, the Goondi mill crushed for three hours on Thursday morning. Fifty canecutters were still working, while 208 remained on strike. The next day 99 cutters reported for work and the mill crushed 20 truckloads of cane. Striking Goondi cutters were summoned to an emergency meeting to review the defections from their ranks. The speeches laid greater stress on politics than at any previous meeting: Italian cutter Ernie Baratto<sup>27</sup> linked police action at Goondi with that of the *Squadre d'Azione* in Italy, and spoke darkly of Abyssinia.

On September 14 the Industrial Registrar gazetted the cancellation of all cane cutting agreements for the Mourilyan Sugar Mill area.<sup>28</sup> The police moved immediately to eject the strikers from the cutters' barracks in the district. The evictions were not accomplished easily. Many of the cutters and farmers were Italian, and on some farms the police had to contend with opposition from both. A strike camp was hastily set up at Mourilyan and it was reported that much of the food donated to it was supplied by

these farmers,<sup>29</sup> whose two concerns were the safety of their kinsmen among the cutters and the harvesting of their crops, green or burnt.

Three days later summonses were issued for a secret ballot in the South Johnstone region. They were delivered by the police during the night. Learning from the Mourilyan ballot, the court announced that voting was to be held in three separate booths: South Johnstone, Silkwood and Japoon. At Innisfail the coordinating committee promptly brought out leaflets in English and Italian, urging the men not to vote, and copies were delivered to barracks throughout the district in the Communist Party's blue utility. The next morning the Tully committee sent speakers to the three polling centres in an attempt to influence the men before the ballot was held. The Silkwood cutters refused to vote, but both at South Johnstone, where the vote was 200 to 170, and at Japoon where it was almost even, the men decided to return to work. Again the strike committee called an emergency meeting in a desperate attempt to retain some control over the course of the dispute. However only 159 cutters attended the meeting at South Johnstone on Wednesday, September 18, and though they voted to stay out it was a futile gesture. Amidst violent scenes between opposing factions of Italians in the Innisfail streets during the weekend, Mourilyan decided to follow South Johnstone. On Monday, September 23 the committee called on all cutters in that area to return to work: only Tully remained on strike.

There was now no question of a favourable settlement. In Tully however, where the committee was led by Jack Henry and Tully CPA secretary Les Lock, the political aspects of the stoppage were dominant. The Tully mill began to crush on September 23, using volunteer labour. The same day the cancellation of all cutting contracts for the Tully mill area was gazetted.<sup>30</sup> A meeting was hurriedly called, and the men marched to the Plaza Theatre behind a bagpiper and drummer enlisted for the occasion. The strikers declared the hotel which was accommodating the volunteer mill hands "black", and mill pickets were organised. The branch secretary of the AWU announced that a meeting of all cutters and mill hands would be held the following day.

On Tuesday, September 24 hands attempting to enter the mill under police escort were met by picketers. Considering the number of police in the little town, and the desperate stage the strike had entered, the encounter was notably free of violence. Four picketers were arrested on charges of disorderly behaviour, but were quickly released on £2 bail, additional charges of using indecent language being withdrawn.<sup>31</sup> During the previous night the committee had worked to turn the AWU meeting to the strikers' advantage, and when the hour of the conference arrived, over 1000 strikers and sympathisers formed up at the top end of Tully's main street. This street slopes fairly steeply down to where the Plaza Theatre is situated, almost at the end of the

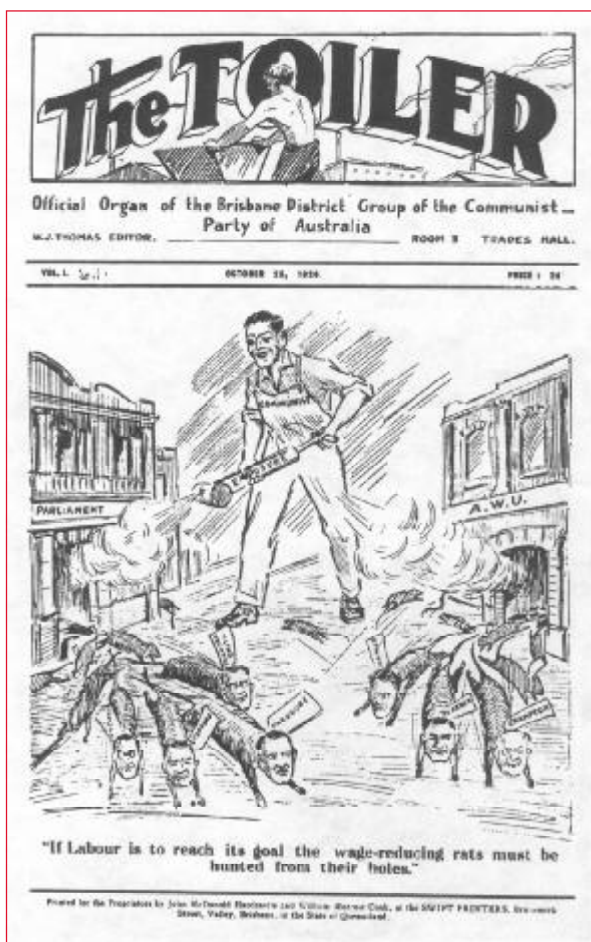
main town area. Thus the great procession, led by the Tully Pipe Band, marched right through the business area before the start of the conference. The AWU organiser opened the meeting with a call for nominations for the chair. Eric Driscoll, communist AWU mill representative was duly elected, and the executive of the strike committee took its place on the platform, reflecting its control over the local strike. The expressed purpose of the meeting was the election of delegates to represent the men at a compulsory conference of millers, farmers, strikers and the AWU. Towards the end of the meeting the “scabs” from the mill arrived to cast their vote. They were escorted by police, and their entry was considered by the strikers to be an act of provocation. Nevertheless, at Henry’s urging, the election was concluded peacefully.<sup>32</sup> The conference was never held.

Crushing continued throughout the week, but on Monday, September 30 the strikers voted 550 votes to 57 to continue to press for burned cane at “Ingham rates”. At a separate meeting of mill hands on October 2, Driscoll managed, despite some dissent, to carry a motion of support for the decision of the combined meeting. The following day a farmers’ conference, held at the Euramo Hall, revealed that attempted sign-ons at Euramo had failed, although one cane farmer at Feluga had enlisted nine volunteers, and another at Lower Tully had signed on ten men. On Friday, October 4, the Lower Tully cutters and the mill hands were evicted from their barracks, and 30 policemen were billeted at the mill. During the afternoon another procession and strike vote were staged. The strikers voted seven to one to remain out, but lifted the ban on the hotel.

However this meeting revealed that many of the men were ready to return to work. By Monday the mill hands were drifting back, and in the afternoon they decided to return to the mill as a body. More than 50 were refused work. That night the strike committee called another meeting at Tully, and sent lorries to collect the men from Lower Tully and Euramo. The El Arish men arrived at 7:45pm and were met by the other strikers, with whom they marched to the Plaza Theatre. The strike was finished, and it remained only to wind it up without losing face. The committee called for cheers for the last mill hands to return to work, and then advised cutters to go back the next morning, as all striking cutters would lose their jobs once the mill was back to full crush. Jack Henry told his audience that the cutters had not suffered a defeat, but had decided to change their tactics. They were to return to work where they would organise within their gangs in preparation for the next strike. The motion was carried by a majority of 20, and the meeting agreed to impose a levy of 2/- in the pound on single men, and 1/- for married workers, to support any striker who might be victimised through the remainder of the season.



The strike had lasted from August 4 to October 7 and had caused great hardship for both workers and small farmers. Some 30 cutters were not reemployed, and the farmers received very little compensation from the Canegrowers Association. In June 1936 two cases of Weil's Disease were reported in Daintree, two at Mossman, one at Gordonvale and five at Innisfail.<sup>33</sup> On July 21 a general order for the burning of the cane before harvesting was handed down by the industrial court. ■



*The Toiler* (1924), organ of the Brisbane District Communist Party.

## 3. Weil's Disease & the Popular Front

“Particularly was I impressed with the women; therefore it is to the wives of the strikers that I dedicate this book. Not only to those who stood shoulder to shoulder with their men, but also to the wives who have yet to learn that only through struggle can they attain to that destiny of free and joyous life to which humanity as a whole has a right.”<sup>1</sup>

It would be difficult to imagine a more suitable issue to open the popular front campaign than Weil's Disease. Concern about the illness, and party organisation within the sugar industry both peaked at the time of the Seventh Comintern Congress. Weil's Disease was an emotive issue in which conflicting class interests could clearly be defined, and by extension linked with alleged conflict of interest between the leaders and the rank and file of the AWU. Because entire communities were involved in the dispute it also offered unique opportunities for the participation of normally apolitical groups such as the women and the migrants. Perhaps the most important development resulting from the strike was that for some North Queenslanders during 1935 the Communist Party changed from an alien threat into a source of strength and protection.

Throughout the strike both the AWU and the CPA treated the dispute as a struggle for control of the sugar workers. The conflict between the two organisations was not new; indeed it was almost as old as the Communist Party itself. In 1924, for instance, *The Toiler* devoted an entire front page to a cartoon depicting a communist using a pest spray to flush rats labelled Crampton, Reardon (Riordan) and Hanlin (Hanlon) out of the AWU building. The caption read: “If Labour is to reach its goal the wage reducing rats must be hunted from their holes.”<sup>2</sup> After 1935 however, each group appears to have regarded the other as its main opponent, and in 1936 the *Workers Weekly* devoted more words to AWU Secretary Clarrie Fallon than to any other

individual, including Hitler. *The Worker* though lacking an individual focus, was if anything even more virulent in its abuse of the party.

Each side clearly identified its enemy during the first days of the strike. The communist press reported the first stop work meeting on August 9, adding: "This action has been taken in opposition to the traitorous AWU officials, who have openly sided with the courts and employers."<sup>3</sup> The AWU newspaper *The Worker* only reported the strike on August 24, when it published a full-page article under the headline "The Communist Party's Latest Stunt". Damaging insults were hurled at local strike leaders: it was hinted that Karl King had once "scabbed" during a strike, and Les Sullivan was accused of having tried to join the police force.<sup>4</sup>

General tactics were also laid down from the outset. The policy of the AWU was to divide the strikers into the smallest possible groups and then to conduct secret ballots. The Communist Party, on the other hand, aimed at uniting the four mill areas into one great display of strength. Party speakers stressed the alleged corruption of AWU ballots, and appreciative audiences cheered references to ballot boxes with sliding panels.

Both sides acknowledged the presence of non-British cutters in the district and printed posters and leaflets in Italian as well as English. The AWU however regarded the Italians as the dupes of the Communist Party, and *The Worker* frequently referred to them as not speaking English, and therefore being unaware of the issues involved. It wrote of "... intimidation against people who do not understand our language ... who are weak or indifferent ..."<sup>5</sup> The Communist Party on the other hand, made use of prominent Italian communists and anti-fascists such as Ernie Baratto, Lino Cazzolino and Angelo Biletta, as speakers as well as translators. In accusing the AWU organisers of removing the ballot slips from Italian canecutters' trade union tickets,<sup>6</sup> party speakers did not suggest that the foreign cutters were "dupes" but rather that militant unionists were being robbed of their votes.

Throughout the campaign, both organisations were at pains to represent each other as outsiders. AWU pamphlets emphasised the party's Sydney connections, and stressed that the strike was a response to Central Committee orders to undermine the AWU. The CPA for its part insisted that the struggle was between local "rank-and-file" members and their Brisbane based executive. The leadership was linked with the state government, the Canegrowers' Association and the CSR. By the final night of the strike it was clear that two issues were at stake: Weil's Disease and the authority of the AWU leaders. Part of the last resolution carried by the strikers in Tully on October 7 illustrates this:

We repudiate the slanders of the AWU officials that our leaders are disruptors who led

us into defeat. We affirm our unbroken confidence in the strike committee. We the sugar workers of the Tully area, declare the AWU officials to be strikebreakers, organisers of scabs, and agents of the bosses.<sup>7</sup>

For the strikers and their families, however, it is likely that the policy difference which had the most impact was demonstrated in the Relief Kitchens.

While it is rarely comfortable to take part in a strike, the sugar workers found themselves in a particularly difficult position. The “lay-off” in the sugar industry lasts for seven months and when the strike was declared few cutters had worked for more than two weeks. Many local families were in debt to storekeepers who gave credit in anticipation of the season. Most single men were dependent on their employers for accommodation, as both cutters and mill hands lived in barracks during the crushing season. Some, particularly amongst the Italians, lived on the farms throughout the year, working as field hands in exchange for keep during the slack.<sup>8</sup> The *Workers Weekly* reported that mill workers who were not on strike, but who were unable to work due to the strike, were refused sustenance.<sup>9</sup> Thus the tiny sugar towns were flooded with penniless and later homeless people.

One of the first actions of the strike coordination committee was to call on the AWU for strike relief, which, since the union had not authorised the stoppage, it was clearly not going to provide. Therefore a public meeting called at Innisfail elected a relief committee, and centres were set up at Mourilyan and Tully. They were funded initially with £100 sent by the Collinsville miners,<sup>10</sup> and with donations from other sugar centres. Mossman, where cane was burned voluntarily, sent £75 a fortnight throughout the strike, and members of the Ingham Communist Party took up collections among the Herbert River cutters.<sup>11</sup> Within two weeks of the beginning of the strike the *Workers Weekly* was calling on individuals and trade unions to send donations. G. McKinnon and another delegate left Innisfail to tour the state explaining the strike to other unionists and taking up collections.<sup>12</sup>

Little money was available within the strike area, as businessmen and farmers were adversely affected by the stoppage. Nevertheless both groups provided considerable aid. Many of the northern businessmen had earned their capital in the cane, and all were to some extent dependent on the cutters for their future prosperity. Though in some cases facing bankruptcy, either through fear of later retaliation or through sympathy with the aims of the strike, they lent premises and equipment to the relief committees. Similarly the smaller cane farmers had almost invariably begun their careers as cutters, and although fear of losing the crop naturally generated hostility to the strike, some were sympathetic. The Italian farmers in particular were often related to their cutters, or had sponsored their migration. Thus the relief kitchens

received regular supplies of vegetables from the cane farms.

At Mourilyan, relief committee secretary R. Coleman set up a kitchen in an empty bakehouse. Italian gang cooks served meals to the strikers in relays of 35. The kitchen made its own bread, and men with money were expected to pay for their meals.

In Tully the relief system was more elaborate. The committee, headed by Con Doyle issued relief tickets which could be cashed at local stores. Soon, however, in the belief that the shopkeepers were raising their prices for goods purchased on relief tickets, Doyle decided to open a store of his own. A sympathetic businessman offered an empty shop, and "Bricky" Hanson was installed as manager. Hanson bought his goods wholesale and exchanged them for strikers' relief tickets or occasionally for cash. Any profit made on cash sales was put aside for extra relief. A staff of eight ran the shop, four behind the grocery counter and another four controlling the stock and keeping the books. A "special investigation branch" sought out people in special need of items such as lactogen or orange juice, and ran dances to provide shoes and clothing. The store was so popular that there was some talk of retaining it as a co-operative after the end of the strike. Tully also had a "cookshop" or relief kitchen, which operated from a disused butcher's shop equipped with a stove and some home-made furniture. Cutlery was collected from the townspeople and pots and pans were lent by cafes. Three relays of cooks, assisted by eight stewards, fed the single men who paid for their meals with relief tickets. Initially these tickets, or invoices, had the value of 6/- a week, but as money arrived from militant trade unions outside the district the sum was raised to 7/-. The Tully committee even sent some relief money to wives of striking cutters who were stranded in southern cities.

When the cutters and mill hands were evicted from their barracks new problems arose. Some of them camped on the beaches; a strike camp was set up at Mourilyan. However, though the climate is mild in far north Queensland, the strike began in mid-winter, and in the Tully district in particular there is no season which is free from rain. The Tully strike committee rented a disused boarding house where many men were accommodated. Others slept in the back of the relief store and kitchen, or with families in town.

In all these activities Communist Party members were energetic and clearly visible. Funds arrived from communist-led trade unions in answer to appeals published by the communist press. Party members issued relief tickets, collected and distributed food and generally made themselves responsible for the wellbeing of the families of striking workers. In Tully the strike committee also organised social activities such as dances and card parties in an effort to relieve the boredom of the strikers. AWU portrayals of the party as sinister and foreign were difficult to substantiate in the face

of contacts made in the cookshop and at the card table: it would be difficult to discover anything foreign about a euchre party.

Contact with the AWU on the other hand was irregular. Canecutters had no union representatives, and though the mill hands had them, Tully mill had elected communist Eric Driscoll. In Mourilyan the situation was complicated. Karl King had been elected mill representative in 1934, but during that year had been called on to show cause why he should not be expelled for his part in the Ingham Weil's Disease strike. He refused to pay the fine imposed on him, and was declared unfinancial. Throughout the strike, however, he was still referred to as the strikers' AWU representative. The sugar workers therefore had little contact with their union, and the image of its leaders as outsiders was fostered by their refusal of strike relief. The only assistance available from the AWU was aimed at ending the strike, and this was to be achieved through secret ballots, a process already surrounded in many minds by scandal. In this situation support for the popular front could only increase.

One interesting aspect of this is the support which developed among women during the strike. Its growth was in part spontaneous, and in part the result of Jean Devanny's being in the district when the strike broke out. Devanny, a New Zealand novelist and feminist, was the wife of *Workers Weekly* publisher Hal Devanny, and herself a lecturer and recruiter for the Movement Against War and Fascism (MAWF), for which she was touring at the time.

Women first became actively involved in the strike during the Innisfail meeting which elected the relief committee. Several women were on this committee, and as the kitchen was to be run by canecutters' cooks, they devoted themselves to organising entertainments. Under the headline "Workers Display Initiative at Mourilyan", the *Workers Weekly* listed activities including "... concerts, card parties, cricket, football, picnics, swimming, all forms of sport, debates, community singing, dancing, wheelbarrow races, etc."<sup>13</sup> Recognising a rare opportunity they held dancing classes for the canecutters during the afternoons at the Mourilyan School of Arts. The lessons were put to use at evening socials which consisted of dancing, supper and a sing-song, for which the Communist Party provided song sheets. Devanny reported that *Avanti Popolo* (Forward the People) was a great favourite among the Italians, and that all enjoyed the Red Aviators' Song, for which words and music had recently arrived from Melbourne.

It was among these women that the first Women's Progress Club (WPC) was formed in Innisfail. Its object was the building of a "mass organisation" through which contact could be made with the wives of the workers, so that in future strikes their attitudes and needs would be understood and catered for. As women played only a

minor part in the tightly organised Tully relief operations it was not until mid-September that a similar club was founded in that town. It is likely that Devanny was instrumental in its foundation as the first president was her Tully hostess, Eileen Quinn, around whose invalid bed the inaugural meeting was held.<sup>14</sup> The Tully club gave as its aims: social activities, educational work in maternal and child welfare, Red Cross work, relief for the very poor, sewing circles, the sponsoring of lectures by specialists on subjects connected with the men's jobs and the facilitation of work amongst women in the event of a future strike. This group was particularly important in the development of the North Queensland Women's movement, since the Townsville WPC and later associations grew out of its activities.<sup>15</sup>

Another significant development occurred in the relationship between British and non-British sugar workers. There were many non-British workers in the industry, but Italians formed by far the largest migrant group.<sup>16</sup> In 1891, in an attempt to fulfil its election promise to rid the colony of Kanaka labour, the Queensland government had assisted the migration of 335 Italians to the sugar plantations. These early arrivals began a process of chain migration which led to the presence of some 3000 Italian-born North Queenslanders by the beginning of the First World War. During the war immigration ceased, but in 1918 Italians began to arrive in numbers which Queenslanders found alarming. Several factors contributed to this: firstly conditions in post-war Italy were poor, secondly, America, which had always received the bulk of Italian migration, introduced a quota system, thirdly, the war had produced a "bank up" of prospective migrants, and lastly, the process of chain migration is by its nature a geometric, not an arithmetic progression. Between 1921 and 1930 there was a net gain of 23,928 Italians, most of whom had settled in North Queensland.<sup>17</sup>

In the far north the depression set in early with a slump in world sugar prices. With economic hardship came xenophobia. Some of the agitation came from the trade unions, particularly the AWU, which objected to the influx of migrants on the grounds that it would lower working conditions. However much of the problem would appear to have been economic envy. Many of the migrants of this period were peasants, that is experienced farmers, accustomed to living frugally and to working hard. For many the driving force of their lives was the desire to own a farm. Their tradition of mixed farming taught them to achieve a degree of self sufficiency and cooperation unusual in Australia, so they weathered recessions more tenaciously than their Australian neighbours. In consequence, the banks tended to regard Southern European families as good investments, and loans were made available for the purchase of farms. Although this often meant that they took up virgin land or derelict properties rather than going concerns, the great increase in Italian proprietorship appears to have alarmed British

Australians.

Attempts were made to stop Southern Europeans entering the farming districts, and when these failed, to prevent them from leasing or purchasing land. Despite many expressions of indignation, public meetings and considerable political pressure, these attempts only resulted in occasional directions to enforce the laws requiring all persons owning real property to be natural born or naturalised British subjects. (These laws were a part of the White Australia Policy legislation, and were never intended to be used against Europeans).<sup>18</sup> To make matters worse, some of the blocks taken up by Italian farmers were those which returned soldiers had failed to make viable. The RSSAILA became the sworn enemy of the Italian settlers, and the league in Queensland enthusiastically supported the perpetrators of the “anti-dago” riots in Western Australia.

The form the criticism took was often undeniably racist. Some Australians still clung to a quaint 19th century racial ideology which divided Caucasians into three distinct racial groups: Nordic, Alpine and Mediterranean. These races were supposed to possess inherent qualities which enabled them to be ranked hierarchically. British Australians were Nordic people, Northern Italians, who were believed to be tall, blond and blue or hazel eyed, were Alpine, while Southern Italians, who were stereotyped as short and dark, were Mediterranean people, and often had their blood polluted by the dreaded strains of Africa or Arabia. This idea was voiced by a correspondent of the *Brisbane Courier* in 1924 when he wrote:

Some anthropologists are asking whether the Nordic race which has given mankind its highest civilisation, is being bred out, even in England ... Does not there arise here a responsibility on the part of ... Australia ... to keep pure the long-skulled race strains ... Mediterraneans breed like rabbits, crowding out the Nordic with his higher living standard ...<sup>19</sup>

During the 1920s agitation against the immigrants became intense, and the *Sydney Labour Daily* reported that “The whole of Northern Australia is a volcano which may burst into an eruption of racial feud at any moment ...”<sup>20</sup> As a result the Queensland government found it necessary to appoint a Royal Commission to enquire into the situation in the sugar districts. The Ferry Report restated the racial mythology of the era in temperate official language:

the population of Italy is divided into two distinct groups — the Northern and the Southern Italians. The latter are shorter in stature and more swarthy.<sup>21</sup>

The commissioner found that the British gangs were the best workers, followed by the northern Italians, with southern Italians a poor last, and added to this nonsense by announcing, incorrectly,<sup>22</sup> that the recent arrivals were almost all southerners. He



concluded that "... the admission of races that can never make good Australian citizens only widens the breach between the Australian and the better type of foreigner."<sup>23</sup> While Thomas Ferry was making his enquiries the AWU attempted to protect its British-Australian members by refusing cutting tickets to Italians and trying to negotiate a 75% Australian to 25% migrant quota system with both farmers and millers.<sup>24</sup> A "preference" agreement was signed by the AWU, the Australian Sugar Producers' Association and the Queensland Cane Growers' Council in June 1930.

Although the numbers of new arrivals dropped during the depression there was no corresponding decrease in hostility. After Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia, the Australian Natives Association led the attack, since the RSL had to reconsider its stand in the light of its admiration for Mussolini's strong anti-bolshevik government. At the ANA's 1938 Annual Conference the president told the members:

We need population in Australia, but first in importance is the need to populate our Commonwealth with "A1" Australian children rather than "C3" migrants from an alien land. (Cheers) In our population, Australia would welcome from overseas, within reasonable limits, our own kith and kin; beyond that, men and women of the Nordic strain. (Applause)<sup>25</sup>

With such attitudes prevalent in the community the extent of the cooperation engendered by the strike was remarkable. Every strike meeting included an Italian speaker; some, like Cazzolino already communists, others, like Baratto, joining the party during the stoppage. Devanny noted that there were always Italian women in the audiences of meetings held at Innisfail and Mourilyan. For the North Queensland community however the social contact made during relief work probably had the greatest significance. Italian gang cooks Victor Manaserro and Lino Cazzolino ran the Mourilyan relief kitchen; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that they handled the job of feeding large numbers of men on the supplies available better than their Australian counterparts. Even the eating of Italian food was a novel experience for the British cutters, who, in the 1930s, regarded the Southern Europeans as "living off the smell of an oily rag". Devanny reported that the militant cooks "harangued" the men in Italian as they ate.

The migrants were made welcome at picnics and dances, and the almost unprecedented sight of Australian girls dancing with Italian men became commonplace. Sing-songs were held in Italian and English, great enjoyment being derived from the discovery of songs which could be sung in both languages, notably the *Internationale* and the *Red Flag*. British workers began to realise the pressures felt by the migrants for whom militant action in Australia could result in repercussions for relatives at home.<sup>26</sup> For many the contact led to an important stage in the breakdown of racist attitudes:

that of differentiation between members of the “out group”. Thus Italian cutters who “scabbed” at Goondi on September 11 were described as “fascist Italians”, while the Goondi strikers listened to an address by Ernie Baratto on the following day.<sup>27</sup> While it is difficult to gauge the extent to which the 1935 strike resulted in the handing down of burning orders for the 1936 and subsequent seasons, its effect on community attitudes is undeniable.

Because its time span and geographical boundaries are *known*, the strike is one of the few issues which it is useful to examine in isolation in terms of its effect on the membership of the Communist Party. CPA membership figures are always difficult to ascertain, but Davidson, working from reports published by the *Workers Weekly* and the *Communist Review*, has estimated that the party had 500 members in the whole of Queensland in July 1935.<sup>28</sup> Since membership was reported as 255 in District Three (South Queensland) this would leave 245 in District Nine. At the end of the year when Defence Fund<sup>29</sup> quotas were allotted, Brisbane was asked for £500 compared with Townsville’s £650. This would suggest heavy recruiting in the north between July and December. Furthermore, when the district quota was reallocated between the local sections the sugar towns were asked to donate heavily in terms of their comparative population. The figures were: Townsville £350, Innisfail £300, Cairns £200, Tully £175, Collinsville, Tablelands, Mackay, Ingham and Mount Isa £150, Ayr £90, Home Hill and Proserpine £70, Winton £40, Longreach £30, and Giru £20. District Nine was the first in Australia to fill its quota in 1936, and again figures suggest that it was dependent on sugar workers for this achievement. After being in fourth place until August the district suddenly forwarded the remaining 40% of its quota. A *Workers Weekly* editorial attributed the response to the opening of the harvesting season.<sup>30</sup> ■

## 4. The Spanish Civil War

“I fear also that the vast majority of Australians regard the Spanish War as a thing with which they have no connections.”<sup>1</sup>

The Spanish Civil War broke out on July 18, 1936, as a *pronunciamento* or army revolt against the government. This revolt was preceded by a series of political upheavals. Municipal elections held in 1931 had returned republican majorities in the large cities, resulting in the departure (though not the abdication) of the king, and the replacement of the monarchy with a republican coalition government. This coalition ruled for two years, and introduced a broad range of reforms into what had previously been almost a feudal country. It decreed the separation of church and state, enacted Spain's first divorce law, expanded secular public education, reduced the size of the army, introduced a public works program and instituted a system of compensated land reform. Alarm at the rapidity of change weakened the government's support, and in an election in November 1933, a coalition of conservative and clerical parties gained office. Over the next two years they tried to reverse the reform program. The left countered with general strikes in Madrid and several other cities; and the regional government of Catalonia declared Spain a federal republic. Revolutionary committees established by the Asturian miners invaded their regional capital Oviedo, and held out against the police and Moorish troops for two weeks. The uprising was suppressed with great brutality, and thousands of political prisoners were interned by the government during 1935. At the subsequent elections in February 1936, the government lost office to a coalition of the left known as the Popular Front. Fearing its designs to reform the institutions of the army and especially the Catholic Church, high ranking officers devised a *pronunciamiento*. In the first weekend of the revolt the army was defeated in the important centres of Madrid and Barcelona, but the reverses were short lived. The war dragged on for nearly two and a half years.

Its duration may be explained by the strategic and economic importance of Spain,<sup>2</sup> which led to large-scale intervention by other European powers. Within two weeks of

the outbreak of hostilities the Nationalists were receiving massive aid from Hitler and Mussolini. In the course of the war, despite the non-intervention pact, 70,000 Italians and 20,000 Portuguese fought in the Nationalist ranks, and Germany provided several thousand technical specialists and “volunteer” air squadrons. In addition large quantities of armaments, including tanks, aeroplanes and submarines, were supplied by the fascist governments. The Popular Front sought aid from the West, particularly Britain, but none was forthcoming, and after it had suffered some reverses the Soviet Union stepped in and provided arms and technicians. As the war continued, from all over the world 30,000 to 40,000 untrained and unarmed volunteers arrived in Spain where they formed the International Brigade.<sup>3</sup>

It might have been expected that these events would have little impact on the majority of Australians, who did not display much interest in, or knowledge of foreign affairs. Australia was geographically isolated, and its education system lagged behind world standards. There were almost no free libraries,<sup>4</sup> and a noticeable lack of educated administration had resulted from the policy of preference for ex-servicemen implemented by the Public Service. The conscription disputes of 1914-1918 had encouraged widespread distrust of “capitalist wars”, and Australia’s slow recovery from the depression of the early thirties led to a preoccupation with domestic politics and economic issues. Thus the general response to international affairs was apathy.<sup>5</sup>

Two groups were however strongly affected by the war in Spain: the Catholics and the communists. Elements within the Catholic Church in Australia gave total support to Franco, alleging that the elections had been fraudulent, and filled their press with stories of atrocities against the Spanish clergy.<sup>6</sup> *The Advocate* of January 21, 1937 declared that the civil war was part of a communist plot to infiltrate and control Western Europe.<sup>7</sup> During the war church members disseminated propaganda, broke up Spanish Relief and Communist Party meetings, opposed the League of Nations, defended the invasion of Abyssinia, and generally changed from its traditional anti-capitalist stance to one of anti-communism. This change constituted a problem for the ALP which relied heavily on Catholic support. In a move to consolidate that support and to distance itself from the taint of communism, the Labor Party launched an antiwar committee to compete with the Movement Against War and Fascism, and refused to support Spanish Relief. This expedient was calculated to minimise disunity. Although a small section of its political and industrial wing was alienated,<sup>8</sup> the isolationist attitudes to foreign affairs of the membership at large were reinforced. Curtin, who led the party from October 1935, ignored the Spanish War.<sup>9</sup>

The revolution in Spain had a massive impact on the Communist Party of Australia. The campaign against the Nationalists, the leadership of whom Franco was rapidly

assuming, was seen as a part of the overall battle against fascism inaugurated by the Comintern Congress of 1935. In addition it had a powerful emotional impact, particularly on the growing liberal-intellectual element in the party, which provided many of the volunteers from the southern states. On August 7 the *Workers Weekly* informed its readers that Russia was sending money to Spain, and that foreigners were already arriving in that country to join the Peoples' Militia. It called on the trade unions to organise collections in Australia and for the ACTU to arrange methods of sending donations to Spain. Two weeks later the paper urged all branches of the Communist Party to hold marches and demonstrations in support of the Spanish government. Party leader J.B. Miles approached the ACTU and the ALP through Curtin, to propose joint action in relief campaigns, but encountered general indifference.<sup>10</sup>

On August 26 the Spanish Relief Committee was formed at a meeting called jointly by the MAWF and International Labour Defence (ILD). It was a typical front organisation made up of trade unionists, Christian socialists, Labor Party politicians, and Communist Party members. The original committee consisted of Bartlett Adamson, Rev. Stuart Watts, Father Bradley, O. Schreiber, R.A. King, R. Donning (Textile Workers), S. Hudson (Plasterers), W.G. Martin (Hotel, Club and Restaurant Workers), J. Reddie (Moulders), W. Orr (Miners), Nurse M. Lawson, P. Thorne (ILD), and R. Smith (MAWF). Phil Thorne, communist secretary of the ILD, was elected secretary of the new committee. The campaign acquired a specific objective at its second meeting when it decided to sponsor a Red Cross unit for Spain. Within six weeks the unit had been purchased, nurses were appointed to it, and transport to Europe arranged. The nurses, M. Lawson, U. Wilson, E. Johnson and M. MacFarlane, all from Lidcombe Hospital, were given a public send-off at Transport House, Redfern, on the October 23, at which Fred Paterson, Lloyd Ross and W.J. Thomas spoke. The next day 500 people, singing the *Internationale* and *Solidarity*, farewelled their ship, the *Oronsay*, from the Sydney wharf.<sup>11</sup>

By this time the first of the International Brigadeers were also leaving Australia. It is difficult to ascertain the number of Australians who went to Spain during the civil war; many travelled illegally, often smuggled aboard departing ships by sympathetic members of the Seamen's Union.<sup>12</sup> Independent action was discouraged by distance and most Australian volunteers had their passages arranged by the Communist Party. This limited the number leaving for two reasons: firstly there was not the independent liberal idealist component which was so apparent in European volunteer groups; and secondly the party did not always accept volunteers, particularly when the Central Committee believed that they were needed in Australia.<sup>13</sup> Ralph Gibson gave the

number of Australians in Spain as “more than 50”;<sup>14</sup> Nettie Palmer, before the war had ended and therefore presumably before all the volunteers had arrived, gave it as 44.<sup>15</sup> Davidson, almost certainly including nurses, interpreters and press reporters, states that 59 people went from Australia to Spain, 28 of whom died there;<sup>16</sup> while Andrews’ figure for the International Brigade alone is 48.<sup>17</sup> One of the problems involved in establishing numbers is the variety of nationalities represented in Australia. Unnaturalised Spaniards and Italians entering Spain through France have probably been disregarded in these figures. But more than mere numbers, Australians provided financial support and supplies for the Republican cause.

From the beginning of 1937 the Spanish Relief campaign was aided by lecture tours and meetings at which members of the party who had recently returned from Spain described their experiences of the war. The first of these was Vance Palmer who had been in Spain when the war broke out, and the subsequent list includes nurses Mary Lowson, May MacFarlane and Una Wilson; Ron Hurd, who addressed 600 meetings after his return from the International Brigade;<sup>18</sup> Sam Aarons and Ernie Baratto.<sup>19</sup> The Spanish Relief Committee forwarded a total of £10,860, seven ambulances and large quantities of food and medical equipment to Spain. Aid was organised from August 1936 until the Communist Party was proscribed in June 1940, when the committee’s books were seized and its bank account frozen. These were not released until 1944 when the final audit was made and the balance of £7/9/10 forwarded to the Red Cross Comforts Fund.<sup>20</sup>

The factors which induced apathy towards foreign affairs in other parts of Australia were present to an unusual degree in North Queensland. Isolation, poor educational and administrative standards, lack of access to information and loyalty to ALP attitudes<sup>21</sup> were integral to northern society. Nevertheless the Spanish Civil War aroused a strong and immediate response in this region. In Ingham a group of Italians formed a committee, collected £30 and despatched it to the ACTU in Melbourne before the Spanish Relief Committee was formed in Sydney.<sup>22</sup> When the central committee was established it had 21 branches, each operating as an independent unit and communicating directly with the national office. One was set up in each of the state capitals of Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Hobart and Darwin; the remaining 16 were in North Queensland.<sup>23</sup>

Given the level of unemployment in 1936, the wages of the period,<sup>24</sup> and the size of the North Queensland settlements, some of the contributions sent from this region were remarkable. By the end of October 1936 Innisfail had donated £53; and a month later Ayr, with a population of less than 2000, despatched £101/13/6 to the fund. This represented nearly 20% of the entire Australian contribution at this time. During 1938

the Innisfail Spanish Relief Committee raised £270/10/7.<sup>25</sup>

The key factor in the North Queensland response was the presence of an anti-fascist working-class group with a sense of involvement in the European situation. In the sugar towns of District Nine it was unnecessary for the Communist Party to explain the link between Franco's Nationalists and the rise of world fascism. The war in Spain had an immediate impact as an event which concerned friends and relatives at home, or at least fell within the range of local political experience. The role of the Communist Party in the north was one of coordination and organisation at national and international levels. The party, as in the sugar strikes, emerged as the one political group which supported the local cause in the face of the apathy or hostility of other organisations.

The difference in the impact of the Spanish Civil War in North Queensland and elsewhere in Australia was, then, qualitative as well as quantitative. To some extent this is demonstrated by the list of known volunteers given by Nettie Palmer in her Spanish Relief pamphlet: *Australians in Spain*. Palmer gave the names of 28 people, nine of whom came from North Queensland; all of these had connections with the sugar industry and four came from Ayr. Though trade unionists are included in the list, many of the southern volunteers were middle-class intellectuals. Aileen Palmer, daughter of novelist Vance Palmer, served as a medical interpreter; Portia Holman, daughter of a former premier of NSW worked as a doctor. Reporting on the conflict were sons of an ex-Labor prime minister: John Fisher (*Workers Weekly* and *Labor Daily*) and of a chief justice: R.T.E. Latham (*Daily Telegraph*).<sup>26</sup> By contrast the North Queenslanders were all working-class men who went to Spain to fight with the International Brigade. Canecutters Lou Elliott and Jack Kirkpatrick both left Australia during the first year of the war to be repatriated two years later after being seriously injured in the fighting. Elliott, while with the Brigade, acted as a political commissar.<sup>27</sup> From Ayr, an Australian Ned Buckby, and three Spaniards, Salvador Barker, Angelo Plaza and Rosenda Sala joined the Brigade in 1937,<sup>28</sup> after spending some time working for the fund through the Ayr Spanish Club.<sup>29</sup> Ray Jordana and Joe Garcia both went to Spain from Innisfail. Jordana, who had migrated to Queensland as a child, spoke on behalf of Spanish Relief in Melbourne before leaving for Europe.<sup>30</sup> Another Italian, canecutter Ernie Baratto, joined the International Brigade from Mourilyan where he had played an important role in the 1935 sugar strike,<sup>31</sup> during which he joined the Communist Party. The following year he left for the Spanish war by way of France and served in several battalions until the brigade was evacuated in January 1939.<sup>32</sup> This list is almost certainly not complete. An Ingham Italian called Baracca is remembered as having fought in Spain,<sup>33</sup> and it is likely that other Italians and Spaniards who fought

were either registered, like Baracca, as departing migrants, or, like the family of Celia Gallego, were visiting Europe when the war broke out.<sup>34</sup> As Nettie Palmer acknowledges, the extent of Italian and Spanish Australian's participation will probably never be known. Nevertheless, from the list available, the difference between northern and southern Australian recruits is apparent.

Some of the fundraising in North Queensland, particularly in towns outside the main areas of migrant settlement, followed the general Australian pattern of collections taken up at public meetings and lantern slide showings. Devanny was touring the north when the war broke out and she promptly aligned the campaign with her MAWF meetings. The war had been expected and she had brought the necessary information and literature with her.<sup>35</sup> In this way Millaa Millaa came to be one of the earliest Australian towns to hold a Spanish Relief meeting.<sup>36</sup> Whenever possible the meetings included eyewitness accounts of the war. Sister Mary Lowson spoke in various North Queensland centres late in 1937,<sup>37</sup> and International Brigadeer Ron Hurd undertook an exhaustive tour of the north during the following year. His meetings were held at El Arish, Gordonvale, Herberton, Innot Hot Springs, Mount Garnett, Tully, Lucinda, Macknade, Victoria mill, Ingham, Trebonne, Halifax, Townsville, Giru, Home Hill, Ayr, Bowen, Collinsville, Scottville and Mackay.<sup>38</sup> Also in keeping with the national pattern were the donations received from the communist-led trade unions, among them the Bowen and the Collinsville Miners' Lodges, the Cairns Unemployed and Relief Workers' Union, and the Mackay Waterside Workers' Federation.<sup>39</sup> Money received from individual communists and party units in Townsville, Herberton, Brandon, Winton and Home Hill was soon joined by public donations. These were encouraged by the *North Queensland Guardian* which ran highly emotional articles on Spain, featuring such headlines as: "The Widow's Mite", and "They Shall Not Pass While This Spirit Prevails". Under the latter was published a letter from a 75-year-old lady who wrote:

Please give this 10/- to the Spanish Relief Committee for me ... I just saved sixpence now and again ... The Spanish people is in need of it most.<sup>40</sup>

Much of the fundraising in North Queensland centred around the social life of the local communities. In Townsville, where the Spanish Relief Committee does not appear to have been very active, the Women's Progress Club ran dances to raise money for Spain. Spanish Relief Committee (SRC and CPA secretary in Tully, N. Edmondson, organised a cabaret at the beginning of the 1937 cutting season. The Bowen group developed the social aspects of the campaign to the point of establishing a "Younger Set of the Spanish Relief Committee".<sup>41</sup>

However the extent of North Queensland's contribution to Spanish Relief was



largely due to the participation of ethnic groups, especially in the sugar towns of Ayr, Ingham and Innisfail. One undocumented group is the Yugoslavs, with whose party work in Cairns, Innisfail and Mareeba Devanny was particularly impressed.<sup>42</sup> Considerable contributions were made to SRC funds by the Yugoslavs of Mossman and the Yugoslav Club of Mount Isa. Certainly for many of these people the united front against fascism would have been a personal and a patriotic crusade.<sup>43</sup>

In Ayr the Spanish Relief campaign centred around the Spanish Club under A. Villanueva. The first contribution list from Ayr consists of 56 names, only five of which could be British. Most are Spanish, with at least one Yugoslav and two Italians (including “Un Communista”). One of the British names is that of Con O’Clerkin the Ayr AWU representative who was later to be expelled from his union for communist activities. Although much money was raised through collections taken up amongst the Spanish population, social functions were also popular in the Ayr district. In November 1936, for instance, Australians, Spaniards and Italians mingled at a house party at Giru. This was probably a combined Spanish Club and CPA function as thanks were extended at the end of the evening to the Spanish host and to the Ayr Communist Party secretary S. Ransoon. The small Ayr community became more directly involved with the Spanish war when Buckby, Barker, Plaza and Sala left to join the Republican army. After their departure the Plaza family continued to work for the fund. In the neighbouring community of Home Hill Spanish Relief was organised by CPA secretary Doug Olive, who, at the end of 1936, organised a Spanish Solidarity Day. Although refused a permit by the local council, at least 100 people attended the procession and subsequent meeting. The audience was addressed by representatives of the CPA, the ALP, the Ayr MAWF and “a Spanish worker”, and resolutions were passed condemning Franco, the federal government and the Home Hill Council.<sup>44</sup>

In Ingham the Spanish Relief Committee was organised by the Italian community. The office bearers were two communists: Mario Cazzolino and G. Scagliotti, and an anti-fascist who was not a party member, G. Governato. The enlistment of Baracca increased the level of personal involvement already established by relatives and friends caught up in the war in Europe. This involvement was so widespread that when the committee organised a door-to-door collection in the town only two families were reported to have refused to donate. Dances were popular in Ingham; they were held at the Trebonne Hall and were organised by the young Italian girls of the town.<sup>45</sup> The Ingham Spanish Relief Committee marched as a discrete group in the May Day procession of 1937.<sup>46</sup>

Possibly the most interesting of the Spanish Relief campaigns was that conducted at Innisfail. The unique feature of the Innisfail Committee was that it was run by a

Spanish woman, secretary Trini Garcia.<sup>47</sup> Joe Garcia, her husband and a member of the Sub-State Committee of the Communist Party left Innisfail to fight in Spain early in 1937. Trini Garcia and her daughters organised a magnificent campaign which included house parties, May Day contingents and a public meeting to commemorate the first anniversary of the Franco revolt. At the end of 1938 a Spanish Relief Queen competition, during which Lily Garcia alone raised £46, was held, and early the following year the fund conducted a New Year Ball at the Innisfail Shire Hall. The greater part of the Innisfail contribution was raised by Spaniards among whom regular collections were taken up and who, at the beginning of 1939, decided to strike a levy on themselves. Wider community participation occurred however, and the groups which were created during the 1935 strike assisted with the Spanish Campaign. The Innisfail and Silkwood MAWFs held socials, the Women's Progress Club organised functions and the Mourilyan branch of the Communist Party took up collections. There appear to have been close personal ties between Innisfail and the Spanish Popular Front, as in addition to Joe Garcia and Ray Jordana, Mourilyan canecutter Ernie Baratto had joined the International Brigade. He maintained regular contact with Costante Danesi of the Mourilyan Anti-Fascist Club, and in one of his letters, reproduced in the *North Queensland Guardian* in late 1937, Baratto impressed the justice of their cause:

Dear Comrade, Spain is still rich in honest and worthy people. The government soldiers do and always will dedicate themselves to the greatest sacrifices. Dedicate their lives for the victory of democracy ... We of the International Brigade have come to Spain to fight — not for pay but for liberty — for democracy.<sup>48</sup>

Other communist newspapers at various times published letters from the sisters, brothers and friends of Innisfail people, resident in Spain.<sup>49</sup>

The Spanish Civil War, then, had considerable relevance for North Queenslanders; and because the Communist Party was the only organisation which also espoused it the popular front in the north was strengthened. Party membership numbers are not available for the period, although the *Workers Weekly* records that 200 new members were recruited in District Nine between April and October 1937.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, when quotas for the 1937 election fund were allotted by the Central Committee at the end of 1936 the quota for North Queensland was raised to £2000, compared with £900 for Southern Queensland.<sup>51</sup> Electoral figures for the sugar town polling booths also suggest that support for the CPA was growing rapidly in this period. The party candidate in the Bowen electorate increased his vote in Gumlu, Home Hill and Inkerman between the 1935 and 1938 elections from 5% to 36%, 20% to 34%, and 9% to 34% respectively; and in the Herbert and Mundingburra districts the party held or increased its vote in this period despite there being four candidates instead of three in the 1938 election.<sup>52</sup>

In January 1937 Districts Three and Nine were amalgamated into a single State Branch, under the leadership of Jack Henry who was transferred to Brisbane for this purpose. His departure did not have the devastating effect that the removal of Tripp had produced some years earlier: the Communist Party in the north was no longer dependent on any one leader.

For the North Queensland community, the Spanish campaign may be a small landmark. The cooperation between migrant and non-migrant; the acceptance, in some areas of leadership which was not Anglo-Saxon and male; the sharing in an international ideal — all demonstrate a development not usually associated with North Queensland in the 1930s. ■



Communist Party leaders Jack Henry (let) and J.B. Miles (right).

## 5. The Anti-Fascists

“The encouragement of foreign clubs in a British community is not desirable. Such organisations assist in promoting what has been described by the United States Congressional Committee as an undigested mass of alien thought, alien sympathy, and alien purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

During the inter-war years the political divisions of Europe were re-enacted throughout North Queensland. Fascist and anti-fascist, Serb and Croat, White and Red Russian, argued and often fought in the mines and canefields of the north. Probably the most politically complex of all the ethnic groups, however, was the Italians.

Although Mussolini did not form his first cabinet until 1922, anti-fascist sentiments were already widespread in Italy. From late 1920 his *Squadre d’Azione* formed during the metal workers’ strike of that year, roamed the country, destroying socialist organisations and even murdering some members. One of the results of the violence was a wave of anti-fascist migrants, which in view of the quota system introduced by the United States in 1921, concentrated on Latin America, and to a lesser extent, on Australia. The anti-fascists were a politically diverse group whose members owed allegiance to socialism, republicanism, anarchism, syndicalism and communism. In Australia this diversity caused many problems of organisation for those who attempted to promote anti-fascist action, especially in Sydney and Melbourne.<sup>2</sup> In North Queensland however, although the political divisions existed, concerted action was more effective for a variety of reasons.

Firstly, Italians settled in North Queensland as “chain migrants”. Early arrivals sponsored relatives and friends from their own regions so that distinct regional groups settled in different areas in the north. Most of the anti-fascist immigrants were from the provinces of Vicenza, Treviso and Belluno,<sup>3</sup> and in the small communities of the sugar towns found themselves connected by regional as well as political ties. Secondly, close personal links were maintained between migrants, even though their politics at

times conflicted. For example, the leader of the southern anarchists, and founder of the Melbourne Matteotti Club, Frank Carmagnola, travelled to Australia with Ingham communists Campanaro and Cazzolino, and retained his friendship with them throughout the ideological fight which broke up the southern group. Carmagnola's most recent visit to his Ingham friends took place in 1977.<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, and most important, industrial action in the canefields drew together diverse groups in a common struggle. During the Ingham strike of 1934 the strike committee consisted of Carmagnola and two communists, Mario Cazzolino and Pat Clancy, all of whom worked under the general direction of Jack Henry.<sup>5</sup> As a result, even before the declaration of the popular front in 1935, the anti-fascist movement in North Queensland was an active, and to some extent, effective force.

Although some socialist Spanish families had settled in the north by 1922,<sup>6</sup> the first of the anti-Mussolini migrants were the three Cazzolino brothers, Mario, Lou and Lino, and Frank Carmagnola who arrived in Ingham in that year. The largest influx was during 1924 and 1925, after which numbers fell gradually until in 1928 Mussolini, by then in absolute control in Italy, placed heavy restrictions on Italian emigration.<sup>7</sup> The anti-fascists did not come to North Queensland because they entertained theoretical objections to fascism, but because they had lived under the regime. A school teacher who lived with her brother above his garage in Northern Italy, described her experience thus:

When Mussolini came to power he wanted to boss us around, but my brother did not want to be a fascist ... Mussolini took the most violent young people of the town, and they used to come with guns and try to boss us around ... There was a squad of fascists which used to come at night, and get angry because we were closed. I used to go down — some of them had been my pupils at school. I would ask them what sort of manners they had not to let my people sleep at night — doing these stupid things. Why didn't they come for petrol during the day? They would say: We can command these things. I would say: You are the same as other people. They would insist and we would give them petrol. Ferruccio said: You are very patient; I would throw something out of the window at them. My first brother went to Australia and wrote saying we should come, because it is a free country.<sup>8</sup>

The family settled in the Innisfail district, where they were active in anti-fascist organisations.

As Cresciani has pointed out, the majority of Italian migrants accepted fascism. Mussolini laid great stress on the necessity, as he saw it, of creating in other countries an impression of unanimous support for his regime. The Italian Emigration Department was replaced by a new service within the Foreign Office which instructed consuls

everywhere to supervise this policy, and even in centres as small as Townsville vice consuls were appointed to spread a knowledge of fascism among the migrants.<sup>9</sup> The propaganda disseminated in Australia by the fascist government was persuasive and very efficient. Fascism was equated with religion and Italian patriotism, a subject on which, in the racist climate of Australia, the migrants were extremely sensitive.<sup>10</sup> The Italian Chamber of Commerce circulated a monthly bulletin, and social clubs were encouraged among the Italian communities. Two such fascist sponsored clubs existed in Townsville,<sup>11</sup> and in Babinda a branch of the Fascist Party was still holding street marches in 1943.<sup>12</sup> Consular officials and priests toured the north speaking on behalf of the Italian government.<sup>13</sup> These activities received some support from the Australian government which delayed the naturalisation of anti-fascists,<sup>14</sup> raided their clubs,<sup>15</sup> banned their newspapers,<sup>16</sup> and supplied their names to the Italian authorities, to facilitate “investigation” of their families in Italy.<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding, in North Queensland the movement grew.

The first Australian anti-fascist demonstration was held in Halifax in March 1925, and Australia’s only Italian newspaper, which was fascist controlled, reported the incident and remarked: “... the fact is that almost all Italians in North Queensland are bitter and irreconcilable enemies of fascism.”<sup>18</sup> In 1926 Carmagnola left Ingham for Sydney where he launched the *Lega Antifascista*.<sup>19</sup> Simultaneously the *Comitato Antifascista dell’Herbert River* was founded in Ingham.<sup>20</sup> The following year the *Lega* began publication of a newspaper, *Il Risveglio*, which, on the grounds that it was printed at the Communist Party’s printery at Annandale, was later banned by the Bruce government.<sup>21</sup> In 1929, after nearly a year’s struggle to obtain a government permit, *La Riscossa* first appeared.<sup>22</sup>

The activities of the *Comitato* during the 1920s consisted largely of individual acts of violence against the fascists and their propagandists. Typical was its members’ intrusion into a reception given in Ingham in honour of Count Gabrio di San Marzano, Italian Consul to Brisbane. The count’s Fascist Party badge was ripped from his coat, and the band was persuaded to play the *Internationale*. During his tour the consul was attacked at Babinda and Cairns, and forced to visit Innisfail under police protection.<sup>23</sup>

The *Lega Antifascista* in Sydney and Melbourne did not survive the depression. Subscriptions became fewer, and the crisis was aggravated by splits within the movement. The Matteotti Club was closed at the end of 1931, and the Melbourne edition of *La Riscossa*, like many small newspapers of the period, was forced to cease publication.<sup>24</sup> In North Queensland, however, the anti-fascist movement prospered. In part this was due to the increasing militancy within the sugar industry.

In June 1930 the Australian Workers Union (AWU), the Australian Sugar

Producers' Association and the Queensland Cane Growers' Council signed a "preference" agreement, to the disadvantage of migrant cutters. It provided for 75% of the workers in the field to be British subjects. This British preference was effectively fought by the combined activities of the Ingham anti-fascists, the Mourilyan anarchist group, led by Costante Danesi, and the Communist Party. The North Queensland anti-fascists had discovered something that their southern counterparts would not learn for another eight years, that their enthusiasm needed the superior organisation and resources of the Communist Party in order to survive.

At the end of 1931 Carmagnola returned to Ingham, and began to publish *La Riscossa* in reduced format. In December of that year he was arrested after an incident in which the Townsville vice-consul was assaulted in Ingham. His trial, which was held on February 11 and 12, 1932, at the Townsville Supreme Court, was remarkable for the strong bias against Italians and anti-fascism displayed by the crown prosecutor and the judge, and for the reaction of the jury to this bias.<sup>25</sup> Despite Acting Justice P.B. MacGregor's recommendation that he be convicted, the jury, reported to be mainly composed of waterside workers, found him "not guilty".<sup>26</sup>

During the early 1930s the anti-fascists' tactics remained at the level established during the previous decade. In 1934 the Italian Consul-general, Marquis Agostino Ferrante, needed police protection during his stay in Ingham,<sup>27</sup> and a year later, Bruno Rossi, entering an Ingham hotel wearing his Fascist Party badge, was beaten up with his own crutches.<sup>28</sup> During these years the Ingham anti-fascists built their clubhouse, as the group grew too large to meet at Cazzolino's house.<sup>29</sup>

In the sugar strikes of 1934 and 1935 the North Queensland anti-fascists accepted communist leadership. Indeed in Ingham the anti-fascists always had strong Communist Party connections. Despite Cresciani's emphasis on the anarchist component of the movement,<sup>30</sup> it contained a small group of communists, notably the Penna and Cazzolino families and Barreri and Campanaro. Both groups met in the Workers' Club building, but only the Communist Party had the resources to provide the pamphlets and posters which heralded the arrival in Ingham of fascist propagandists.<sup>31</sup> However the proclamation of the popular front heralded a new level of cooperation between the anti-fascists and the Communist Party, particularly among the anarchists of Innisfail and Mourilyan.

Late in 1935 Carmagnola returned to Sydney where he found that the anti-fascist movement had completely disappeared.<sup>32</sup> During his absence, however, the Movement Against War and Fascism had been set up in Australia,<sup>33</sup> and by the end of 1935 its committee had organised a national anti-war congress, to "unite all lovers of peace".<sup>34</sup> MAWF was a typical "front" organisation in that although many of its members were

not communists, party members were among its most enthusiastic and efficient organisers. In the north branches were set up by communist Jean Devanny during her 1935 tour, and in addition to starting new branches she apparently attempted to incorporate Italian anti-fascist movements into MAWF. Ten Queensland delegates attended the 1935 congress, and while none was Italian, the anti-fascist groups were represented by Yugoslav communists.<sup>35</sup> *La Riscossa* had not survived Carmagnola's departure, and by 1936 the only newspaper outlet for anti-fascist news was the *Workers Weekly*. Correspondents used its columns to warn northern Italians of fascist spies in the district. Early in 1936 for instance, a correspondent calling himself "Milano" warned of a Red Cross "racket" centred on Mrs Morelly's (sic) cafe in Cairns. The report stated that the local anti-fascists had circulated leaflets in Italian pointing out the "crimes against humanity being perpetrated in the name of the Italian Red Cross".<sup>36</sup>

On May Day 1936 only the Yugoslavs represented the anti-fascists in the Innisfail march and torchlight rally.<sup>37</sup> In Ingham however, Jack Henry marched with the Italians and was reported to have remarked that he had never before seen such a "beautiful" May Day march. Accompanying the marchers was an Italian band which played the *Internationale* and *Bandiera Rossa* (The Red Flag).<sup>38</sup>

The alliance between the anti-fascists and the communists was further cemented by the Spanish Relief campaign during which the Communist Party again demonstrated that it was the only sympathetic organisation which had the resources needed for effective action. Some independence seems to have been maintained by the Innisfail group, however, for one report in the *North Queensland Guardian* noted that a portion of the money raised there during 1938 had been sent to Paris.<sup>39</sup> Though not supported by any concrete evidence, it is possible that this donation was sent to the *Comitato Anarchico Pro-Spagna*.

From 1936 the increasing organisation of the anti-fascist groups strongly suggests a growing communist influence. In October the Mourilyan Italian Progressive Club drew up its constitution and elected a committee comprising Costante Danesi, Ferruccio Guerra, Giovanni de Luca and Emilio Campi. Probably only one of these founders, Campi, was a communist,<sup>40</sup> and the stated purpose of the club was apolitical: to maintain social contact between Italians, to improve their social conditions and to protect them against the British Preference League.<sup>41</sup> A clubhouse was purchased and the Guerra family moved into its upper storey as caretakers and managers.<sup>42</sup> During a speech made at the club's first anniversary celebrations on October 9, 1937, Danesi announced that the club "had no political views", but went on to note that "most Italians deplore fascist aggression in Spain, China,<sup>43</sup> and Abyssinia."<sup>44</sup> However on the previous May Day the Innisfail Italians marched as a group,<sup>45</sup> while Danesi himself



represented the Progressive Club at the Ingham celebrations. His fellow speakers at the Ingham Workers Club were Filippo Bossone, the Ingham communist who, in 1930, had been jailed after delivering an inflammatory speech in the Brisbane Domain,<sup>46</sup> and Townsville communist Pat Clancy.<sup>47</sup>

Cresciani gives 1938 as the year during which the influence of the Communist Party displaced that of the anarchists in the anti-fascist movement.<sup>48</sup> However the North Queensland experience indicates that this displacement occurred earlier, and by 1938 the anti-fascist groups were featuring in May Day parades and were continuing their work for Spanish Relief.

During 1939 the North Queensland anti-fascist movement was subject to further development. At the end of 1936 canecutter Ernie Baratto had left the canefields to join the International Brigade. He served in Spain for two years, surviving at least one wound and a report of his death, which was recounted in the *North Queensland Guardian*:

An Italian worker who returned here some months ago said that Baratto's parents who lived in the area he stayed in while in Italy, had been sent a parcel of dirty clothes by the police, with a note saying it came from Spain where their son had been shot as a prisoner of war.

But on his return to Australia in April 1939 the same journal announced that "... his Innisfail mates are turning on a spread".<sup>49</sup>

Baratto arrived back in Queensland with a new mission. He worked to rally anti-fascists among the Italians, Spaniards and other nationalities to "defend Australian democracy against attacks from within or without".<sup>50</sup> He approached the task with the same enthusiasm and dedication which had earlier taken him to Spain. Arriving in Ingham in time for the May Day (1939) celebrations, he organised the Italian contingent for the march. The meeting that followed was held at the shire hall, presumably because the numbers were too great for the Workers' Club. Between 350 and 400 people heard Danesi, once more representing the workers of Innisfail, outline the international situation and conclude that there was an urgent need for anti-fascist unity. Max Jessup, representing the Ingham Communist Party, described the progress of Russia under Stalin, and [a] one-minute silence was held for the dead of the International Brigade. Baratto was the final speaker and it was to cries of "Viva Baratto" that he addressed the workers on the subject of democracy. Later that night the Workers' Club was crowded for the final celebration of the day. Toasts were proposed to the USSR and Jessup and Baratto spoke for a movement to rally all forces against fascism. The *North Queensland Guardian* reported 200 people dancing.<sup>51</sup>

With this triumph, Baratto began his tour of North Queensland. From Ingham he

visited the migrant communities in turn, conducting meetings and forming an anti-fascist committee in each place. Two hundred people heard him speak at Innisfail. At Babinda the meeting was held in Italian, while at his next meeting, at Mareeba, he used an interpreter, Maria Pedrola, to translate into English “when necessary”. The popular front policy was perhaps having an unexpected effect on North Queensland “race” relations. From Mareeba Baratto travelled to Tully, and thence through Townsville, where he was interviewed for the *North Queensland Guardian* to Home Hill and Giru.<sup>52</sup>

The career of Ernie Baratto encapsulates the history of the popular front in the sugar districts of North Queensland. A radical canecutter of the beginning of the Weil’s Disease strike of 1935, he joined the Communist Party while working on the strike committee at Mourilyan.<sup>53</sup> His political education was received at the Marx classes run by the Mourilyan CPA branch. During the 1936 season he saved his fare to Spain where he served with the Dimitrov, Lincoln, British, Passionaria and Stakanov battalions of the International Brigade, in the capacities of sergeant, captain and political commissar.<sup>54</sup> With such credentials he toured the district, attracting large audiences to his Italian language meetings in an area where, a few years earlier, his people had been considered alien and black and therefore beneath contempt.<sup>55</sup>

The anti-fascist groups quickly settled into a familiar North Queensland pattern; the activities of the Mareeba anti-fascist club were typical. At its first meeting at Ballico’s Cafe, fundraising was discussed and it was decided to conduct a series of dances at Grasso’s barn. These were subsequently held, and with an admirable display of cultural adaptation the committee set admission at “gents 2/-, ladies a cake”.<sup>56</sup> Baratto’s anti-fascist clubs, however, were not allowed to drift into parochialism. They were formed as part of a national organisation within the popular front movement. On July 9, 1939 delegates from each group met at an Italian Anti-Fascist Conference, held in Townsville, which aimed to create a new organisation to foster cooperation between Italian migrants, to help victims of Italian fascism and to develop social and cultural life among Italian migrants.<sup>57</sup> The delegates elected a committee which had its headquarters at Innisfail. The branches were instructed to report to the Innisfail group, which, in its turn was to coordinate the work of the branches; a provisional constitution was drawn up.<sup>58</sup> Italian-Australian anti-fascism had emerged as an organised force. ■

## 6. Women in the Popular Front

“We are not purely a charitable organisation, but will endeavour to relieve distress whenever possible, always realising that while this unfair system of society exists, distress will be created faster than organisation can relieve it.”<sup>1</sup>

Although feminist writings had been featured by Marxist journals since the time of *Knowledge and Unity*, by the end of the popular front period women constituted only 16% of Communist Party membership.<sup>2</sup> Generally, the party has discouraged independent action by women’s groups for both theoretical and organisational reasons. Theoretically, Marxists believe that no true liberation of women can be achieved independently of class liberation. Organisationally, the system of democratic centralism kept policy decisions within the province of the Central Committee. Women’s organisations existed to implement these decisions. These factors were reinforced in Australia by prevailing ideas of women’s role in society and by the party’s close alliance with the trade union movement.

In North Queensland however, a remarkably strong and independent women’s movement grew up during the late 1930s and early 1940s. This movement is perhaps a paradox since neither local party members nor the northern community in general were more liberal in their attitudes towards women than other Australians. Indeed Devanny reported that the district was extremely “backward” in this respect, and she described local communists as “scarcely less chauvinistic than the rest of the population”.<sup>3</sup> Several factors may have contributed to the strength of the movement. Firstly, the industrial component of the Queensland party was not as great as that of other states,<sup>4</sup> and therefore it may have been less influenced by the male-dominated trade unions.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the movement’s founders were the wives of the 1935 strikers: it did not spring from a directive of the District Committee. Thirdly, isolation, and perhaps the general psychological characteristics of the region, made party discipline a little more relaxed than in southern districts. It is perhaps indicative of such relaxation

that while alcohol was strictly proscribed to party members in other areas, this regulation was ignored in the north.<sup>6</sup> Fourthly, the current leader of the northern party was Jack Henry, whose extreme shyness in the company of women<sup>7</sup> may have led to their activities being allowed to develop without interference. Finally the movement came under the auspices of Jean Devanny, who was not only a militant feminist, but also a communist with some standing in the southern party. This may have added dignity and status to the local women's movement.

The first Women's Progress Club was established in Innisfail during the strike of 1935.<sup>8</sup> It was however the second, the Tully Women's Progress Club, which had the greater impact on the North Queensland women's movement.<sup>9</sup> When the Weil's Disease strike broke out, the Tully Section had only one woman member. She felt so isolated when attending the overwhelmingly male meetings that she confessed a sensation of "immorality". When the WPC was formed two weeks before the end of the strike there were five communists among the 25 foundation members. The basic aim of the group was industrial: to make contact with the greatest possible number of sugar workers' wives to persuade them to give the strikers greater support during any future dispute in the industry. To this end the club held socials and educational evenings which were funded by street stalls.<sup>10</sup>

After the strike Devanny continued to tour the north on behalf of the Movement Against War and Fascism. By the end of 1935 she had founded Progress Clubs in Ayr, Home Hill and Townsville.<sup>11</sup> The Townsville group however quickly collapsed, possibly due to lack of efficient leadership. In July 1936 the president of the Tully WPC, Eileen Quinn removed to Townsville where she reconstituted the club and built it into the most effective women's front organisation of the period.

The constitution of the Townsville WPC stated that the group was "... non-sectarian, non-party ..." and that "... neither religion or (sic) politics shall be discussed at its meetings."<sup>12</sup> Throughout its life the club continued to protest its non-political nature. Early in 1939, the then president, Ann Horne told a meeting:

It [the club] was formed in July 1936 to organise women into an active and energetic body, which will work for the progressive improvement in the lot of women and children. We are not a purely charitable organisation, but will endeavour to relieve distress whenever possible, always realising that while this unfair system of society exists, distress will be created faster than organisation can relieve it. We are non-party and non-sectarian. All are welcome, no matter what their political or other views are. All we ask is that our members are willing to work for the general improvement of the conditions of life of the women and children.<sup>13</sup>

Evidently, and perhaps not surprisingly, this statement was greeted with disbelief as

she deliberately reiterated the club's political complexion at a subsequent meeting:

I wish to take the opportunity tonight of stating that the Women's Progress Club is not a communist organisation as so often referred to by some people of this town. There are a few communist members in the club, but because these women are progressive and wish to join a progressive organisation that does not make this club a communist club ...<sup>14</sup>

Neither the membership nor the club's activities however, vindicate her claim. More than half the members were communists, and others were the wives or daughters of communists.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore the activities of the group were often very political indeed. When Melbourne communist Ralph Gibson visited Townsville on behalf of the International Peace Conference early in 1937, it was the Townsville WPC which organised his meetings.<sup>16</sup> The group supported both the Spanish and Chinese Relief<sup>17</sup> funds, raising money by holding dances.

On May Day 1937 the Townsville Club marched as a group, carrying peace slogans; they also marched in the parades of the next two years.<sup>18</sup> From 1937 the WPC sent delegates to the annual District Conference of the CPA,<sup>19</sup> and often the party's campaigns were reflected in WPC activities. When organised by the Progress Club however, these campaigns tended to be slanted towards welfare interests; for example, while the Communist Party was waging its peace campaign of 1937, the WPC was protesting that the war budget was impinging upon funds available for social services. Work for Spain and China continued throughout 1938 but, as the *Guardian* files demonstrate, the club was less active than in the previous year. As the original president was in Brisbane, it is possible that the group had difficulty in adjusting to her absence. Two magazines were sponsored during 1938: *World Peace* and *Women Today*, and some of the fortnightly meetings were devoted to discussions on articles appearing in these journals. Despite the continued absence of the foundation president, the club's activities once more became extremely political in the following year. In April 1939 the WPC passed a resolution supporting the Watersiders in their attempt to end the export of war materials to "aggressor nations",<sup>20</sup> however May 1939 proved to be its most active and exciting period. In addition to the May Day celebrations at the beginning of the month<sup>21</sup> there was an election campaign to support, and the group ran socials to help fund Fred Paterson's bid in the Townsville by-election.<sup>22</sup> On May 24, three days before the poll, Townsville mayor, Margaret Gill, called a public meeting at the Town Hall to launch a campaign in support of a National Register of Women complementary to the Federal government's measure for Australian men.<sup>23</sup> Reports on the progress of the meeting vary. The Women's Progress Club sent delegates to heckle, and the *North Queensland Guardian* reported that they had caused the election of office bearers

to break up in disorder.<sup>24</sup> The *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, on the other hand, reported that a committee had been elected in an orderly manner, and its first meeting arranged. However, the list of committee members published by the *Bulletin* contains the names of three communist women, and gives the venue of its first meeting as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) hall.<sup>25</sup> Since the secretary of the YWCA at this time was a member of the party, and her name appears on the list of National Register committee members, it may be assumed that Margaret Gill's patriotic plans had been effectively thwarted, either during the initial meeting, or by infiltration of the committee. The following week the Progress Club called a public meeting at the Tree of Knowledge, (the meeting was later moved to the Theatre Royal due to inclement weather)<sup>26</sup> to explain its attitude on the National Register to the public.<sup>27</sup>

The Women's Progress Club was politically, then, a fairly typical front. This view is reinforced by one member's report that when the club was perceived to have outlived its usefulness, "we changed it into the Trades and Labor Council Women's Auxiliary."<sup>28</sup>

It did, however, display an unusual degree of independence for a contemporary women's organisation, partly due to the scope of its activities and their relevance to local women.

Political activities were interspersed with both social work and feminist propaganda.<sup>29</sup> Money raised at the fortnightly dances and socials, and through the ubiquitous street stall, was used for charitable as well as political purposes. Needy families were helped whenever possible, and the club sponsored Christmas treats for the children of the unemployed.<sup>30</sup> Donations made by the group to the Sister Kenny Memorial Fund led, some time later, to an acrimonious dispute with Tom Aikens,<sup>31</sup> president of the fund. One Progress Club member, believing that Aikens had inadequately accounted for the money donated, had her query published in the women's column of the *North Queensland Guardian*. Aikens, in reply, somewhat irrelevantly denounced the columnist "Flo"<sup>32</sup> as a man. He was rewarded with a public lecture through the column on the party's policy of sexual equality.<sup>33</sup> During 1939 the club celebrated International Women's Day,<sup>34</sup> and later held a minute's silence for the death of May Holman, MLA.<sup>35</sup>

Probably the most successful issue pursued by the WPC lay in its lobbying for public utilities relevant to women and children in the district. Among its demands were a free library, relief work for unemployed boys, a children's hospital in Townsville, free milk for school children and for a ladies' retiring room in the city.<sup>36</sup>

A *Bulletin* report of a club meeting held on June 1, 1939 demonstrates the technique employed in pursuit of these aims. At this meeting the secretary read a letter from the

town clerk, replying to the club's request for a retiring room. The letter announced that the mayor would receive delegates from interested groups at the Town Hall. Two delegates were sent to the meeting, but found that no other group was represented. Nevertheless, they succeeded in extracting a promise that a rest room would be included in the remodelling plan for the market buildings. The club then passed a resolution calling for the provision of a temporary rest room until the remodelled building was completed.<sup>37</sup>

Communist women in Townsville worked hard to understand the theoretical basis of their party. For many the study of political, economic and philosophical concepts was quite alien, and the classes held at the CPA rooms in Flinders Street, and the weekend seminars run at a house at Pallarenda and at the Scout Den in Flinders Street represented novel and often difficult experiences. Perhaps the most taxing problem lay in the required attempt to relate these concepts to local circumstances.<sup>38</sup> The WPC members did this admirably. Many of the traditional pursuits of northern women were included in the work of the club. It had, for example, a Hospital Committee, whose members were responsible for distributing flowers and books to public hospital patients, who were then interviewed on conditions at the hospital. During 1939 a horticultural and handicraft exhibition was held by the Progress Club at the Townsville Ambulance rooms.<sup>39</sup> This blending of traditional provincial Australian women's occupations with local, national and international politics demonstrates an effective application of the policy decisions of the 1935 congress.<sup>40</sup>

The Women's Progress Clubs by no means embraced all the activities of communist women in North Queensland. At a more direct level the District (later Sub-State) women's committee was led by Florence Milburn, who travelled extensively in the region organising groups.<sup>41</sup> Milburn also worked through the women's column of the *North Queensland Guardian*, which, under her editorship, became a happy blend of domestic and political concerns. One edition,<sup>42</sup> chosen as a random example, featured an editorial written in defence of the Women's Progress Club, which had recently been accused of corrupting the women of Townsville, and three readers' letters. The first of these pleaded for equal opportunities for married female teachers; the second protested the price of shirts at the Babinda store, and accused the storekeeper of "profiteering"; the third advised that children needed play to promote their mental and physical wellbeing; the remainder of the column was devoted to recipes. Perhaps less happy was the idea of running a competition aimed at increasing *Guardian* subscriptions. The column offered a copy of *The History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* to the woman enlisting the greatest number of new subscribers,<sup>43</sup> (this has yet to be read by its winner).<sup>44</sup>

Often the activities of the Women's Committee were based on traditional "women's work". In fundraising drives the women ran street stalls and provided suppers at dances and balls.<sup>45</sup> They were, however, also engaged in direct political action, both as Communist Party representatives at women's functions, such as International Women's Day,<sup>46</sup> and as office bearers within the party. Railway Estate Branch of the party had a woman president from 1937 to the end of the period under review, and members recall considerable numbers of women attending the District Conference as branch delegates.<sup>47</sup>

Both in Townsville and in other towns in North Queensland, party members worked within other women's organisations in the hope of spreading their message beyond their normal circle of acquaintance. This tactic was unusually successful in Collinsville, where the secretary reported that every committee in the town had at least one communist member.<sup>48</sup> Certainly, when J.B. Miles visited the mining town in 1936, representatives of the Ladies Home League and the Ladies Hospital Guild<sup>49</sup> were among those who welcomed him at the railway station,<sup>50</sup> while the Collinsville Country Women's Association (CWA) was represented at Communist Party Conferences by Mary Miller.<sup>51</sup> However, in Townsville these organisations shared only two members, and communist activities within the CWA were limited to heckling meetings.<sup>52</sup> Collinsville's penetration of this association was not equalled in Queensland until the war period, when in 1942, the Gladstone CWA circulated a petition calling on the federal government to lift the ban on the Communist Party.<sup>53</sup> Women were also very active in the peace movement, the Townsville Women's Peace Committee becoming an important front by 1938. This group, which met at the YWCA rooms and shared an office bearer with this association, pledged its support for Fred Paterson during the election campaign of 1939. A Belgian Gardens branch of the Peace Council was formed at the beginning of June in that year, and shortly after affiliated with the International Peace Council. This group sent delegate Ellen Taylor to the National Women's Peace Conference in Brisbane in August.<sup>54</sup>

With so much activity it would be easy to overestimate the number of women involved. Cross membership between the organisations was high, and although definite numbers cannot be ascertained, it is likely that no more than 20 women formed the core of the women's movement in Townsville. Their energy and dedication, however, attracted many peripheral helpers who manned street stalls and baked cakes for a cause which became less alien as its adherents demonstrated their active concern for the immediate problems of women in a North Queensland community.

The women's movement, in spite of, or perhaps because of its parochialism, had an important place in the development of the North Queensland Communist Party.



Moreover its contribution to the community in general should not be overlooked. During the Second World War women became increasingly important in the party, and very conscious efforts to recruit them were made on a national scale.<sup>55</sup> It is unlikely, given local attitudes to women, that these efforts would have met with any considerable success in North Queensland had not strong foundations been laid by the women's movements of the popular front years. Perhaps more importantly, communist women were very much a part of the local community. They worked within the culture of the region to win the status which that culture traditionally denied them. Their importance reaches beyond the material and political benefits they gained. ■



Jean Devanny with strikers, Mourilyan, north Queensland 1935.

## 7. The Communist Party in North Queensland Society

“Townsville’s First Annual Communist Ball. Continuous Old-Time and Modern Dancing. Miss C. Waters and the Ritzy Reveller’s Orchestra. Added Attractions: Old-Time Waltzing Competition, Prize £2/2/-, Entrance Free; Quick Step Competition, Prize £2/2/-, Entrance Free. A Gala Night. Novelties Galore. Excellent Buffet Supper Provided. Admission 2/6.”<sup>1</sup>

In North Queensland during the 1930s, among working-class people at least, the perception of the Communist Party as sinister and foreign was gradually eroded for a number of reasons. Of these, the day-to-day contact between party members and the community, especially in their work to relieve social distress, would have had a considerable influence.

In the years preceding World War Two unemployment remained very high.<sup>2</sup> The mildness of the northern climate may have reduced some of the distress among the local unemployed,<sup>3</sup> but it also had the effect of attracting large numbers of men from the south, either looking for work or merely travelling to fulfil unemployment relief conditions. For many the journey terminated in Cairns where a large unemployed camp was established. Party work among these people took two forms: the formation of unions among them to fight for better conditions for unemployed workers, and the provision of temporary relief.

The Unemployed Workers Movement (UWM) had originally been formed in April 1930 to cope with the depression. By the middle of 1931 it claimed 31,000 members throughout Australia, and in some towns party activity consisted mainly of running the UWM. The movement’s hostility to ALP members, and the creation of rival organisations by the ALP caused a temporary decline in membership in 1932 and

1933; but the following year was one of rapid growth. In 1934 the UWM boasted 68,000 members in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.<sup>4</sup> It would also appear that this front organisation was a major recruiting area for the party, for at the end of 1935 some 48% of party members were unemployed.<sup>5</sup> In North Queensland UWM branches were established in Cairns, Innisfail, Atherton, Tully, Townsville, Charters Towers, Bowen and Mackay.

The formation of unions for the unemployed provided them with the organisation needed to dispute individual issues, and often in this period these issues centred around relief work. Campaigns were waged in support of public works such as the Townsville sewerage scheme<sup>6</sup> being performed by relief workers rather than by private contractors on tender. Strikes and protests were organised to counter perceived acts of victimisation or petty tyrannies by foremen or administrators of relief jobs.<sup>7</sup> When, in 1938, new relief legislation was enacted by the Queensland Legislative Assembly, the Townsville group coordinated all branches north of Mackay in a series of protests throughout the region.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to organisation, the formation of unemployed unions provided potential access to power through combination with other unions. During the Townsville sewerage dispute for example, the movement fought its case with the assistance of six trade unions: the Carpenters, the Amalgamated Engineers, the Railway Workers, the Watersiders, the Seamen and the Plumbers.<sup>9</sup> The Townsville group attempted to realise its potential muscle by closely aligning itself with the Trades and Labor Council. In March 1936, although rejecting affiliation, the Council agreed to meet with delegates from the UWM every month, and gave permission for members of the movement to march as a union in the Townsville May Day procession.<sup>10</sup> This marked the beginning of a period of considerable cooperation with the Townsville TLC which included the latter's acceptance of at least a degree of financial responsibility for the movement. Member unions arranged on-the-job collections for UWM funds,<sup>11</sup> and in February 1939 Townsville Unemployed secretary H. Greenfield attempted to formalise this assistance by asking the council to provide the movement with a basic income of £10 a month. The council refused, but did agree to make £2/2/- a month available.<sup>12</sup> The following year it paid the expenses of delegates to the Conference of Unemployed Organisations which was held at the Brisbane Trades Hall on March 29 and 30, 1940.<sup>13</sup>

Although a degree of cooperation was also achieved in Innisfail, other towns were less successful. In Tully in 1940 a meeting of unemployed workers elected a deputation to meet with the May Day celebration committee. The delegates were instructed to ask for permission to march in the procession and have a speaker on the platform,

free participation in the sporting events for the families of the unemployed, and preference in the allocation of work connected with the celebrations. The committee ruled the requests out of order because the movement was not affiliated with the ALP. It was explained that:

... if they were given representation on the committee a dangerous precedent would be established that non-Labor movement bodies could seize upon the advantage to the disadvantage of the Labor movement. The Chamber of Commerce was cited as one of these bodies.<sup>14</sup>

Outside the trade union movement the UWM occasionally attempted to increase its political impact. For example in 1936 in Tully the movement endorsed Tully CPA secretary Les Lock as workers' candidate for the council elections,<sup>15</sup> and it provided representation for the unemployed on the platforms of other groups such as the Communist Party and the Movement Against War and Fascism.<sup>16</sup>

With the assistance of its Women's Auxiliaries the movement also attempted to fill the social void which accompanies poverty. The Charters Towers group had a particularly striking record of providing activities and entertainments for its members. Of the 700 people in the town who were unemployed in 1935, 400 belonged to the UWM. Jean Devanny, whose MAWF meetings were organised by this branch, later described it as one of the best organised she had encountered, as some form of activity was arranged every night for the unemployed of Charters Towers.<sup>17</sup> The Innisfail UWM had a social committee which organised dances and other entertainments. This group managed to raise money for other causes, and one dance, held at the Rechabite Hall in 1937, raised £60/6/- for the Communist Party's Electoral Fund.<sup>18</sup>

Outside the Unemployed Workers' Movement much temporary relief was provided by party members, sometimes through organised fundraising, but more often through numerous acts of individual assistance. Members collected food and money from their workmates, and delivered it to the homes of families who appeared on the party's list of needy people.<sup>19</sup> In Bowen, a Women's Welfare League also provided relief for families, and women's groups generally worked hard to arrange some sort of treat at Christmas. The Townsville Women's Progress Club for example arranged a Christmas party for the children of the unemployed in 1938, and in 1939 the Bowen Women's League raised enough money to give a Christmas gift of 10/- each to 38 women, and 2/9 each to 82 children from unemployed families.<sup>20</sup>

The men who "jumped the rattler" however belonged to no union, often had no family and appeared on nobody's list. These men were regularly met by party members when the northbound goods train stopped at the end of Third Avenue, Railway Estate, before moving into the Townsville railway station. The wife of a meatworker who

lived in the suburb nearby remembered the thick sandwiches which were made from the meat allowed to employees, and set aside for such travellers.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the 1930s a constant stream of men slept on the floor of the party office, in the bookshop,<sup>22</sup> and in the homes of members: "... they were always welcome."<sup>23</sup> In the sugar districts, groups of migrants continued to arrive in search of work. When their money ran out they were forced to leave their accommodation. Their plight has been vividly recounted by one Ingham party member.

There was a lot of poor bastards who came here to get a job, but there was no job at all ... When the money is finished they chuck him in the street ... and the poor bastard he got nothing to eat, because he got no dole; nothing to eat, no work, no sleep at all. One afternoon it was raining ... and one bloke he came — like you see something crazy — I say, "What's wrong?" He say, "You know [hotel owner's name] he chuck ten poor buggers away in the street. They are under the tree."

It was raining very, very — he cry.

I say, "How many?"

He say, "Nine or ten."

I go out. I go straight in the street, he show me the poor buggers. I say, "What's wrong, what for you cry?" He say, "We don't know where we are to go now: we got nothing." I say, "Come on, come with me." They take the ports and put them in the shop ... I have one tarpaulin. I take the tarpaulin and put it on the floor. I say, "You got a roof; that's all you got."

I came home. I was worried. My wife says, "What's wrong?"

I explain. She say, "Take something to eat." I say, "Yes I came to ask you." She say, "I prepare a big stew, and then you take him down."

My wife she starting make a big saucepan stew. I can do nothing else because I am nothing ... I take the bloody stew and a couple of loaves of bread, went down there to give something to eat. They start to eat. Couple of days after we got 25. Next to me was the AWU office. The organiser, he got the toilet. I say, "Mr [organiser's name], leave the door open." He say, "No, I don't want to do. They make everything dirty." He shut the door ... The organiser he report to the health inspector. The next morning the inspector come to see me. He say, "You can't keep." I say, "What for I can't keep? Who told you I can't keep?"

"You know you got only three toilets?"

Sergio [Penna] he come ... He say we have to go see the Roman Catholic priest, he got big dancing hall ... I say, "I go see the Methodists, he got one big hall too ... you talk very good, you born here. You go see the chairman of the council, he got Drill Hall ..."

Two sisters, both in the party, one say, "I go see the English Church."  
 The other say, "I go see the Roman Catholic." All right. They say, "We very sorry."  
 But no chance because they need the hall because he have Sunday School ... And  
 the English Church — can't do. "We got meetings." Got a lot of bloody stories, you  
 know. And the council say, "No chance ... Sergio he tried every way, but no chance.  
 No priest, not one he accept; no way."<sup>24</sup>

In its work among the poor the North Queensland Communist Party had an unusual asset. One of its members, Fred Paterson, was a qualified barrister. Paterson travelled widely in the north, defending clients whom he considered would otherwise have been disadvantaged before the law. Paterson's clients, whose impecuniosity caused considerable financial hardship for his own family,<sup>25</sup> do not appear to have been chosen because of the justice of their cases, so much as in the belief that everyone, regardless of race or social standing, had the right to first-class legal representation in court. In one instance he travelled to Darwin to defend two Chinese who were charged with keeping an illegal gaming house.<sup>26</sup> In another, in Townsville, he defended an unemployed "... bloke alleged to have stolen a pig from a farmer."

Fred represented him and got him off. Between the time that he was arrested and charged and the time the case came off, the pig had to be kept. The police fed and fed it, and looked after it very well. One of the strongest points of the defence was when Fred asked for the pig to be brought into the court. There were four policemen carrying the pig. Fred drew attention to the fact that this chap had been alleged to have walked nearly a quarter of a mile with that pig on his shoulder.<sup>27</sup>

Another important reason for the weakening of the "Red Bogey" in North Queensland was the unusually extensive social life of the party in this district. Dances, card parties, "smoke evenings", picnics, bazaars and discussion groups provided entertainment throughout the region. Many of these functions were organised to raise funds for specific campaigns, such as Spanish or Chinese Relief, or party electoral or press funds. Others appear to have been held rather for their social value: for example the WPCs ran regular dances, the proceeds of which were distributed to any currently pressing cause. Both types of entertainment received wide support from non-members.<sup>28</sup>

Picnics were always popular. Innisfail members picnicked at ETTY Bay, the Tully group went to Mission Beach and Townsville communists travelled to Magnetic Island. For those who were more interested in intellectual pursuits the Left Book Club held fortnightly meetings in Townsville and Tully, and the Townsville CPA ran fortnightly informal gatherings to discuss "matters of up-to-the-minute importance over a cup of tea." Less orthodox perhaps was the *Guardian* Fund Boxing Tournament held at the

Townsville Theatre Royal in September 1939.<sup>29</sup>

Most popular of all, however, were the dances, which seem to have been organised by every section and front group in the district. Sometimes these were small functions such as the one reported by Les Sullivan, in Cairns:

A benefit dance will be conducted at Freshwater Hall Saturday 25th. The proceeds of this dance are to be handed to a lady who can well do with a little assistance.<sup>30</sup>

Others were more ambitious, such as the Old-Time Dance held at the Roof Garden Ballroom in Townsville in May 1940, at which early arrivals were taught the Empress Waltz by Mr and Mrs King.<sup>31</sup> Some combined dancing with other activities: for example a Labor Day Dance and Euchre Party was held by the CPA at the Townsville Palais Royal during the same month.<sup>32</sup>

Collinsville and Scottville, where support for the party was very strong,<sup>33</sup> organised some ambitious (and perhaps ideologically questionable) functions such as the Miss Collinsville Popularity Quest which was a successful fund raiser in 1939. Another was the annual Collinsville Red Ball, “the social event of the year”. The triumph of the 1939 season however must have been the Townsville Communist Ball. Although planned as an annual event, international affairs intervened, and it was never to be repeated. Three hundred people attended the ball, which was held at the School of Arts (now the Arts Centre). They danced to the music of Miss Waters and the Ritzy Reveller’s Orchestra until 1:45am, and enjoyed a buffet supper provided by the Women’s Committee of the Communist Party.<sup>34</sup>

The Communist Ball was reported by the *North Queensland Guardian* under a banner headline which was applicable to so many of the social activities of the North Queensland Party during the popular front period: “Red Bogey Dying”. ■

## 8. Public Meetings

“Public meetings must be made attractive. The party has many specialists who are very willing to give advice and help. Halls should be attractively decorated, program should be brightened. Musical items are a good idea. Lighten your program so the people will come again.”<sup>1</sup>

Although much of the day-to-day contact between communists and other members of the northern communities occurred at a social level, the party laid great stress on the holding of public meetings. It is possible that the demise of the public meeting and the rise of the mass media as political tools have been responsible for fundamental changes in North Queensland politics, particularly those of the working class. Certainly the entertainment value, which caused spectators to run behind the campaign lorries as they moved from suburb to suburb, no longer exists.<sup>2</sup> The North Queensland Communist Party, which was often in a position to provide first-class speakers and hecklers, made good use of this medium, and during J.B. Miles’ tour of 1936 it became evident that District Nine could provide larger and more widely representative audiences than the other districts.

Federal secretary Miles visited Queensland as the final stage of a nation wide tour undertaken in support of the Defence Fund. During 1936 the CPA was called on to appear before the High Court to show cause why it should not be declared an illegal organisation. The expenses which would be incurred were estimated at £5000<sup>3</sup> and much party activity during this year was aimed at raising money and popular support for this cause.

Miles entered the District at Mackay on June 27 and party members who met him at the railway station handed him a telegram of welcome from the District Committee in Townsville. That night, in the heart of Premier Forgan Smith’s electorate, he addressed 400 people at the Britannia Hall, and demonstrated his grasp of local politics by challenging the state secretary of the AWU, Clarrie Fallon, to a public debate.<sup>4</sup> From



Mackay he travelled to Collinsville where, at 8:30am, his train was met by a remarkable reception committee. The delegates, who later accompanied him to an official welcome at the Pioneer Cafe, represented the Caledonian Society, the Ladies' Home League, the Ladies' Hospital Guild, the Collinsville Miners' Union, the railway workers, the MAWF and the CPA. The breadth of Communist Party activity in Collinsville<sup>5</sup> was further demonstrated that evening at a public meeting, when these delegates were joined on the platform by representatives of the Scottville miners, the Unemployed Workers' Movement, the Young Communist League and the Ambulance Committee. Miles remarked that he believed this to be the most broadly representative gathering of the tour, and added that if support in the rest of Australia were equal to that in Collinsville "... we would be taken very seriously indeed." Apparently support in Scottville was equally impressive, for during his speech there the following evening Miles referred to the town as "Red Scottville".<sup>6</sup>

These early meetings seem to have set the pace for the remaining centres. An eight-man committee had been elected well in advance of Miles' arrival to prepare for his meeting at Home Hill. The local party branch made an attempt to gain the cooperation of the ALP for the event, but reported that though local Laborites were in favour, the QCE had vetoed the proposition. The Home Hill Boxing Club was, however, more helpful, and postponed its tournament so as not to clash with the meeting. Miles retaliated by urging his 200-strong audience to attend the boxing match to be held on the following night. Represented on the Home Hill platform was the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights, whose Chairman, G. Wellington, in his speech stressed the workers' need for unity.<sup>7</sup>

On his arrival in Townsville on July 4 the leader was given an official reception at the Oddfellows' Hall. Among the 170 guests were representatives of the trade unions and of the ALP. The reception followed the typical Townsville pattern of speeches interspersed by musical items organised by Comrade Whitewood, and a toast proposed by Townsville's oldest member, Comrade Wilks. Perhaps it was also typical that in the district's report to the *Workers Weekly* the content of Jack Henry's speech is given in some detail, while that of Miles is not mentioned. Henry's speech on this occasion was notable for its mildness. He told the guests that unity was sought, not on revolution, but on work conditions and problems. A public meeting was held the following Monday.<sup>8</sup>

The Cairns branch did not send a report of Miles' visit to the national press, but Innisfail members, who were his hosts on July 10 reported in detail. On his arrival in the northern sugar town Miles was met by party members and representatives of various trade unions. His meeting, which was held at the Regent Theatre, attracted an

impressively large audience of 600, many of whom were reported to have travelled from the Tablelands for the occasion. On the platform were delegates from the ARU, the AFULE, the WWF, the Carpenters and Joiners, and the Unemployed and Relief Workers' Union. Miles' Innisfail itinerary was demanding; it included an open air meeting at South Johnstone on the 11th, one for combined railway unionists at Innisfail on the 12th, and another, which attracted 250 members of various unions to the Regent Theatre later the same day. The final meeting of the tour was held at Babinda, where 150 sugar workers huddled under the hotel verandah to escape a tropical downpour.<sup>9</sup>

Defence Fund collections from public meetings during the tour appear to have become a matter of regional pride. Mackay collected more money than any non-metropolitan city in Australia to that stage of the tour. Three nights later Collinsville broke Mackay's record, only to be defeated in its turn by Scottville. Justifiably proud, this tiny mining settlement reported its collection in per capita terms. Although Townsville did not publicly announce the size of its contribution, this information was apparently obtained by the Innisfail members. When they reported to the *Workers Weekly* that discounting the state capitals the largest collection of the Australian tour had been taken up at their meeting, they tautologically added that it was "bigger than Townsville's".<sup>10</sup>

Despite, or perhaps to some extent because of such rivalries, these reports suggest that by the second half of 1936 North Queensland communist meetings were attracting unusually large and varied audiences. Once more Paterson proved himself a valuable asset. Contemporaries of diverging political persuasions describe him as "a wonderful speaker", capable on occasion of converting a casual listener to lifelong enthusiasm for the cause.<sup>11</sup> His oratory was not merely of the stump variety; he had a versatility which could cope with a farmers' meeting, an afternoon tea with 40 ladies and a large street meeting in the course of a single day's campaigning.<sup>12</sup>

The grinding work of keeping the party's platform constantly before the public was, however, shared between members throughout the region. An examination of the meetings advertised for a single month, July 1937, demonstrates the energy of these men. In the second half of 1937 the district was waging a persistent, if vain, campaign for the affiliation of the CPA with the ALP. Local members took to street corners and hotels to explain the need for a united front to anyone who would listen. George Bordujenko and Fred Matzkows addressed a meeting at the Hermit Park Hotel on how affiliation would achieve a better life for the people. Two days later the affiliation proposals were described by J. Whitewood, speaking at the old North Ward Fire Station. Meanwhile, Les Sullivan was travelling from Innisfail to Babinda to speak

at the State Hotel before joining Les Lock at Hamilton's Corner in Tully. Sullivan then travelled out to Mount Isa to explain the proposals, while Lock moved on to Cardwell to hold a meeting at the CWA Hall there. In the last week of July Matzkows spoke at the Oddfellows' Hall, Townsville, Roly Hills at Belgian Gardens "near Cottrell's store", H. Morgan and Danny McCarthy at the National Hotel in Railway Estate and Les Sullivan and Mick Leahy at Mossman, where they drew an audience of 200.<sup>13</sup>

For children growing up in the small sugar towns or on isolated farms, the street meetings held by the Communist Party and later by the Protestant Labor Party, were a constant source of entertainment.<sup>14</sup> Another, rarer, form was derived from the public lectures given by locals returning from visits to Russia. Communist Party sponsored trips of this type were unusual in this period in North Queensland. Thus the occasional working-class tourist drew large audiences on his return. One such was Harry Walls who was the Northern (Innisfail) farmers and sugar workers delegate to a trade union conference held in Russia in 1935. He was welcomed back to Australia by a meeting held in Silkwood at the end of December. During the following weeks he addressed sugar and waterside workers at Mourilyan and the Innisfail Unemployed and Relief Workers organisation. His lecture described the "splendid success" of the collective farming scheme in the Ukraine, the effective health and safety measures regulating dangerous jobs in Russia, the equal wages and conditions enjoyed by Soviet women, and the treatment used to cure "anti socials". He repeated his talks, early in 1936, at Innisfail, Cairns, Babinda and Tully.<sup>15</sup> Two years later Tony McGillick entertained a large audience at the Townsville Theatre Royal with a similar eyewitness account.<sup>16</sup>

The effect of the contact made with the general public through these meetings was reinforced by the openness with which policy decisions were discussed. District, later Sub-State, Conferences were large sociable affairs, which attracted as many as 60 delegates from the various branches.<sup>17</sup> The delegates were often accompanied by their families, and the event was rounded up at the local photographic studio where the Conference Portrait was taken. All members were welcome to attend, and they were followed by a series of public meetings at which the decisions taken were explained to the general public. Speakers at such meetings advertised that they would answer any questions asked.<sup>18</sup> The effect of such meetings on non-members is difficult to assess, although extant letters suggest that it was favourable. After a Charters Towers meeting a local trade unionist wrote:

... everything was fair, honest and above board ... All unionists will be well advised to co-operate with the communists ...

From Tully came the remark that:

... if we are too sniffishly particular as to who are our associates on the battlefield, we may find we have no choice as to our associates in the prison camp.<sup>19</sup>

Election campaigns were a particularly fruitful source of public contact, and during the popular front period these were fought on federal, state and local authority levels. Indeed the party often claimed that it contested elections mainly because they presented opportunities for propaganda activities;<sup>20</sup> but when the possibility of a victory arose, party resources were heavily invested in the candidate.

At the federal level only two seats were contested during the popular front period. Both campaigns were used as propaganda exercises for the united front policy, but there was an essential difference between them. The first seat to be contested was the sprawling northern division of Kennedy following the death of the ALP incumbent David Riordan. The party nominated Jim Slater, and the entire campaign hinged on an attempt to moderate the opposition of the ALP. A program was drawn up and offered to the Labor Party with the suggestion that it might form a basis for coordination of the two campaigns, and although this was rejected, the communists continued to support the Labor candidate. Their key electoral publication was a four-page circular which explained to voters how, under the preferential system, they could make Slater their first choice without splitting the working-class vote.<sup>21</sup>

The triennial federal elections were held later in 1937, and these evoked a different response. Only one candidate was nominated, Paterson for Herbert, and it would appear that this time the party made a genuine attempt to win federal representation. Albert Robinson directed the campaign, and 21 party speakers, including J.B. Miles and Jack Henry toured on Paterson's behalf. Paterson himself visited all centres from Mackay to Innisfail, and made it known that if elected he would have no conscientious objection to taking the oath of allegiance. In addition party members claimed to have delivered 125,000 pamphlets, 6000 posters and 50,000 how-to-vote cards. Nevertheless the united front policy was pursued with unremitting vigour. Paterson, who claimed to have been promised the ALP preferences,<sup>22</sup> informed his audiences that if it were not possible to elect a communist government, the next best thing would be one formed by the Labor Party. At Mareeba an election meeting at which J.B. Miles was the main speaker coincided with one held by the ALP and addressed by Forgan Smith. The Communist Party's opened at 7:15pm at the Tivoli Theatre, and at 8pm the audience was told that the premier's meeting was about to begin and that those who wished to attend might leave without giving offence. It was not without satisfaction that the *North Queensland Guardian* reported that, although some left, about 100 people remained at the Tivoli. In the Kennedy electorate the party once more waged a wholehearted campaign on behalf of the ALP candidate. Members claimed to have

delivered some 40,000 of his electoral leaflets, and to have held more meetings for him than the Labor Party itself.<sup>23</sup>

The CPA gave considerable attention to the elections held for seats in the Queensland Legislative Assembly. State elections were contested in 1935 and 1938, and on both occasions the party ran five candidates. In Bowen Paterson contested the seat at the two elections, and also ran for the 1936 by election occasioned by the death of the sitting member.<sup>24</sup> His vote increased steadily from 15.63% in 1935 to 24.5% in 1936 and 29.33% in 1938, when four candidates stood, an increase of one on the two previous elections. Particularly strong communist polls were recorded at Proserpine, Collinsville and Scottville, where in 1936 Paterson won 81.1% of the vote. The communist press claimed a high degree of cooperation with the ALP in this electorate in 1936 and 1938, suggesting that during the by-election campaign, when meetings clashed, Paterson and Riordan shared a platform.<sup>25</sup>

In 1935 Alan Tucker contested the Cairns seat, standing as an independent. His 5.63% of the valid vote was not impressive and this seat was not contested in the subsequent election in 1938. Jack Henry campaigned for Herbert in both elections, and although his proportion of the vote remained constant at about 17% this represented a slightly better result in 1938 when four candidates competed.<sup>26</sup> On both occasions much of Henry's electoral support was won in Cardwell, Cowley, El Arish, Flying Fish Point (1938), Tully, Silkwood and South Johnstone. In Mundingburra the Townsville CPA secretary Alex MacDonald contested the seat in 1935, standing as an independent, while Ayr secretary, Doug Olive stood in 1938. Again Olive's 9.02% at the second election at which four candidates stood represented a slight advance on MacDonald's 8.01% in 1935 when there were only three. However neither result was gratifying. The scattered electorate of the Tablelands was contested by Jim Slater in 1935 and by Les Sullivan in 1938. Slater's only successes were in the small polling booths of Innot Hot Springs (27.69%) and Mungana (20.68%), and his overall result was only 7.32% of the vote.

Three years later Les Sullivan polled a little better at 11.59%, receiving an astonishing 74% of the vote from the mining settlement of Topaz.

Townsville was contested in 1938. Albert Robinson polled a disappointing 6.23% and his campaign received little publicity even from the communist press. However, in 1939, a by-election, occasioned by the death of "Mossey" Hynes gave the party another opportunity to test its support in the northern city. It nominated Paterson as its candidate, in a bid to increase the communist vote. Undoubtedly, as Jones has demonstrated,<sup>27</sup> Paterson could attract a personal following in the district which increased the vote in any electorate he contested. However, this result was also affected

by the type of campaign the party afforded him. While most electoral campaigns were largely propaganda exercises, when Paterson was the candidate the CPA made a genuine attempt to win. On this occasion added impetus was derived from the furore caused by the rejection by the QCE of popular Labor Alderman Tom Aikens for the pre-selection ballot. The *North Queensland Guardian* was outraged, and called for support for Aikens.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless the rejection of a candidate who was seen as a left-wing Laborite was perceived to favour the chances of the Communist Party in gaining the support of militant Townsville unionists, and a week later the party chose Paterson for the seat.

Paterson's campaign opened with a meeting at the Theatre Royal, attended by 600 people. Party members distributed copies of the Townsville "election song" to the audience and led a "warm up" of community singing. Thus when the candidate mounted the stage, which was decorated with two large flags bearing the party emblem of the hammer and sickle, he received a "wonderful ovation". During his 75-minute speech he delivered a policy statement which stressed social and economic reform and civil rights.<sup>29</sup> Paterson subsequently defended Aikens and denounced the "extreme right-wing clique" in the ALP. He insisted that his only motive in standing for election was to strengthen the labour movement, and said that "... the bogies which had separated the Communist Party from the people in the past were being overcome ..."<sup>30</sup> Although the campaign was brief, it was strongly fought, despite the refusal of the two local radio stations 4AY and 4T0 to sell Paterson radio time. The final rally was as emotional as the first, featuring a torchlight procession from the Great Northern Hotel to the Tree of Knowledge, led by the Citizen's Band.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime however, the ALP had selected George Keyatta as its candidate. Since Keyatta was known to stand to the left of the Labor Party, this choice diminished communist gains from the veto of Aikens' candidature. The party did raise its vote considerably, to 16.98% (four candidates), but at no time could any realistic hope of victory be entertained.<sup>32</sup>

The great success of this period occurred in the Local Authority elections of 1939. In 1936, as the Communist Party was attempting to secure affiliation with the ALP, all efforts were made to support the Labor candidates at the local authority polls. Three years later an approach was made by the Townsville Communist Party branch to the Labor Party, in the hope that the two groups might combine to draw up an election platform. It was reported that the ALP rejected the proposition on the casting vote of the chairman after the committee of 14 divided evenly. In Millaa Millaa delegates from the Producers' Association, Douglas Credit, the Farmers' Unity League and the Communist Party drew up an electoral program, and selected a candidate. The groups also campaigned for one of the Labor candidates, who was said to have pledged his

unofficial support for the program.<sup>33</sup>

In 1939 the Communist Party nominated candidates in Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, the Johnstone Shire (Innisfail), Douglas (Mossman area), and the Wangaratta Shire (Collinsville Division). In Innisfail, however, the candidate J. Wells had his nomination rejected on the grounds that he was a council employee. The party claimed that it had been cheated, as on the day that his nomination was announced Wells had been offered, and had accepted, the job of foreman on the Shire Public Works.<sup>34</sup> In the other shires electoral platforms were announced during February. Each of these shared two planks: that the government should be pressed to return half of the main roads tax paid in the shire to the council for the improvement of local roads and footpaths; and that the hospital tax be removed and be replaced by a tax on large incomes. Otherwise the platform for each local authority district was devoted to local issues. Typical of these were the pledges to throw open Heatley's Parade for building sites in Townsville, and to build a concrete drain in Lilley Creek in Cairns.<sup>35</sup>

The candidates, Fred Paterson in Townsville, Allan Tucker in Cairns, J. Burnett in Mackay, Bill Edmondson in Mossman and Jim Henderson in Collinsville ran energetic campaigns. Party hopes, however, focussed on Paterson, and the Townsville election monopolised the communist press. From the outset large crowds were attracted to election rallies. Four hundred and fifty people attended Paterson's first meeting near the Tree of Knowledge which was later described by the *North Queensland Guardian* as one of the largest audiences ever seen at a municipal election meeting.<sup>36</sup> Eleven more were held during the next two weeks, at which Paterson was strongly supported by other members. Whenever possible they were introduced with a direct reference to their trade union positions: Fred Matzkows for example being described as the president of the Boilermakers. Given the nature of the platform and the style of northern working-class politics in this period,<sup>37</sup> a striking feature of the campaign was Paterson's ability to retain an ideological perspective. One tactic used to achieve this was to allow supporting speakers such as Albert Robinson, Bill Horne or Danny McCarthy, to elaborate on local issues, after which Paterson would explain the significance of the election in relation to world affairs.<sup>38</sup> When the votes were counted North Queensland discovered it had not one, but two communist aldermen. In the Collinsville Division of the Wangaratta Shire more than 60% of the electors had voted for Jim Henderson to be one of the division's three representatives.<sup>39</sup> In Townsville Paterson polled the fifth highest of the 11 men elected, and a strong swing to the left had replaced a council which had long been dominated by independents with one in which Labor held a small majority. ■

## 9. The Popular Front & the Press

“A branch of Beak House Jewellers will shortly be opening in Tully - the manager will be glad to see any Guardian readers, and discuss their jewellery requirements with them.”<sup>1</sup>

From its foundation the Communist Party of Australia always laid great emphasis on its press. Concentration of ownership of the Australian media and communication problems caused by distance lent urgency to the need for the publication and wide distribution of an attractive national newspaper. During the popular front period the drive for mass support encouraged members to give even greater attention to this aspect of their work.

During the early years of the Party, Queensland had taken the lead by publishing the first Australian Communist newspaper. Although W.J. Thomas' *The Communist* (1920) only ran for three editions before being replaced by *Knowledge and Unity* (1918-1921) as the official organ, it holds an honoured place in the history of the Party.<sup>2</sup> The financial problems involved in producing a paper were, however, overwhelming for the small group which comprised the Queensland Communist Party of the 1920s. *New order* (1924) published only five editions, and *The Toiler* (1924-1925) ran to six before it was overcome by such difficulties. After its collapse, although the branches issued bulletins, no newspaper appeared in the state until the popular front period.

The attention of the northern members was, therefore, directed to the circulation of the national paper, *The Workers Weekly*. During the late 1920s the sale of six copies of each edition was a condition of membership. This was not easy for the Townsville Russian members, many of whom spoke little or no English. The job was therefore passed on to their children who sold the papers for a penny a copy outside Lowth's Hotel.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless as the party grew sales in North Queensland gradually increased until, at the beginning of the popular front period, they had reached over 1000 copies



of each edition.

In May 1936 an intensive sales campaign was conducted as part of the drive for mass support implicit in the popular front policy. Each of the bi-weekly editions of the *Workers Weekly* published circulation figures for every district, and the competition to increase sales became a matter of regional pride, since these figures reflected the activity and enthusiasm of the group concerned. At the beginning of the campaign District Nine was selling about 1700 copies of every edition. By comparison, District Three (Southern Queensland) recorded 1700 of the weekend paper and about 500 fewer in midweek. The largest sales were registered in District 1, centred on Sydney, where the numbers were 7000 and 4500 respectively. From this time until the end of the popular front period North Queensland always had Australia's second highest circulation.

During the latter half of 1936, as the campaign proceeded, sales rose dramatically in District Nine until at the end of the year 3000 copies of each issue were being sold in the area. The increases were distributed throughout the District. Comrade Nicholson in Mount Isa raised his sales from 36 dozen a week in May to 60 dozen in November when he claimed, in a letter to the *Workers Weekly*, that circulation was higher than that of the local "capitalist press". In Mackay, between July and November, sales increased from 14 dozen to 36 dozen. Cairns members set themselves a quota of 50 dozen papers in June. In all of these towns the sole means of distribution was through individual members, who often sold from door to door; even in Townsville, where the party had a bookshop, most sales were thus effected. This town pledged itself, in June 1936, to raise its figures to 86 dozen by November. Although it did not achieve this, members were consoled by the fact that the closure of the meatworks at the end of the 1936 season did not result in a sudden drop in sales as it had in previous years. Between June and September *Workers Weekly* circulation in District Nine rose by 40%. Indeed, the increased sales in Northern Queensland accounted for half the national increase of 1800 copies.<sup>4</sup>

The enthusiasm of the Queensland members warranted editorial encouragement, and so at the beginning of 1937 the *Weekly* began to publish a special Queensland edition, which contained a full page of news from that state. In addition numerous bulletins and job sheets were published by branches and units. Unfortunately few of these have survived. Among them, however, were the Townsville Section Committee's bulletin, *The Van*, which the *Workers Weekly* editorial staff described as "... technically the best they have seen";<sup>5</sup> *Vanguard* was published in Collinsville,<sup>6</sup> *Spark* in Charters Towers,<sup>7</sup> and *Plod* in Mount Isa.<sup>8</sup> Devanny reported that *Plod*, which contained political and industrial news and comments on local scandals, was accepted as the town's

newspaper.<sup>9</sup> Three job bulletins were also published regularly in Townsville,<sup>10</sup> and an Italian language bulletin, *Rompiscatole*, was edited by Jack Henry, with the assistance of a translator.<sup>11</sup>

Encouraged by the success of the sales campaign, by the beginning of 1937 both District Three and District Nine had determined to publish their own newspapers. The burden of funding was to be born by the districts involved, but the Central Committee agreed that the state press funds might be incorporated into the District Electoral quotas. During the previous year the party had decided to raise £10,000 throughout Australia for the election campaigns of 1937, and this sum had been apportioned between the districts according to membership and past fund raising achievement. The quota allotted to North Queensland was £2000: equal to that of Victoria and more than double that of District Three (£900). Because both elections and newspapers were considered by the party to be primarily propaganda exercises,<sup>12</sup> the Central Committee entered into an agreement with the two districts whereby money raised to pay for the publication of a paper might be considered a part of the Electoral Fund quota.<sup>13</sup>

Within the districts the quota was reapportioned between the sections which competed for a banner to be awarded the group which was first to raise its share of the cost. A report sent from Innisfail to the *Workers Weekly* in January 1937 suggests the methods used to raise the funds. The major portion of the £200 which had been collected in this section during the preceding three months was raised by private subscription; the balance came from competitions, house parties and other social functions, among them a Workers' Press Dance, held at the Regent Theatre, and described as a "social hit", and a New Year's picnic at ETTY Bay.<sup>14</sup>

Within District Nine the Press Fund aroused considerable enthusiasm, and although 22 weeks were allowed by the Central Committee for the filling of the quotas, Tully won the banner in less than half that time. Within 11 weeks Tully, Bowen and Home Hill had fulfilled their obligations.<sup>15</sup> Fervour for the new project was so intense that a Townsville member, Danny McCarthy, evolved a plan whereby power for the printing press was to be generated by a belt attached to the wheels of his bicycle, which he undertook to pedal throughout the printing process.<sup>16</sup> Fortunately for McCarthy this was never necessary. The district raised £1700 of its quota, and the remaining £300 was provided as an interest-free loan by member Lindsay Stewart. Contract printing was investigated and discovered to be too expensive, and so Andy Cook arranged the purchase of printing machinery. Premises were organised by Robinson, Matzkows and McCarthy, and on May Day 1937 the *North Queensland Guardian* published its first issue. District Three's paper never materialised.<sup>17</sup>

The *Guardian* was unique in the history of Australian communist journalism: a mirror of the popular front in North Queensland. The printing machinery was registered as a private company, in the name of Andrew Cook of the Causeway Printery, Hermit Park. Initially 5000 copies were circulated, rising to 5200 by 1939.<sup>18</sup> Distribution was timed for 3pm on Fridays, although a special Tablelands Edition was issued at 4pm on Thursdays.<sup>19</sup> The size of the district it was intended to service was reflected in the breadth of its news coverage. From the outset local columns contributed from Innisfail, Cairns, Mossman, the Tablelands, Millaa Millaa, Home Hill, Collinsville, Mount Mulligan, Carbine, Mareeba, Bowen, Babinda and Charters Towers<sup>20</sup> indicated its widespread circulation.

Editorial policy, under both the first editor, Fred Paterson and his successors E. Campbell and Danny McCarthy,<sup>21</sup> reflected the popular front and its aim to reach the widest possible audience. Paterson set out the goals of the paper in his first editorial. He wrote that it was to wage “A crusade against poverty; a crusade against war; a crusade against governmental tyranny and despotism.”<sup>22</sup> Particularly noticeable was the absence from the *North Queensland Guardian*’s banner of the hammer and sickle. The omission of the symbol of the Communist Party demonstrates the stress Paterson laid on wide circulation and mass appeal. Another unexpected feature of the editorial line was its insistence on the compatibility of Christianity and communism.<sup>23</sup>

This theme is also reflected in the regular columns of the paper, which included one headed “Churches”; it was of particular importance to the party during the Spanish Civil War, when the Nationalists proclaimed themselves the sole protectors of religion, and the Australian Catholic newspapers were publishing regular accounts of alleged atrocities against the clergy perpetrated by the Republican army. The wide range of interests represented by such columns contributed to the *Guardian*’s broad working-class family appeal. There were reviews of the publications of the Left Book Club, which had members in North Queensland.<sup>24</sup> Film reviews were also featured, usually of productions currently appearing at Townsville cinemas. This column spread no political message, unlike the syndicated filmstar gossip column which particularly favoured information about the activities of Charlie Chaplin and Paul Robeson.

One such story appeared under the headline: “Left incline in Hollywood”,<sup>25</sup> and another under: “Movie Stars for Peace and Progress”.<sup>26</sup> Regular “Turf News” and “First Aid” columns were also printed.

Two of the features were written by Fred Paterson; one on the law, and the other about political economy. Even these columns were politically circumspect: never compromising the party line, but always presenting it in its most easily digested and generally useful form. The legal column concentrated on matters of importance to

working-class families such as social security, and readers' legal queries were answered. In the political economy column Paterson provided Marxist education in the form of answers to readers' questions. Here too much of the information was of an immediately practical nature such as the way the hire-purchase system functioned.

An extensive women's column featured women's letters, news of women's organisations, medical advice, household hints, recipes and dress patterns. Its editor, CPA women's organiser Florence Milburn, also printed feminist articles and advice on peculiarly working-class problems such as how to cope with unemployed husbands and children.<sup>27</sup> Another unusual feature of the *North Queensland Guardian* was its children's column, headed "Happy Companions". In January 1937 the *Workers Weekly* had begun to publish a column for children, but it consisted of reports on orphanages and teachers' conferences. "Happy Companions" was far more appealing, and featured children's contributions, games and puzzles. During the life of the paper it grew to three full columns and acquired a separate post office box.

Local news and feature articles were contributed from every part of the District. Much of the news was industrial, though trade union business was less important in the *Guardian* than in the *Workers Weekly*. In Townsville, meetings of the radical trade unions and of the Trades and Labor Council were reported in detail. However much of the industrial news was very parochial: for example a report headlined "Favouritism at the Tully Pickup".<sup>28</sup> Although the paper followed the wars in China, Abyssinia and Spain, events in Russia and the progress of Hitler, local news was given preference except on rare occasions. In line with the policy decisions on the popular front conferences of 1935 and 1936, issues such as the establishment of a public swimming pool and a free library were allotted many column inches, and the drains of Innisfail, which were blamed for a serious outbreak of typhoid fever in the town in 1938,<sup>29</sup> featured throughout that year. Perhaps the best indicator of the *Guardian's* acceptance of its role as a provincial working-class newspaper may be seen in its intense preoccupation with events such as the Jubilee celebrations of the West End State School, which were reported at length in every edition published during June and July of 1937.

Feature articles often combined politics with local interests. Typical were two of these written by A. Northage, a Townsville resident, who had recently returned from a Communist Party sponsored trip to Russia. Published late in 1937, the articles were travellers' tales in which guide book history mingled with descriptions of exotic meals and the wonders of tsarist architecture. Politics were eclipsed by the excitement of the tourist.

One feature in particular separated the *Guardian* from other communist newspapers: it carried, and was to some extent financially dependent upon commercial advertisements. It would appear that its promoters had hoped to make the paper self-

supporting through sales of advertising space. Although it did once run a column on Mount Isa's veteran super paper seller, Archie Nicholson, who by this time was selling 300 *Guardians*, 200 *Workers Weeklys* and dozens of *Moscow News*, as well as delivering the *Plod* each week,<sup>30</sup> the paper never imitated the *Workers Weekly's* circulation campaigns. Instead it stressed the importance of selling advertising space. On the front page of the edition of May 19, 1939, for example, the following exhortation appeared:

Will you please spare five minutes to glance through our advertisements, and see if any of our advertisers can supply your requirements. By supporting our advertisers you are supporting us and making the publication of the *Guardian* possible. When buying mention the *Guardian*.<sup>31</sup>

Advertising rates were three shillings a column inch, which compares very favourably with the *North Queensland Register's* rate of 3/6 a column half inch.<sup>32</sup>

Though none of the larger firms ever advertised through the paper, space sold quite well to smaller businesses. The varied nature of the advertisers is demonstrated by the contents of a paper chosen at random. Townsville firms advertising in this edition were the Aitkenvale Butchery; Kuriand Cafe and Selkig's Cake Shop; Thomas and Gray, Grocers; Beak House Jewellers; Burrows Farm Machinery; Connolly the Electrician; Foley's Clothes; the Mia Mia Cake Shop and the CPA which advertised a lecture and an election night gathering. The same edition carried advertisements for non-Townsville firms: the Black and White Cafe in Cairns; Weiland the Butcher at Herberton; Maxwell and Sullivan, Tailors; McGee's Hotel and Mrs Bell's Sporting Goods, all of Collinsville; Dan the Tailor and Mrs Bradford's Guest House at Babinda; Acme Radio, Home Hill; Naughton the Pastrycook of Ayr; Wilson's Cars, Mount Isa; Efstathis Cafe, Tully; and the Brisbane Anvil Bookshop.<sup>33</sup> The Townsville City Council was a frequent advertiser, and bought space in the final issue before proscription. During the life of the paper the number of advertisements in each edition rose from four in the first to a peak of 76 in October 1939. After the outbreak of war, sales diminished commensurate to the popularity of the party; there were only 33 in the final edition.

Despite this strategy the paper consistently absorbed half of the entire income of the sub-state committee. The weekly deficit averaged £10, and in June 1939 £270 of the original loan was still outstanding. In that month sub-state secretary Albert Robinson launched a press fund, which was to be combined with a drive for increased advertising and circulation. The campaign was to run from July to December. Two months after it began the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed and the end of the popular front was in sight. ■

# 10. The End of the Popular Front

“We knew that Stalin could be trusted to do the right thing.”<sup>1</sup>

On August 21, 1939 Australian communists were stunned by the news that the USSR had signed a ten-year treaty of nonaggression and neutrality with Nazi Germany. After Hitler’s annexation of Czechoslovakia the previous March it had appeared that the popular front had been vindicated. Despite the assurances of federal Attorney-General Robert Menzies, the threat of international fascism was growing, and Menzies’ pro-German speeches,<sup>2</sup> and the “pig iron” campaign,<sup>3</sup> made the linking of members of the federal government and fascist ideology more credible. Party campaigns of this period received wide support from other sections of the labour movement. This was particularly noticeable in Townsville where, on certain issues, the CPA, the Trades and Labor Council and the City Council found themselves in agreement.

Early in May the Townsville City Council unanimously passed a resolution to petition the prime minister to impose an embargo on the export of “war materials to aggressor nations”. The “city fathers” then gave serious consideration to a motion submitted by communist alderman Fred Paterson: that if the Townsville Waterside Workers’ Federation should refuse to load materials suitable for war purposes, and an attempt be made to load using “scab” labour, the Council should cut off the electricity supply to the Harbour Board to prevent the use of electric cranes. Three other aldermen (Corcoran, Aikens and Mindham) spoke to the motion, but it was allowed to lapse after it had been pointed out that since the WWF had agreed to load under protest, the resolution amounted to an attempt to coerce the union. An alternative motion, that the council should assist the WWF and cooperate with the union in any public protest it might decide to hold, was carried unanimously.<sup>4</sup>

The National Register issue<sup>5</sup> provoked widespread interest both industrially and politically. The Trades and Labor Council voted at its June meeting to boycott the

register, and later the same month the City Council carried a motion proposed by Paterson and seconded by Aikens: that the council “have nothing to do” with a suggestion that it cooperate with the Red Cross in its National Register work. The issue also attracted support in other parts of the district, and good attendances were reported at meetings held by J. Jessup in Innisfail, A. Robinson at Ayr and L.G. Stewart at Atherton.<sup>6</sup>

During July Miles embarked on another North Queensland tour. He was warmly welcomed at Townsville and Collinsville, and had arrived at Home Hill when news of the Nazi-Soviet Pact broke. Its impact was immediate. Miles was refused permits for his Ayr and Home Hill meetings, and that night the party notice board was “hacked to pieces” with an axe.<sup>7</sup> The emotional reaction to the news is only understandable in terms of a left-wing perception of Russia as a symbol of hope for the future. In particular, for a section of the North Queensland labour movement the USSR was the country which had not suffered a depression in the early part of the decade. During a meeting of the Townsville Trades and Labor Council that week the confusion, alienation and stubborn faith the pact had evoked were demonstrated.

Shortly after the meeting opened the secretary moved that the TLC condemn the USSR for signing the pact. He asked the council to “... view with intense disgust the action of the alleged champions of democracy in signing a pact with the spearhead of fascism and betraying democracy”. B. Douglas, representing the Carpenters’ Union announced that he “had much pleasure” in seconding the motion. Speaking to it he said:

Twelve months ago we praised Russia, but now it is weak and dare not arm its people.

Russia is showing the yellow streak and Stalin is licking the boots of Hitler.

The debate was noisy and divisive; its tone was bitter. Boilermakers’ delegate Hughie Grant challenged critics of the Soviet Union to a public debate at the Tree of Knowledge, while Bill Ford of the Waterside Workers was of the opinion that “anyone who expressed horror or surprise had obviously not followed international politics. The pact will improve chances of peace ... At this point he had to appeal to the chair for order. M. Knight (AEU) grumbled that the USSR would never be able to please some people, while Bill Hodson (AMIEU) moved that the matter be deferred until members were better acquainted with the facts, at which time he believed that “... the critics would be forced to swallow their words.” The motion was carried 21 to 12, and W. Kogler of the Public Service Union closed the debate, ironically “... expressing his satisfaction at the intense loyalty of the champions of the USSR.”<sup>8</sup>

Assisted by the presence of Miles in the district, the party rallied quickly. On September 25, four days after news of the pact had been released in Moscow, the *North Queensland Guardian* published a leading article headed “Peace Front Still Only

Hope: German-Soviet Pact no Obstacle.” The pact was imputed to delays created by Britain in the concluding of a British-Soviet alliance. The article insisted that the pact was not an alliance but a peace treaty, and the editorial suggested that Chamberlain had hoped to force Russia to engage Germany without Britain’s support. The subsequent edition of the paper carried an official statement issued by the Soviet defence chief Klim Voroshilov, and an article written by the Central Committee’s theoretician, R. Dixon. While these confirmed the local interpretation, Dixon added another dimension when he wrote: “If war comes we communists will strike at the cause of war: capitalism.”<sup>9</sup> The paper also carried an article which assured readers that the pact did not entail Soviet endorsement of Hitler’s persecution of the Jews.

Party members embarked on a heavy program of public meetings designed to convince as many people as possible of this interpretation. To their advantage, the local dearth of news on the more recent developments in the international situation contributed to increasingly large audiences. An Ingham correspondent reported during the last week of August that:

The very large crowd indicated the widespread interest aroused by the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact. The results of the weekend visit showed that the people are more and more learning that the Soviet diplomats can be trusted to do the right thing, and that they didn’t betray the democracies.

On the night war broke out Albert Robinson was addressing 300 people at McCallum’s allotment in Tully. He reported that the news was received peacefully, “with some scenes of quiet mirth at some of the statements from the radio.”<sup>10</sup>

The *North Queensland Guardian* condemned “. . . the savage German fascists [who] have launched a new aggression against Poland” and reiterated its belief that Germany and Russia would never form a military alliance. The party’s busy schedule of public meetings was maintained. Miles dedicated the remainder of his tour to analyses of the war and the pact, drawing large crowds at Mossman, Herberton, Millaa Millaa, Innisfail, Mareeba, El Arish, Ingham and Mackay. On his return to Sydney he reported that: “I was very pleased with the way the workers refused to be caught up by the press distortions over the present international crisis and the Soviet-German Pact.” During September George Bordujenko addressed “Ingham’s largest ever street meeting,”<sup>11</sup> but despite good attendances, communist speakers began to encounter difficulties. Jim Slater addressed an audience outside Dunlop’s Hotel at Mareeba on September 6, but was refused a permit for Chillagoe the following night. On September 8 federal Attorney-General W.M. Hughes<sup>12</sup> secured the passage through the House of Representatives of his National Security Bill. This had immediate repercussions in the north.<sup>13</sup> The next night Slater’s Dimbula audience was dispersed by the police, and a



permit was refused for Mareeba. Evidently this town was a potential trouble spot, for when Slater went ahead and held his meeting illegally, violence broke out and he was assaulted. Later the RSL publicly dissociated itself from the affair. Newell, the Mareeba grocer, promptly closed the accounts of known communists, and a rumour was circulated that Fred Paterson had resigned from the party in protest against the pact. Paterson countered this by travelling to Mareeba where he managed to contain a public meeting. A few days later Comrades McCormack and Crampton were bashed in Tully.<sup>14</sup>

During the last week of September, on the direction of the Comintern,<sup>15</sup> the party adopted a new war policy which effectively ended the popular front. The CPA suddenly withdrew its support from the allied cause, declaring the war had become a capitalist plot to crush Soviet Russia. The North Queensland District Committee met to endorse the new policy, and on October 11 the *North Queensland Guardian's* editorial called for an end to the war; it continued:

The Communist Party declares that further bloodshed and destruction can be avoided ... Carry resolutions in your organisations in favour of an international conference of the powers to negotiate peace, disarmament and security.<sup>16</sup>

J.B. Miles, in an interview with *Smiths Weekly*, when asked what the attitude of the party would be in the event of a war between Britain and the USSR, unequivocally announced that the party would support Russia.<sup>17</sup>

During the remainder of the year conditions deteriorated rapidly. Not only were open air permits increasingly difficult to obtain, but the party also encountered problems in hiring halls for indoor meetings. The Oddfellows, whose hall had been used by the Townsville CPA for the previous four years, were instructed by their Brisbane branch to withhold it on the grounds that the party was a "disloyal organisation".<sup>18</sup> The most shattering event of these months however was the invasion of Finland by Russia at the end of November. Sympathy for Finland was widespread, and Russia was expelled from the League of Nations. In Townsville "Aid Finland" committees were set up, and their members heckled communist meetings and occasionally provoked violence.<sup>19</sup>

On January 4 the Central Committee issued a warning that the CIB held dossiers on every known communist.<sup>20</sup> In Townsville the party was unofficially notified that the *North Queensland Guardian* would be suppressed if it continued to support Russia over the Finnish invasion.<sup>21</sup> Throughout Australia the party began to prepare for proscription. Members were warned to burn or hide all documents, and arrangements were made for key members to move to other districts. Printing equipment was set up in a cave some miles beyond Mount Spec and on a cane farm in the Ingham area.<sup>22</sup> The Townsville bookshop advertised a clearance sale, and plans to operate a circulating

library in Cairns were quietly shelved.<sup>23</sup>

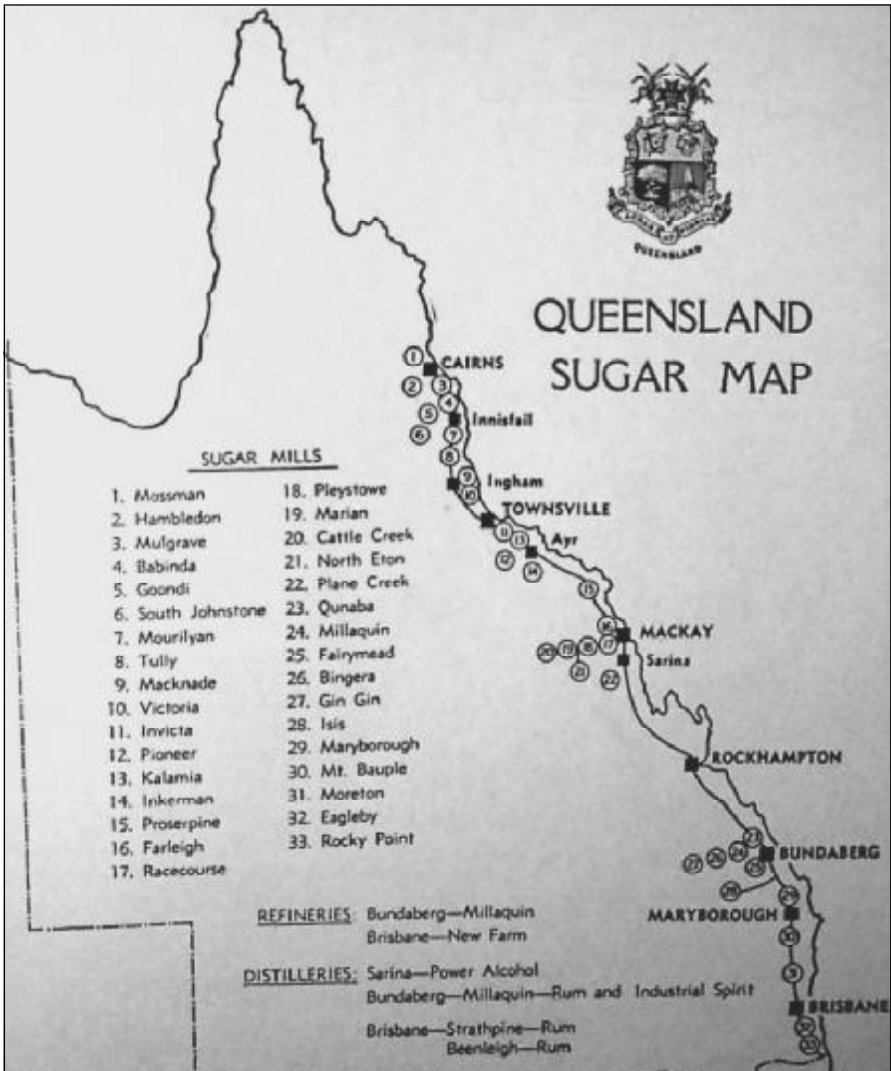
Even local authorities devoted time to considering communist activities. Balonne Shire Council had circulated its counterparts throughout Queensland seeking support for an approach to the government on the proscription of the Communist Party. The petition was rejected by most Queensland Councils, including Innisfail, Douglas, Atherton, Herberton, Eacham and Woothakata, though it was endorsed in Cairns. In Townsville the council members opposed the move unanimously, but the debate provided the occasion for savage attacks on the party led by Aikens who told the meeting that he favoured the deportation of communists. Paterson, for his part, used the debate to “speak at length on the international situation”.<sup>24</sup>

Despite pressures and widespread disfavour, party members continued to hold public meetings to explain their view of the war, some of which were turbulent affairs. It was at this time that a rudimentary Defence Force was formed, although this branch of party activity was never formally organised in North Queensland.<sup>25</sup> Attendance at these meetings remained high. Four hundred people, for example, were attracted to one held by Paterson at Mareeba on February 1, at which he informed hecklers: “We will meet force with force.” In March the Police Department announced that no more permits would be issued for street meetings at which international politics were discussed, and “Hear the speech the police will not allow to be given on the streets” proved to be effective advertising during April. However by May neither permits nor halls were available to the Communist Party; clearly the end was in sight. The party was excluded from the May Day marches, although in Townsville “prominent union officials” Hughie Grant, Fred Matzkows and Bill Hodson were among the official speakers.<sup>26</sup> The *North Queensland Guardian* was being published in reduced format, and after April 26 every edition was mutilated by the censor. As advertisers abandoned the paper financial problems became acute, and fundraiser Bordujenko issued appeals for donations. “Time,” he wrote, “marches on our side — the side of the working class.”<sup>27</sup> One final victory, however, remained to be won.

With neither street permit nor hall at his disposal, Fred Paterson advertised that he would conduct a meeting at 7:30pm on May 10. His subject was to be “Australia’s Fight for Liberty”. At the appointed time 300 people assembled below high water mark on the beach at the Strand. The “fight for liberty” was waged, and won, with files and hat pins. RSL members were driven from the beach, and a memorable meeting was held.<sup>28</sup>

During May the federal minister for information announced a total ban on a group of newspapers and journals. The papers were the *Tribune*, *Soviet Today*, the journal of the Friends of the Soviet Union, *The Communist Review*, *Wharfies*, the

WWF paper, the *Militant*, which was published by the Trotskyites, *World Peace*, the IPC journal, and three regional Communist Party newspapers: the *Guardian* (Victoria), the *Red Star* (West Australia), and the *North Queensland Guardian*. On June 15, a few days after the fall of Paris, the CPA was declared illegal under the National Security (Subversive Associations) regulations. ■



Map showing Queensland sugar mills (1941).

# Epilogue

Proscription had been expected and the party was well prepared. Paterson and Robinson left for Brisbane immediately and George Burns, chairman of the state committee, arrived in the north. He was accommodated in the Mount Spec “office” from which he was supervising the publication of an illegal newspaper, *Spark*, by the end of June.<sup>1</sup>

Although communist homes and offices throughout Australia were raided, party members in North Queensland generally suffered less persecution than elsewhere. Homes were searched and books and papers confiscated,<sup>2</sup> but no British-Australian members were arrested in this district. This has been ascribed to the extent of the support which had been built up in the community during the preceding years.<sup>3</sup> Unlike other areas North Queensland did not lose its printing equipment during the police raids since it had been registered in the name of a private company, The Causeway Printery, in 1937. After the war, while other districts were still negotiating for the return of their property, the Townsville printing press was transported to Brisbane and used to set up the Coronation Printery under the management of George Bordujenko.<sup>4</sup>

One North Queensland group did, however, undergo considerable victimisation. In June 1940 Mussolini had entered the war. Italian communists became doubly suspect: as members of a subversive party, and as enemy aliens. When the internments began the police arrived during the night. Some experienced as many as three raids, during which their papers and books were burned, before being arrested.<sup>5</sup> They were transported by trains with barred windows to Stewart Creek (later Stuart Gaol) in Townsville, from which they were sent to internment camps throughout the country.<sup>6</sup> The story of the internees and the political violence they faced in the camps,<sup>7</sup> and of the hostility of local communities towards their wives and children who struggled to maintain the family farms, has yet to be told. Ironically the fall of Paris marked a turning point in the public image of the party. There was general recognition that loyalties in France were divided to some extent on class lines, and the French

Communist Party was the most vocal critic of the surrender. When Hitler invaded Russia on June 22, 1941 party policy moved into line with public opinion and support increased rapidly. In December 1942 the ban was lifted after a number of leading communists gave an undertaking on behalf of the party that communists would work for increased production and observe National Security regulations.<sup>8</sup>

The anti-fascists remained in the internment camps, despite the formation of a Civil Rights League aimed at securing their release. The league, though based in Brisbane, consisted largely of ex-North Queenslanders, and included amongst its members Allan Tucker, Jack Wells, Max Jessup, Bill Quinn and Mick Healy.<sup>9</sup> Although the league achieved little, an Australian-Italian Anti-Fascist Committee was active in Brisbane by the beginning of 1944,<sup>10</sup> and the movement claimed its highest membership during 1946.<sup>11</sup>

The women's groups continued their work throughout the illegal period, and as the Trades and Labor Council Women's Auxiliary, they played an important part in activities centred on the welfare of troops stationed in North Queensland. Townsville women were among the foundation members of the Union of Australian Women, and female membership reached its highest point in the district during 1943.<sup>12</sup>

The *Spark* was in circulation for 26 months. It was a state-wide publication, information for which was transmitted from district to district, each branch producing its own roneoed copies. In August 1942 the Brisbane branch began to print a small paper called the *Standard*, and this continued to appear until the proscription of the party was lifted in December.<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of 1943 the *North Queensland Guardian* again appeared on the news stands. This was not, however, a northern paper; though still listed under the proprietorship of Roly Hills, it was published in Brisbane. Registration was transferred to Jim Slater in Brisbane on April 23, 1943, and from that date the paper was known as the *Queensland Guardian*. The North Queensland branch of the party never again produced its own newspaper.

Electoral support increased remarkably during the war. Candidates standing as independents or as independent socialists polled quite well during the 1941 state elections,<sup>14</sup> Paterson receiving 47.34% of the vote in a two-candidate contest for the seat of Bowen. Despite his conviction under the National Security Act, which resulted from a speech given at a Townsville City Council meeting in 1941,<sup>15</sup> he was a popular alderman. At the Local Authority elections of 1943, campaigning on a joint ticket with the Hermit Park Labor Party led by Tom Aikens, Paterson was returned for a second term.

Two other communists, Fred Matzkows and Roly Hills, served on this council during its period in office. In Collinsville also two communists were successful at these

elections. The party vote again increased at the 1944 state elections, at which Paterson became Australia's first communist MLA.

When his victory was announced Paterson resigned from the Townsville Council so as to give his full attention to his new electorate. The mayor, Alderman Gill, headed a committee which raised funds to build a "Paterson Playground" (now the John Herbert Memorial National Fitness Centre) in his honour. After a Civic Farewell held at the Town Hall Paterson ended his Townsville career with a final meeting at the Tree of Knowledge where he had been one of the most regular speakers over the preceding years. A very large audience heard Aikens give an emotional speech under the Australian and Soviet flags which were flying side by side next to the Townsville Post Office. As he travelled to Brisbane to take up his seat, Paterson was given civic receptions in Ipswich and Toowoomba.<sup>16</sup>

Membership increased rapidly during and after proscription and was greater in 1943 than at any other period in the history of the Communist Party of Australia. The success of the recruiting drive which was conducted during 1942, while the party was a banned organisation, can be attributed to two factors: firstly to the enrolment of "fellow travellers" who found themselves cut off from party information and activities due to proscription, and secondly to a reaction to the ban itself. During the popular front period the CPA had come to be regarded by some North Queenslanders as their party. It had espoused local causes when other political groups ignored or rejected them; had fought against Weil's Disease in the face of the ALP as represented by the AWU; had supported friends and relatives in Spain while both government and opposition parties advocated "non-intervention"; had assisted in the harassment of fascist consuls apparently backed by the Australian government; and later had fought for the release of husbands and neighbours interned by the government. Many community gains were perceived to have resulted wholly or in part from communist campaigns: in Townsville alone these included the provision of the women's retiring rooms in Flinders Street, a public swimming pool, a free library, shelters at bus stops, a system of Council operated retailing of electrical equipment, and, during the war, a municipal ice works and a fruit market. It was understandable then that proscription should be viewed with indignation by many members of the community.

This indignation was reinforced by the absence of any perception of the Communist Party as a threat to the established northern lifestyle. Public expressions of radicalism comprised an entertainment rather than a threat, as one Railway Estate publican tacitly acknowledged when he regularly "set up" drinks for a local party member whose political arguments attracted custom.<sup>17</sup> One would have needed to be suspicious to the point of paranoia to perceive that a sinister foreign plot was being hatched by

the compulsive organisers of street stalls, dances and bazaars who contributed so substantially to the relief of distress in the community. They were, to use the terminology of the popular front, “the useful people”.

Popular acceptance was, in part, due to the northern district’s successful application of the policy instituted by the Seventh Comintern Congress, which advocated the use of local issues to unite the working class against fascism.<sup>18</sup> In the process of this application, however, the North Queensland branch of the Party had itself undergone subtle changes. These should not be overestimated, as the policy switch of September 1939 demonstrated that loyalty to Russia and to internationalism was strong, and that the district membership included some intelligent and informed theoreticians. Nevertheless, for many communists, day-to-day party activities contained a strong element of social and political reformism. As the centre of party support moved down the North Queensland coast the CPA acquired what can, only be described as a degree of “naturalisation”.

In retrospect it is likely that the temporary alliances which produced the “Red North” resulted in more substantial long term gains for the community than for the party. As Jack Henry frequently reminded his colleagues: “It was not lost; no — nothing is ever lost.”<sup>19</sup> ■



May Day, Tully, 1937.

**APPENDIX A**

**Percentage of the Formal Vote Polled  
by Communist Candidates in North  
Queensland at State Elections Held  
Between 1935-1944**

**BOWEN**

	<b>1935</b>	<b>1936</b>	<b>1938</b>	<b>1941</b>	<b>1944</b>
Andromache	30	38.89	15.38	-	-
Banana Pocket	14.29	17.72	19.18	48.27	57.53
Bells Gully	5.18	5.22	18.67	-	-
Bootoooloo	1.23	14.63	17.11	64.91	45.16
Bowen A to Y	10.52	12.03	23.38	41.1	39.68
Bowen Hospital	-	-	-	25	20.4
Brisbane	9.76	7.69	23.08	38.46	33.68
Cannon Valley	2.11	22.53	33.33	-	-
Cannon Valley Beach	-	-	48.33	67.21	64.4
Collingvale	7.55	2.17	16.67	33.33	42.42
Collinsville	31.58	45.61	48.24	41.8	47.53
Collinsville Hospital	26	20.83	46.15	36.36	51.61
Conway	10.34	8.33	16.36	68.29	33.33
Crystal Brook	32.65	17.24	17.95	-	-
Dittmer	-	-	-	67.32	57.14
Euri Creek	-	10.82	33.33	39.28	80
Foxdale	22.64	23.33	36.36	41.37	35.71
Gumlu	5.55	16.13	36	53.73	31.88
Guthalungra	7.69	5.88	43.1	63.63	42
Home Hill	20.33	28.5	34.18	54.66	59.42



Home Hill Hospital	-	-	-	28	55.55
Inkerman	9.09	16.46	34.41	50	31.5
Inverroona	-	-	-	54.45	25.92
Iyah	16.88	29.49	42.35	68.96	57.89
Jaraga	3.03	15.63	16.67	-	-
Kelsey Creek	20.94	32.8	33.01	75.24	52.94
Kelsey Creek (Duffer Mine)	-	-	31.82	-	-
Kennedy Hospital	4.65	9.52	17.31	-	-
Longford Creek	2.7	6.67	26.32	-	-
Merinda	10.11	14.67	30.96	44.16	33.8
Middle Camp	0	-	-	-	-
Mookara	0	13.79	16	-	-
Mount Coolon	14.29	19.05	28.37	22.22	22
Mount Hector	11.54	-	-	-	-
Mount Marlow	-	24.49	34.48	69.38	77.77
Osborne	5.22	5.22	17.91	69.44	44.82
Preston	8.33	22	19.61	21.05	42.42
Proserpine	13.74	34.23	33.22	50.04	48.03
Proserpine Hospital	-	-	-	56.45	65.62
Queens Beach	-	-	-	54.12	35.59
Scottville	68.79	81.1	74.7	75.37	75.53
Strathdickie	2.04	6.67	28.81	50	34.14
Windermere	-	10.98	25.26	58.09	53.57
Bowen Z	3.25	6.61	20.69	27.87	36.44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.63</b>	<b>24.25</b>	<b>29.33</b>	<b>47.34</b>	<b>44.41</b>
Number of candidates	3	5	4	2	3

## CAIRNS

	1935	1938	1941	1942	1944
Brisbane	-	-	5.4	-	-
Bungalow	-	-	12.7	-	-
Cairns Central School	5.29	-	10.13	-	-
Cairns Hospital	2.46	-	4.41	-	-
Cairns Showground	-	-	6.95	-	-
Edgehill	5.87	-	9.13	-	-
Edgehill West	-	-	7.61	-	-
Edmonton	7.91	-	8.09	-	-

Parramatta School	4.71		9.61		
Woree	11.7		13.88		
Wright's Creek	7.140)				
Yarrabah	14.29)		8.33		
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.63</b>		<b>9.24</b>		
Number of candidates	3	3	3	4	2
	(Independ.)		(Independ.)		

## TOWNSVILLE

	1935	1938	1939	1941	1944
Brisbane		1.22	9.67		
Cameron Park		7.87	17.39		
North Ward Central		4.52	13.96		
Railway Estate		7.28	17.40		
South Townsville		5.5	17.79		
Townsville		7.55	19.47		
Townsville Hospital		8.47	16.66		
West Townsville School		3.47	6.87		
<b>Total</b>		<b>6.26</b>	<b>16.98</b>		
Number of candidates	2	4	4	1	3

## HERBERT

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Bingil Bay Turnoff	0	-	-	-
Boogan	11.69	6.25	12.82	36.76
Brisbane	15.19	19.49	12.12	22.64
Cairns	-	-	13.92	48.19
Cardwell	24.75	22.8	15.13	43.37
Carruchan	-	10.13	10.52	54.09
Coorumba	-	11.32	10.41	43.24
Cowley	24.71	20.93	18.75	30
Daradgee	5.68	6.45	7.5	27.69
East Innisfail	10.78	13.64	15.84	44.36
East Palmerston	-	-	5.66	45
El Arish	14.7	28.75	28.29	48.48
Eubenangee	2.78	6.25	17.24	32.14
Euramo	15.38	6.73	18.34	38.09

Feluga	16.47	10.83	16	43.39
Fishers Creek	7.69	-	-	-
Floriana	-	10.81	11.36	73.07
Flying Fish Point	-	29.41	14.49	13.63
Garradunga	10.26	7.59	7.14	50.87
Goondi	9.3	6.41	6.55	37.31
Goondi Hill	12.08	13.31	25.32	53.67
Granadilla	-	-	12.5	28.57
Innisfail A to Y	17.81	19.66	21.52	43.06
Innisfail Hospital	1.02	5.56	14.28	34.42
Japoon	16.67	17.07	12.14	56.73
Kennedy Railway Station	-	-)		62.5
Kirrama Road	-	5.93)	6.79	37.5
Lever Estate	-	-	4.16	38.46
Lower Cowley	-	0	0	29.78
Lower Tully	28.46	18.56	11.38	25.33
Macknade	6.23	4.66	4.32	30.87
Mena Creek	14.86	25.56	4.19	45.31
Midgeenoo	16.67	17.02	19.35	30.3
Moresby	3.48	11.18	5.23	43.41
Mourilyan	14.87	15.44	17.2	49.82
Mundoo	28.13	15.28	16.12	58.57
Murray River Upper	-	2.94	18.42	80
Nerada	8.69	-	-	-
North-east Harbour Line	-	-	2.77	26.66
Silkwood	23.14	21.03	20	42.42
Silkwood East	-	-	29.06	61.38
Silkwood Railway Station	38.29	28.3	-	-
South Johnstone	-	-	21.38	42.94
South Johnstone Mill	19	20.32	-	-
South Johnstone School	17.56	21.74	11.36	26.66
Tully	22.73	16.55	22.38	45.42
Tully Hospital	-	-	15	43.05
Utchee Creek	-	13.51)		
West Palmerston	-)	5.88)	3.7)	47.22
Woopan Creek	-)		9.61)	
Innisfail Z	17.83	16.59	17.32	52.77

<b>Total</b>	<b>17.33</b>	<b>17.02</b>	<b>17.54</b>	<b>42.95</b>
Number of candidates	3	4	3	2

## MUNDINGBURRA

	<b>1935</b>	<b>1938</b>	<b>1941</b>	<b>1944</b>
Airdmillan	13.33	5.83	21.68	
Airville	5.8	9.29	22.31	
Anabranch	15.56	21.95	16.66	
Antil Plains	-	-	-	
Ayr	9.22	12.8	20.56	
Ayr District Hospital	-	-	8.33	
Brandon	5.33	5.7	21.35	
Brisbane	3.57	8.69	17.74	
Cluden	-	-	-	
Cromarty	4	0	8.33	
Giru	9.54	17.76	25.19	
Hermit Park	6.69	4.66	12.47	
Hodel	2.7	5.26	23.8	
Jalaga (Ayr line)	-	-	-	
Jarvisfield	14.74	22.17	40.83	
Kalamia Mill	13.48	12.75	16.5	
Macdesne	7.31	8.04	26.92	
Maidavale State School	-	-	27.14	
Mundingburra 1)	)	)	)	
Mundingburra 2)	9.74)	8.6)	12.29)	
Oolbun	25.53	6.84	28.12	
Ooononba 1)	)	)	)	
Ooononba 2)	14.05)	8.69)	16.72)	
Pioneer Mill	4.35	8.85	11.47	
Rita Island	6.45	3.8	22.58	
Roseneath	-	-	-	
Ross River Meatworks	-	-	-	
Shirbourne	20)		41.66	
Stewarts Creek	2.38)	24.53	9	
Stuart Road	-	-	-	
Townsville 1)	)	)		
Townsville 2)	3.85)	6.78)	12.84	

Townsville Showground	-	-	12.5	
West Townsville	3.36	3.88	8.09	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8.01</b>	<b>9.02</b>	<b>16.26</b>	
Number of candidates	3	4	3	5

## THE TABLELAND

	1935	1938	1941	1944
Almaden	9.09	7.14	4.54	24.32
Aloomba	2.03	3.11	3.75	31.65
Atherton	-	-	-	10.71
Atherton East	3.28	14.54	5.26	-
Babinda	9.91	17.2	10.46	26.72
Babinda Hospital	3.33	6.45	4.54	11.76
Barrine	0	9.3	2.94	5.12
Bartle Frere	6.56	8.26	2.5	25.97
Beachview	-	-	-	3.12
Beatrice River	15.84	14.04	17.14	30.95
Bellenden Ker	-	-	5.74	31.18
Brisbane	4.54	4.55	3.19	4.76
Butcher Creek	10.34	11.59	6.94	26.86
Cairns	-	-	11.11	32.28
Chillagoe	9.97	10	7.8	39.6
Chilverton	6.56	20	6.89	11.62
Dimbulah	8.8	13.95	6.98	35.25
Evelyn Scrub	0	4.17	16.66	0
Fossilbrook	3	0	0	-
Geraldton Road	0	0	2.12	13.51
Glen Allyn	-	-	2.22	6.66
Gol Gol South	0	0	-	-
Gordonvale	8.03	11.69	9.91	27.86
Harvey's Creek	2.74	23.23	-	-
Herberton A to Y	7.53	12.95	10.26	17.4
Herberton Hospital	0	1.75	2.98	8.69
Innisfail Road	-	6.79	16.66	14.28
Innot Hot Springs	27.69	24.39	31.94	42.62
Irvinebank	10.9	17.2	5.1	26.66
Jaggan	0	3.51	0	2.5

Kaban	0	-	-	-
Kirrama	-	-	-	26.58
Kjellberg's	-	6.82	1.38	-
Koorboora	0	-	-	-
Kulara	2.32	16.85	8.64	26.58
Kureen	5.26	2.7	4.54	0
Lake Barrine	-	-	-	9.09
Little Mulgrave	8.06	3.08	3.27	32.14
Lower Tate	17.54	-	-	-
Maalen Area	9.09	-	-	-
Malanda	3.85	4.74	5.72	10.47
McDonnell's Creek	3.51	20.72	24.56	57.44
Meerawa	2.78	5.56	15.06	35.18
Middlebrook Road	-	-	-	42.3
Middlebrook State School	-	23.26	3.7	-
Millaa Millaa	9.2	14.47	8.71	23.84
Minbun	4.29	1.69	0	10.81
Mirriwinni	9.96	10.39	8.16	36.69
Mount Garnet	0.64	15.42	7.82	35.83
Mungana	20.69	8.33	0	-
Nigger Creek	12.86	22.86	28.2	-
North Johnstone	7.14	3.85	3.03	12.24
Peeramon	2.08	6.9	5.17	11.62
Ravenshoe	4.89	7.42	10.17	20.32
Stannary Hills	6.06	-	-	-
Tarzali	0	6.42	0	13.33
Topaz	-	74	38.63	80.64
Tumoulin	1.23	6.35	5.26	11.32
1935	1938	1941	1944	
Watsonville	0	10.91	10.25	11.76
Wondecla	-	-	-	19.17
Wooley's Road	-	-	-	4.76
Yungaburra	5.98	1.24	3.66	15.9
Herberton Z	8.51	10.64	12.24	30.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>7.32</b>	<b>11.59</b>	<b>8.99</b>	<b>23.27</b>
Number of candidates	3	3	3	4

**APPENDIX B**  
**Constitution & Rules of the CPA**  
**1935 & 1938**

**Constitution and Rules of the Communist Party of Australia  
(Section of the Communist International). Adopted by the  
11th Congress of the Communist Party of Australia (1935)**

The Communist Party of Australia, being a section of the Communist International, is the organised vanguard of the proletariat of Australia, the highest form of its class organisation.

The Party fights for the leadership of the proletariat, the toiling farmers and all the toiling masses in the struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, for the victory of Socialism.

**I. Party Members and Their Duties**

- (1) Any person accepting the Program and Statutes of the Communist International, and of the Communist Party of Australia, who is attached to a basic Party organisation, who is actively working in it, and who submits to all the decisions of the Communist International and the party, and who regularly pays Party dues, is accounted a member of the CP of A.
- (2) New members are accepted through the basic Party organisation; and their acceptance must be ratified by the Section Committee.
- (3) In cases of entrance of groups from other political organisations into the Communist Party, the Central Committee must decide whether or not to accept them into the Party. (Note: In cases of transfer of leading persons from other political parties, their acceptance by the district leadership or section leadership must be endorsed by the Central Committee.)
- (4) No member may issue any publication without the authority of the appropriate Party Committee.

- (5) (a) Members may transfer from one district organisation of the Party to another only upon permission from their Section and District Committees.
- (b) The district granting the transfer shall notify the district to which members transfer through the regular Party channels.
- (c) Members leaving the country must first obtain the permission of the Central Committee. No subordinate committee can issue a clearance or transfer.

## II. Organisational Structure of the Party

- (6) The guiding principle of the organisational structure of the Party is democratic centralism, which signifies:
  - (a) The application of the elective principle to all leading organs of the Party, from the highest to the lowest.
  - (b) The periodic accountability of the Party organs to their respective Party organisations.
  - (c) Strict party discipline and subordination of the minority to the majority.
  - (d) The absolutely binding character of the decisions of the higher organs upon the lower organs and upon all Party members.
- (7) All Party organisations are autonomous in deciding local questions in so far as these decisions do not conflict with any decisions of the Party.
- (8) The highest leading body of each organisation is the general meeting, conference or congress.
- (9) The general meeting, conference or congress elects a committee which acts as its executive organ and guides all the current work of the respective organisations. Under conditions of illegality it is admissible for leading Party organs to set up subordinate ones or to co-opt on the endorsement of the higher Party organs.
- (10) The scheme of Party structure is as follows:
  - (a) For individual factories, workshops, mines, offices, stores, estates, streets, etc. — Unit; Unit committee.
  - (b) For the Section: — Section Conference; Section Committee.
  - (c) For the District: — District Conference; District Committee.
  - (d) For the Commonwealth — The Party Congress; the Central Committee.

## III. The Party Unit

- (11) The basis of Party organisation is the unit in factories, mines, workshops, offices, stores, agricultural enterprises, etc. The Party members working in these places with any members that may be attached by the Section Committee or District Committee shall constitute the unit.



- (12) The unit is the organisation which links the masses with the Party. The tasks of the units include the conduct of Party work among the non-Party masses by means of systematic agitation and propaganda, to recruit new members, to distribute Party literature, to issue a factory newspaper, to conduct cultural work and activity for the enlightenment of the Party members and the Party workers, to strive tenaciously and constantly for all union and factory committee positions in the enterprise, to participate in all economic conflicts and demands of the employees, to interpret them from the standpoint of the revolutionary class struggle, to win the leadership of all the struggles of the employees by obstinate and unwearied unit work.
- (13) The unit elects a committee or organising secretary to lead its current work between full meetings.

#### **IV. The Section Organisation**

- (14) The highest Party authority in a section is the Section Conference, which elects the Section Committee. The rules for representation at the Section Conference are determined by the District Committee..
- (15) The Section Committee carries out the decisions of the higher authorities and conducts all the Party work in the Section. It calls a Section Conference, as a rule, half yearly. The Section Committee elects the Section Secretary in agreement with the District Committee.

#### **V. The District Organisation**

- (16) The highest authority in a district is the District Conference. The regular District Conference meets at least once every year. Extraordinary District Conferences may be called by the District Committee at the request of half the Party organisations in the District, or by the Central Committee. The District Conference hears the reports of the District Committee and elects the District Committee.
- (17) The District Committee is elected at the District Conference, and is the highest Party authority in the interim between two District Conferences. The District Committee itself decides how often the plenary meetings are to be held. These must be convened, however, at least once a month, or at less frequent intervals if agreed to by the Central Committee. The District Committee elects a bureau for conducting current work. The District Committee also elects the District Secretary, whose membership should not be less than one year. Exceptions may be made only with the endorsement of the Central Committee. The District

Committee is obliged to consider the candidateness of the secretary together with the Central Committee before the election of such.

- (18) The District Committee carries out the decisions of the Central Committee and is entrusted with organising special organs for various work (organisation, agitation and propaganda, trade union, small farmers, women, etc.). As a rule members of the District Committee are placed at the head of these bodies, who arrange their work under the guidance of the District Committee. The District Committee appoints the editors of the District Party paper in agreement with the Central Committee. The District Committee conducts all the Party work within the limits of the district in question. The District Committee is responsible for its work to the District Conference and the Central Committee to which it is obliged to tender a written report of its activities every month.

## **VI. State Conference**

- (19) Where necessary, the Central Committee and the district organisations within a State may arrange a State Conference with representatives from the District Committees concerned and the Central Committee.

## **VII. The Party Conference**

- (20) The Party Conference meets twice a year as a rule. The rules for representation and composition of the Party Conference are determined by the Central Committee. The representatives of the Districts are elected by the District Committees. The Central Committee may co-opt individual Party workers to the discussion of the Party Conference in an advisory capacity without voting rights.
- (21) The decisions of the Party Conference come into force after endorsement by the Central Committee.
- (22) The Party Conference elects the delegates to the World Congress of the Comintern in case it meets immediately before the World Congress.

## **VIII. Party Congress**

- (23) The Party Congress is the highest authority of the Party and is called not less than once every three years by the Central Committee in agreement with the Executive Committee of the Communist International. Extraordinary Party Congresses are called by the Central Committee, or should a number of districts which represented half the previous Party Congress demand the convening of a Party Congress, and to which demand the ECCI gives endorsement.

- (24) The rules for representation at the Party Congress are determined either by the Central Committee or by the Party Conference meeting before the Party Congress.
- (25) The Party Congress is composed of delegates elected at the District Conferences. In the case of illegality an exception, if agreed to by the ECCI can be made, and the delegates sent by the District Committees instead of being elected. The Party Congress can also be replaced by a Party Conference in agreement with the ECCI.
- (26) The duties of Party Congress consist of:
  - (a) Hearing reports of the Central Committee.
  - (b) Deciding the questions of the Party Program.
  - (c) Determining the tactical line of the Party on the principal questions of current policy.
  - (d) Electing the Central Committee.

## IX. Central Committee

- (27) The Central Committee is the highest authority of the Party between Party Congresses. It represents the Party as a whole over other Party Institutions, organises the various organs of the Party, appoints the editorial boards of its central press organs, who work under its leadership and control, organises and guides all undertakings of importance for the entire Party, distributes all the Party forces, controls the central treasury, and conducts the work of fractions within bodies of a central nature.
- (28) The number of members of the Central Committee is determined by the Party Congress.
- (29) The Central Committee elects from its midst a Political Bureau for conducting the political work, and a Secretariat, including a General Secretary, for conducting the permanent current work. The Central Committee also appoints the leaders of the various organs, at the head of which members of the Central Committee must be appointed whenever possible.
- (30) Plenary sessions of the Central Committee shall be held quarterly.
- (31) A member must have at least four years Party membership before being eligible for election to the Central Committee.
- (32) The Central Committee organises bodies for definite branches of its work, as well as for organisation, industrial, agrarian, women, etc., whose task it is to conduct the work under the complete control of the Central Committee in their respective spheres, along the general policies laid down by the Central Committee.

These bodies are to carry out the decisions through the Central Committee.

- (33) The Central Committee divides the country into districts and alters their boundaries in case of necessity. The Central Committee has the right to combine and divide existing organisations either according to territory or otherwise in conformity with their political and economic characteristics, or in accordance with the administrative division of the country.

## **X. Internal Party Democracy and Party Discipline**

- (34) The free and positive discussion of questions of Party policy in individual organisations or in the Party as a whole is the inalienable right of every Party member, derived from internal Party democracy. Only on the basis of internal Party democracy is it possible to develop Bolshevik self-criticism and to strengthen Party discipline, which must be conscious and not mechanical.

But extensive discussion, especially discussion on a national scale, of questions of Party policy, must be so organised that it cannot lead to attempts by an insignificant minority to impose its will upon the vast majority of the Party or to attempt to form factional groupings which break the unity of the Party.

Therefore, a wide discussion of a national scale can be regarded as necessary only if:

- (a) This necessity is recognised by several district organisations;
- (b) If there is not a sufficiently solid majority on the Central Committee itself on very important questions of Party policy;
- (c) If in spite of the existence of a solid majority on the Central Committee which advocates a definite standpoint, the Central Committee still deems it necessary to test the correctness of a policy by means of a discussion in the Party.

Only compliance with the conditions can safeguard the Party against an abuse of internal Party democracy by anti-Party elements. Only under these conditions can internal Party democracy be expected to be of profit to the cause and not to be used to the detriment of the Party and the working class.

- (35) The maintenance of Party unity, the relentless struggle against the slightest attempt at a factional fight or a split and the strictest Party discipline are the foremost duties of all Party members and of all Party organisations. For the purpose of bringing about strict discipline within the Party and of attaining the greatest possible unity with the elimination of all factionalism, the Central Committee has the right, in the case of a violation of discipline or engaging in factionalism, to inflict any Party penalty, including expulsion from the Party.

The convocation of the plenum of the Central Committee, to which all alternate members of the Central Committee are invited, must be a condition precedent

for the application of the extreme measure of expulsion in the case of a member of the Central Committee. If such a meeting of the most responsible leaders of the Party by a two-thirds vote recognises the necessity of demoting a member of the Central Committee or of expelling him from the Party, such measure must be carried out immediately.

- (36) The decisions of the Party must be executed rapidly and precisely. Failure to carry out any decision of a superior organisation, or any other offence regarded as criminal by the public opinion of the Party, entails: For organisations — Censure and a general re-registration (dissolution of the organisation): For individual Party members — Censure in one form or another (admonition, reprimand, etc.), public censure, temporary removal from responsible Party work, expulsion from the Party.
- (37) Party members refusing to give truthful answers to questions put by the Central Committee or any commission appointed by the CC are liable to immediate expulsion from the Party.
- (38) Any member, nucleus, district organisation, or committee expelled from the Party shall have the right of appeal to the next higher organ of the Party and ultimately to the Party Congress.

## **XI. Party Finance**

- (39) Finance of the Party organisations shall be obtained from Party dues, special collections, Party undertakings, etc.
- (40) The amount of Party dues and its allocation to the various treasuries shall be determined by the decision of the Party Congress or by the CC.
- (41) Membership of the Party is to be regarded as lapsed of those who without sufficient reason fail to pay their dues in the course of three months. This should be announced at the meeting of the Party members in question.

## **XII. Fractions**

- (42) In all non-Party workers' and poor farmers' organisations and branches (trade unions, co-operatives, cultural societies, educational societies, sport and other clubs, war participants, factory committees, unemployed, at conferences and congresses, local administrative bodies, parliaments etc.), where there are at least two Communists, Communist fractions must be organised for the purpose of increasing the influence of the Party and applying its policy in the non-Party sphere.
- (43) The fractions are organs of Party within non-Party organisations. They are not

independent, fully authorised organisations, but are subordinate to the competent Party committees. In questions of internal life and also current work, the fractions are autonomous. In case of differences arising between a Party committee and a fraction, the Party committee must investigate the question anew, and, together with the representatives of the fraction, come to a decision which must be carried out unconditionally by the fraction. In case the decision is appealed against by the fraction, question is finally settled by the higher Party authority. But in spite of the appeal, the fraction must carry out the decision of the Party committee, pending final action by a higher authority.

- (44) If questions are discussed by the Party committee which concern a fraction, the representative of the fraction concerned attends the meeting in an advisory capacity.
- (45) The Communist fractions elect their own leaders, who require the endorsement of the competent Party committee. The fraction leaders are responsible for the activity of the fractions to the competent Party committee. The Party committee in question has the right to send members into the fraction leadership or recall any member from that body after the reason for such measure has been explained to the fraction.
- (46) Candidates for all the important posts in the organisation in which the fractions are working are put forward by the fraction in agreement with the Party committee in question. In the same way, individual comrades can be transferred from one fraction to another.
- (47) Every question up for discussion in the body in which the fraction is working must be discussed beforehand in the general meeting of the fraction or by its committee. On every question on which a decision is reached in the fraction, the fraction members must act and vote solidly. All those who break this rule are subject to disciplinary measures by the Party authorities.

### **XIII. Relations with the Communist Youth**

- (48) Between all executives of the Party organisation and the Communist youth, mutual representation is established. Further, the Communist youth receives the right to representation at all Party conferences and congresses in accordance with its strength. ■

## **Constitution and By-Laws of the Communist Party of Australia. Adopted by the 12th National Congress, Communist Party of Australia, held in Sydney, NSW, November 18-19-20, 1938**

### **Preamble**

The Communist Party of Australia is a working-class political party carrying forward today the best traditions of Australian democracy, the struggle against convictism, for self-government, at Eureka, the fight for social reforms, against military conscription and for peace. Upholding the achievements of democracy and standing for the right of the majority to direct the destinies of our country, the Communist Party fights with all its strength to unite the masses to resist any and every effort, whether it comes from abroad or within, to impose upon the Australian people the arbitrary will of any selfish minority group, or party or clique. It is devoted to the defence of the immediate interests of the workers, farmers, and middle class against capitalist exploitation. The Communist Party works tirelessly in the cause of world peace and for the defence of Australia against fascist invasion. It works for the preparation of the working class for its historic mission to unite and lead the Australian people to extend these democratic principles to their necessary and logical conclusion: by establishing common ownership of the national economy through a government of the toiling people; the abolition of class divisions in society by the ending of exploitation of man by man and nation by nation: i.e., by the establishment of Socialism, according to the scientific principles given us by the great teachers of mankind, Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, expressed in the policy of the Communist International.

The Communist Party works toward the free co-operation of the Australian people with those of other lands - striving toward a world without oppression and war a world brotherhood of man.

To this end the Communist Party of Australia lays down its basic rules in the following Constitution:

### **RULE 1. Name.**

The name of the organisation shall be the Communist Party of Australia.

## **RULE 2. Emblem.**

The emblem of the Party shall be crossed hammer and sickle, representing the unity of the worker and farmer.

## **RULE 3. Membership.**

*Clause A:* Any person, regardless of race, sex, colour, religion or nationality, residing within Australia and who is loyal to the working-class movement, shall be eligible for membership.

*Clause B:* A Party member is one who accepts the Party program, attends the regular meetings of the Party branch of which he or she is a member, who pays dues regularly and engages in some form of Party activity.

*Clause C:* An applicant for membership shall sign an application form and shall be nominated by a member of the Communist Party, each application shall be dealt with without undue delay by the basic organisation of the Party (workshop or local branch) to which it is presented. The applicant shall be enrolled in the Party at the following branch meeting at which he should be in attendance. A majority vote of the membership of the branch present at a regular meeting shall admit an applicant to membership. Within two weeks after admission, the new member must be supplied with a dues card and obtain a copy of the Party Constitution.

*Clause D:* Party members two months in arrears in payment of dues cease to be members of the Party in good standing and must be informed thereof.

*Clause E:* Members who are four months in arrears shall have their names removed from the Party rolls. Every member three months in arrears shall be officially informed of this provision, and a personal effort shall be made to bring such member into good standing. However, if a member who for these reasons has had his or her name removed from the rolls applies for readmission within six months, he or she may, on the approval of the next higher Party committee, be permitted to pay up arrears of dues and be granted continuity of membership.

## **RULE 4. Initiation, Dues and Levies.**

*Clause A:* The initiation fee and dues payments shall be as follows: Those in receipt of an income of over £2/10/- per week, initiation fee 2/-, dues 6d. per week.

All other, initiation fee 6d., dues 3d. per week.

*Clause B:* All members shall pay an international levy of 6d. per quarter.

*Clause C:* No levy shall be struck by any Party organisation except by special permission of the Central Committee: Special levies may be struck by the Central Committee or National Congress.



## **RULE 5. Rights and Duties of Members.**

- Clause A:* The Communist Party of Australia, upholding the democratic achievements and traditions of the Australian people, operates the broadest democracy within the Party. It is the fundamental right and duty of the Party membership to fully participate in determining the policies of the Party and in the election of its leading committees as provided for in the Constitution. Such democracy goes hand in hand with a unified, firm discipline which requires that once a decision has been democratically arrived at by the majority it becomes binding on the whole membership and every member is duty bound to loyally carry it out.
- Clause B:* Party members disagreeing with any decision of a Party organisation or committee have the right to appeal against that decision to the next highest body, and may carry the appeal to the highest bodies of the Communist Party of Australia, the Central Committee and National Congress. Whilst the appeal is pending the decision must nevertheless be carried out by every member.
- Clause C:* In matters of a State or local character, the respective Party organisations have the right to exercise full initiative and to make decisions within the limits of the general policies and decisions of the Party.
- Clause D:* The decisions of the National Congress shall be final and every Party member and Party organisation shall be duty-bound to recognise the authority of the Congress decisions and the leadership elected by it.
- Clause E:* It shall be the duty of members to participate in Party activities, and through study of Party theory to equip themselves to explain the policy of the Party on all questions and the principles of socialism.
- Clause F:* All Party members who are eligible shall belong to their respective trades unions.
- Clause G:* All Party members in mass organisations (trade unions, farmers' organisations, cultural and fraternal bodies, etc.) shall co-operate to promote and strengthen the given organisation and shall abide by the democratic decision of those organisations.
- Clause H:* All officials and leading committees of the Party from the branch committee, up to the highest committees, are elected either directly by the membership or through their elected representatives. Every committee must report regularly on its activities to its Party organisation.
- Clause I:* Any Party official may be removed at any time from his position by a majority vote of the body which elected him, or the body to which he is responsible, providing in this latter case the approval of the next higher Party committee is obtained.

*Clause J:* Requests for the release of Party members from responsible posts may be granted only by the Party organisation which elected them, or, providing the next higher committee agrees, by the organisation to which they are responsible.

## **RULE 6. Structure of the Party.**

*Clause A:* The basic organisations of the Communist Party of Australia are the workshop and local branches. Branches that do not come within these categories can be established only with the agreement of the Central Committee.

The branch is the organisation which links the Party with the people. The tasks of the branch include the carrying out of National, State and local campaigns in the workshop or locality, the organisation of systematic mass agitation and propaganda, selling the Party press and literature, the raising of finance, the recruitment of new members, the organisation of social, cultural and educational work both within the Party and amongst the people generally.

*Clause B:* The District organisation comprises all Party branches in a given locality as determined by the State committees.

The highest body in the district is the District Conference which meets at least annually. It elects the District Committee and, when necessary, delegates to the State Conference.

The basis of representation to the District Conference is decided upon by the District Committee in consultation with the State Committee.

The District Committee, which is the highest authority in the district between conferences, organises the application of the decisions of the higher Party committees, takes up economic and political questions arising in the district and gives leadership and assistance to the Party organisations within the district.

*Clause C:* The state organisation comprises all Party organisations within a given state.

The highest body in the State is the State Conference which meets annually with the exception of Queensland and Western Australia which shall meet at least every two years. It shall elect the State Committee. The State Conference consists of delegates elected by District Conferences, and branches not attached to a district, according to membership, and of members of the outgoing State Committee. The basis of representation to the State Conference is determined by the State Committee with the Central Committee.

The State Committee, which is the highest authority in the State between conferences, shall meet at regular intervals as decided by the State Committee in consultation with the Central Committee. The State Committee shall elect an executive to carry out the work of the Committee between meetings.

The State Committee is responsible for the conduct of all Party work in the State between conferences and shall maintain the closest possible connections with the Central Committee.

## **RULE 7. National Authority.**

*Clause A:* The supreme authority in the Communist Party of Australia is the National Congress, which shall be held at least every three years. Special National Congresses shall be called by a majority vote of the Central Committee or by a request from Party organisations representing 50% of the entire Party membership.

*Clause B:* The National Congress shall be composed of delegates elected by State Conferences according to numerical strength and members of the outgoing Central Committee. The basis of representation shall be determined by the Central Committee.

*Clause C:* For at least two months prior to the Congress, discussion shall take place in all Party organisations on the main resolutions and problems coming before the Congress. During this discussion all Party organisations have the right to propose resolutions or amend-ments to the draft resolutions of the Central Committee for consideration at the Congress. Proposals may also be submitted for alter-ations to the Party Constitution.

*Clause D:* The National Congress reviews the work of the Party and the outgoing Central Committee since the preceding Congress. It determines the direction of the policy to be pursued by the Party in the ensuing period and considers all major tactical organisational questions and proposed amendments to the Party Constitution. It elects the Central Committee and Central Control Commission. The Central Committee shall consist of full members and of alternates having at least five years' active membership. The number of members and alternates to be elected to the Central Committee and the method of election shall be determined by the Congress. When attending Central Committee meetings as substitutes for full members, alternate members will have the right to speak and vote on any question, otherwise such members will have the right to speak but not vote.

*Clause E:* The Central Committee, which shall hold full meetings at least quarterly, is the highest authority of the Party between National Congresses and is responsible for enforcing the Constitution and securing the execution of the general policies adopted by the democratically elected delegates at the National Congress. The Central Committee represents the Party as a whole. The Central Committee organises and supervises its various departments and committees, leads the political and organisational work of the Party; appoints the editors of its press, who work

under its leadership and control; organises and guides all undertakings of importance for the entire Party; distributes the Party forces and controls the Central Treasury. The Central Committee, by majority vote of its members, may call special State Conferences. An audited financial statement will be submitted to the first Central Committee meeting in each year and by the Central Committee to the National Congress.

*Clause F:* The Central Committee elects from its members a Central Executive and such committees or departments as may be necessary. The Central Executive is charged with the responsibility of carrying out the decisions and the work of the Central Committee between its full sessions. It is responsible to the Central Committee for all decisions. The size of the Central Executive shall be decided upon by a majority vote of the Central Committee.

*Clause G:* The Central Committee may, when it deems necessary, call national Party conferences. The Central Committee shall determine the basis of attendance at such conferences which shall be consultative bodies auxiliary to the Central Committee.

## **RULE 8. Central Control Commission.**

*Clause A:* For the purpose of maintaining and strengthening Party unity and discipline, and of supervising the audits of the financial books and records of the Central Committee and its enterprises, the National Congress elects a Central Control Commission consisting of exemplary Party members with at least five years Party standing. The size of the Central Control Commission will be determined by the National Congress.

*Clause B:* On various disciplinary cases such as those concerning violations of Party unity, discipline, honesty or ethics, or concerning lack of class vigilance or Communist firmness in facing the class enemy — the Central Control Commission shall be charged with making investigations and decisions, either on appeals against the decisions of lower Party bodies, or on cases which are referred to it by the Central Committee, or on cases which the Central Control Commission itself considers necessary to take up directly.

*Clause C:* The decisions of the Central Control Commission shall be endorsed by the Central Executive before being put into effect.

*Clause D:* Members of the Central Control Commission who are not members of the Central Committee shall have the right to participate in the sessions of the Central Committee with voice but no vote.

## **RULE 9. Disciplinary Procedure.**

*Clause A:* Breaches of Party discipline by individual members, financial irregularities, as well as any conduct or action detrimental to the Party's prestige and influence among the working masses and harmful to the best interests of the Party, may be punished by censure, public censure, removal from responsible posts, and by expulsion. Serious breaches of discipline by Party Committees may be punished by the removal of the Committee by the next higher Party committee which shall then organise new elections by the membership.

*Clause B:* Charges against individual members may be made by any person — Party or non-Party — in writing, to a branch of the Party or to any leading committee. The Party branch has the right to recommend the expulsion of a member to the District Committee but before a decision for expulsion can become operative it must meet with the approval of the State Committee. In the meantime, the branch may suspend such member from attendance at branch meetings.

*Clause C:* All parties concerned in breaches of discipline shall have the fullest right to appear, to bring witnesses and to testify before the Party organisation. Any member against whom disciplinary action has been taken has the right of appeal against the decision to the higher committees, up to the National Congress of the Party.

*Clause V:* Any members found to be strike-breakers, degenerates, habitual drunkards, betrayers of Party confidence, provocateurs, voluntary associates of Trotskyists, advocates of terrorism as a method of Party procedure, or members whose actions are detrimental to the Party and the working class shall be expelled from the Party and, if considered necessary, exposed before the general public.

## **RULE 10. Affiliation.**

The Communist Party of Australia is affiliated to the Communist International and participates in international congresses, together with the Communist Parties of other lands. Resolutions and decisions of international congresses shall be considered and acted upon by the supreme authority of the Communist Party of Australia, the National Congress, or between congresses, by the Central Committee.

## **RULE 11. Amending the Constitution.**

This constitution may be amended by decision of a majority of the voting delegates present at the National Congress provided the proposed amendment had been published in the central Party press or congress discussion material at least 14 days prior to the Congress.

## **RULE 12. Right to Make By-Laws.**

*Clause A:* By-laws shall be adopted, based on this Constitution, for the purpose of establishing uniform procedure for the proper functioning of the Party organisations.

By-laws may be adopted or changed by majority vote at the National Congress or between con-gresses by majority vote of the Central Committee.

*Clause B:* State by-laws, not in conflict with the National Con-stitution and by-laws, may be adopted or changed by majority vote of the State Conference or by the State Committee between Conferences.

## **BY-LAWS**

The following are the by-laws adopted by the Communist Party of Australia, in accordance with its Constitution, for the purpose of carrying out the principles, rights and duties as established in the Constitution in a uniform manner in all Party organisations.

### **BASIC ORGANISATIONS**

The basic organisations of the Communist Party of Australia are the workshop and local branches. A workshop branch consists of those Party members who are employed in the particular workshop. Workshop branches shall be organised in every factory, shop, mine, ship, dock, office, etc., where sufficient Party members are employed.

A local branch consists of members of the Party living in the same locality. Local branches shall be organised on the basis of one or more suburbs in the cities and in country towns, taking into account municipal and electorate boundaries.

In all branches having seven or more members a branch committee may be elected consisting of Secretary, Chairman, Treasurer and other such officers as the branch may decide. The branch committee has the task of preparing the agenda and proposals for the branch meeting, dealing with correspondence and preparing recommendations on that which it is necessary to place before the branch, attending to the administrative tasks, organising control over the execution of branch decisions, and between branch meetings, of making decisions on matters that require immediate attention. The branch committee shall report regularly on its work which shall be subject to review by the membership. Branch officers shall be elected in June of each year. All officers shall be elected by majority vote of membership at a specially designated meeting of which the branch membership shall be advised at least 14 days beforehand.

The Treasurer shall submit an audited financial statement to the branch at least quarterly.

The order of business at the branch meeting shall be based on the following

principles but can be amended to suit the requirements of each branch::

- (i) Confirmation of previous minutes.
- (ii) Admittance of new members.
- (iii) Correspondence.
- (iv) Reports.
- (v) General business.
- (vi) Educational discussion.

### **DISTRICT ORGANISATION**

A District consists of an unlimited number of branches in an area as decided upon by the State Committee.

The District Conference will determine the size of the District Committee which as a rule, should not exceed nine members. The District Committee will elect from amongst its members a Secretary, Chairman, Treasurer, Literature and Press Manager and such other officers as deemed necessary. It may select a Secretariat composed of a Secretary, Chairman and one other member which is responsible for carrying out the routine work of the District Committee and preparing the agenda for District Committee meetings. The District Committee shall receive a monthly audited financial statement, a copy of which must be forwarded to the State Committee. The full District Committee shall meet at least fortnightly.

### **STATE ORGANISATION**

The number of full members and alternates of the State Committee shall be determined by the State Conference. Except with special permission of the Central Committee members of the State Committee must have a minimum of two years Party membership.

For two months prior to the State Conference discussion shall take place in all party organisations within the State on the main resolutions and problems coming before the Conference. During this discussion, all Party organisations have the right to propose resolutions or amendments to the draft resolutions of the State Committee for consideration at the State Conference.

The State Committee shall elect from amongst its members a State Executive consisting of not more than seven members, including the Secretary, Chairman and Treasurer. The State Committee shall also elect such other office-bearers as deemed necessary, including the editors of the State press, establish responsibility for the supervision of various phases of activity and create such temporary or permanent subcommittees as may be deemed necessary for the efficient conduct of its activities.

Where a State Committee by a majority of its members and in agreement with the Central Committee, removes any member from the committee, or replaces any member who is unable to serve because of sickness or other assignment, the new full member of the State Committee shall be chosen from among the alternate members.

An Accounting Committee established by the State Committee shall audit the accounts of the State Treasurer at least once per month and shall also organise and supervise the system of auditing throughout the State.

Special State Conferences shall be called:

(a) By the State Committee following a written request from branches representing one-third of the membership of the State organisation.

(b) By a majority vote of the State Committee.

(c) By request of the Central Committee.

A decision for the holding of a special conference must have the endorsement of the Central Committee.

The State Committee shall have the power to issue an official organ, publish pamphlets and other literature with the approval of the Central Committee.

### **TRANSFERS AND LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Members who move from one workshop or locality to another and desire a transfer must receive it through their branch. Where a branch to which the transfer is granted is in the same district, it shall be finalised by the District Committee. Where it is in another district, a duplicate transfer shall be forwarded by the branch through the District Committee to the State Committee which shall arrange for the attachment of the member to his new branch. Where the transfer is to another State or abroad, it must be effected through the Central Committee.

No member transferring shall be accepted into a new branch without his transfer and the endorsement of the appropriate Committee. Before receiving transfers, members shall be fully financial and have finalised all other financial obligations to the branch.

No member has the right to take leave of absence without the permission of his branch. Leave of absence not exceeding one month may be granted by the branch. An extended leave of absence upon the recommendation of the branch, shall be acted upon by the next higher committee of the Party. Before leave of absence is granted the member shall arrange for payment of dues and settlement of other financial obligations.

### **RE-ADMITTANCE**

Expelled members applying for re-admittance must submit a written statement and



their applications may not be finally acted upon except with the approval of the Central Control Commission.

Former members whose membership has lapsed must submit a written statement on application for re-admission, to be finally acted upon by the State Committee.

Comrade! You have read our Constitution and Rules. You are clear as to our objectives; how the Communist Party is based on the broadest democracy; how the Party is organised; just what are the rights and responsibilities of membership, etc.

If you are not already a member of the Communist Party why not join right away? Apply for an application form and further particulars to the Communist Party organisation in your State, or to:—

Central Committee, Communist Party of Australia, Room 2, 193 Hay Street, Sydney, NSW. ■

DOODS  
IRIGIN

# NORTH QUEENSLAND GUARDIAN

DEFEND  
WORLD  
DEMOCRACY  
SUBSCRIBE TO THE  
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(Registered at the General Post Office, Brisbane, for transmission by Post as a Newspaper)
PRICE 3d.
FRIDAY, MAY 12, 1939

## VILLE BY-ELECTION

### Urban Meeting Popularity Grows

It is considered a great achievement at a time when the Communist Party is being attacked by the Government, that the Party has been able to hold a public meeting in Brisbane.

The meeting was held in the premises of the Communist Party, 100, Queen Street, Brisbane, on Monday evening, May 8th, and was attended by a large number of people. The meeting was held in the presence of the Communist Party members and was a great success.

The speaker was Comrade [Name], who spoke for an hour and a half. He spoke of the importance of the Communist Party in the present circumstances and of the need for the Party to be united and to work for the interests of the people.

The meeting was held in a hall which was decorated with the Communist Party flag and other decorations. The atmosphere was very lively and the speaker was well received.

The meeting was held in a hall which was decorated with the Communist Party flag and other decorations. The atmosphere was very lively and the speaker was well received.

## COMMUNIST BALL



BY THE FINEST ARRIVAL COMRADE JOE BALL, BEING BY ARRIVAL TO BENTLEY, APRIL 21, 1939

## INTEREST ON STATE LOANS

### £5,129,994 Exempt from Taxation

### 10 per cent Tax On This Would Pay For Restoration Of Unemployed Relief Scales

The State Government of the Commonwealth has announced that it has agreed to exempt from taxation the interest on the State Loans for the year 1939-40, to the amount of £5,129,994.

The interest on the State Loans for the year 1939-40 is estimated to be £5,129,994. The Government has agreed to exempt this amount from taxation.

The Government has agreed to exempt this amount from taxation. The interest on the State Loans for the year 1939-40 is estimated to be £5,129,994.

## CIVIL DEFENCE

### Demands Proper Measures To Protect Human Lives

The Communist Party has issued a call for civil defence measures to protect human lives in the event of a possible attack.

The Communist Party has issued a call for civil defence measures to protect human lives in the event of a possible attack.

## CASH NEEDED

### FOR TOWNVILLE CAMPAIGN

We appeal to all friends of the Communist Party to contribute to the Townville Campaign.

We appeal to all friends of the Communist Party to contribute to the Townville Campaign.

## ELECT PATERSON

### CONTINUE PROGRESSIVE MEASURES

### To the Stop-Sold Way

The Communist Party has issued a call for the election of Paterson to the House of Representatives.

The Communist Party has issued a call for the election of Paterson to the House of Representatives.

## OBITUARY

The Communist Party has issued a notice of the death of a comrade.

The Communist Party has issued a notice of the death of a comrade.

North Queensland Guardian, May 12, 1939.

## APPENDIX C

# Communist Party Policy Statement for the By-Election for the State Seat of Townsville, 1939

**Economic:** Forty hour week; £4/8/- basic wage plus marginal allowances; two weeks paid annual holiday; extension of public works to provide full employment; increased relief scales.

**Farmers:** No rates or loan interest repayment until income reaches £200 per year; readjustment of farm mortgages by revaluation of the land on a productivity basis.

**Political:** Repeal of all laws restricting liberties and democracies; parliament to have two sessions a year; electors to be given the right of recall; no MP to have any financial interest in any company which has business with the government.

**Education:** Free technical and university education; school leaving age to rise to sixteen, and a weekly allowance to be paid to parents of all school children; free dental and medical examinations twice a year in all schools.

**Housing:** Abolish slums and improvised houses; start a comprehensive scheme to provide cottages and flats at low rental for low income families to be financed from state development funds.

**Taxation:** No tax to be paid on incomes below £300 per year; more steeply graduated tax on big incomes; publication every year of names and incomes of those who earned more than £1000; hospital subsidies to be paid by the government; half the Main Roads tax to go to local authorities.

**Civil Defence:** Adequate to ensure safety. ■

APPENDIX D

# The Provisional Constitution of the Australian Association of Italian Democrats

**1. Name:** Australian Association of Italian Democrats.

**Objects**

- (a) To foster co-operation between Italian immigrants and the Australian people and their institutions.
- (b) To educate Italians in Australian democracy and social ideals.
- (c) To help victims of Italian fascism.
- (d) To develop the cultural and social life of Italians.

**2. Membership:** Open to all Italians who support the above.

**3. Finance:** Dues 10/- per year in advance. Women and youths under 18, 5/- per year. 50% to stay in the branch and the rest to go to the national committee.

**4. Local Organisations**

- (a) All members to be organised into local branches or clubs.
- (b) These to organise social and cultural activities.
- (c) Local branch to elect Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. The committee to consist of 5-9 members.
- (d) Audit every three months.

**5. National Conferences**

- (a) To meet annually, and to consist of representatives of the branches.
- (b) Two auditors for the National Conference.
- (c) The State Committee to consist of 5-7 members.
- (d) The National Committee to keep contact with the branches and to co-ordinate activities. ■

## APPENDIX E

# Rules & Constitution of the Women's Progress Club of Townsville 1938

### **Name**

1. That this club be called the Women's Progress Club of Townsville.  
The club shall be non-sectarian, non-party, and neither religion or politics shall be discussed at its meetings.

### **Objects**

2. (a) To promote the general welfare of all useful people, particularly women and children.  
(b) To stand for peace, freedom, progress and the advancement of women's rights.  
(c) To foster friendship between women of all nations.  
(d) To encourage all women to assist in the development of any movement that will ensure happier lives for women and children.  
(e) To bring closer unity between all progressive women's organisations.  
(f) To strive for equal pay for the sexes.  
(g) To improve education facilities generally.  
(h) To endeavour to have members of the club take an active part on Committees of Schools, Hospitals, Ambulances, Peace Councils, and Progressive Associations.  
(i) To demand better provision be made for public health, especially for women and children.  
(j) To co-operate with any organisation to maintain democracy.  
(k) To raise the cultural level, and discuss every day problems.

### **Membership**

3. Any woman over the age of 16 nominated by another member of the Women's Progress Club shall be eligible for membership. The membership fee shall be 2/

- per year.

## Funds

4. The funds of the club shall be used for the purposes of organisation, and meeting all expenses incurred by the Women's Progress Club.

## Officers

5. These shall consist of president, vice-president, hon. secretary and treasurer.

## Duties of Officers

6. *President:* the president shall preside at all meetings of the club and preserve order so that the business shall be conducted in form and with propriety, and upon the minutes being read and confirmed shall sign the book in the presence of the meeting.

*Vice-president:* the vice-president shall preside in the absence of the president.

*Secretary:* the secretary shall keep a record of all minutes of meetings of the club and conduct the correspondence. She shall prepare a report of the whole of the work done and the progress made during the previous year and read out same at the Annual Meeting. She shall make out all receipts and hand same over to the treasurer.

*Treasurer:*

(a) The treasurer shall keep a cash book and produce it at all meetings or when called upon to do so by the Executive Committee.

(b) All accounts exceeding 10/- to be paid by cheque.

(c) All cheques to be signed by two of the following officers, president, secretary, treasurer.

(d) All accounts to be passed for payment at the General Meeting.

(e) The books and accounts shall be balanced and audited annually, and the treasurer shall hand over all books, documents, and any other property belonging to the club when required by the General Meeting.

(f) The treasurer shall bank all moneys exceeding the sum of 10/- within seven days in the name of the club.

## Auditors

7. Two auditors shall be appointed at the Annual Meeting of club, and shall present a signed balance sheet to the club.
8. Five members constitute the Executive Committee, officers of the club to be

included. Three members constitute a quorum of the Executive Committee. Seven members of the club to constitute a quorum of a General Meeting.

## Election of Officers

9. Committees
  - (a) Officers shall hold office until the next *Annual* General Meeting.
  - (b) Officers of the club shall be elected by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting.
  - (c) Provided any office becoming vacant, the same shall be filled at the next General Meeting, and shall hold office till the next Annual General Meeting.
10.
  - (a) Notwithstanding anything contained in these rules, the General Meeting shall have the power to immediately suspend any officer or member of the committee until the next General Meeting, provided two-thirds of the members are present.
  - (b) Any officer or member of the Committee may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of any General Meeting, provided that four weeks' notice of motion has been given.
  - (c) The secretary must notify anyone concerned in any notice of motion immediately upon receiving same.
11. The club may appoint a delegate for the purpose of being represented at any Conferences composed of kindred societies and for repre-senting the club before any public body.

## Rules of Debate

12.
  - (a) At all meetings, the members speaking shall address the Chair, by whom all priority of speech shall be determined.
  - (b) Any matter may be discussed which affects the interests of the club.
  - (c) No member shall be allowed to interrupt another while in possession of the floor.
  - (d) No question that has already been decided shall be reopened at the same meeting.
  - (e) No member shall be allowed to speak on any one question for more than ten minutes, unless by permission of the meeting.
  - (f) Any member wilfully disobeying the Chair shall be liable to expulsion from the meeting.
  - (g) No member or delegate shall be allowed to speak twice on the same subject except the mover in reply without the permission of the meeting.
  - (h) Only the business of the club to be discussed and on no account will

personalities be allowed.

(i) All members at all times should assist the President to conduct the meeting in an orderly and businesslike manner.

### Order of Business

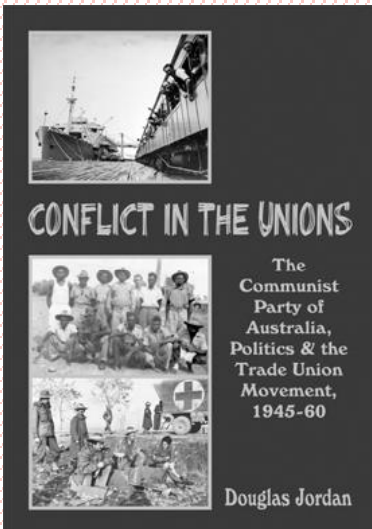
13. Minutes of previous meeting, correspondence, reports, business of which notice has been given previously, general business.

All correspondence must be read.

All business of the club shall be kept strictly within the membership of the club.

These Rules and Constitution may be amended or added to at any General Meeting, provided that four week's notice has been given. Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, the General Meeting shall be the supreme authority. ■

## Also from Resistance Books



A systematic analysis of the political activity of the Communist Party of Australia in the trade union movement between 1945 and 1960. Author Douglas Jordan's study focuses on three key areas: the attempt to build trade union support for the peace movement, the attitudes towards the postwar mass migration program, and the emerging Aboriginal civil rights movement.

[www.resistancebooks.com](http://www.resistancebooks.com)

APPENDIX F

**Household Budget Kept by the Wife of  
a Skilled Meatworker (Boner) 1941**

<b>Income</b>		<b>Expenditure</b>	
Housekeeping	£3	Hospital	10/-
		wood	8/-
		milk	3/6
		bread	2/6
		light	8/8
		rent	15/-
		fruit & vegetables	3/6
		fish	6d
		bus	10d
		child's expenses	1/7
		matches	6½d
		eggs	1/6
		tea, pollard, butter, seeds	4/11
		Bulletin	10d
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3</b>		<b>£3/1/10</b>



## APPENDIX G

# Communist Newspapers in Queensland to 1940

*The Communist*  
(ed. W.J. Thomas)

Australia's first communist newspaper.  
Published three issues:  
1. August 1920, for the Brisbane Branch of the Australian Socialist Party.  
2. October 1920, for the Queensland Communist Group.  
3. November 1920.

*Knowledge and Unity*  
(ed. unknown)

December 31, 1918 (?) to August 1921.  
Originally the journal of the Brisbane Russian Association. March 1919 (?) became the joint publication of the Russian Association and the Queensland Socialist League (Combined Propaganda Committee of the Queensland Socialist League). March 1921 became the journal of the Queensland Communist Party.

*New Order*  
(ed. unknown Russian)

May 5, 1924 to August 1924.

*The Toiler*  
(ed. W.J. Thomas 1924,  
J.B. Miles 1925)

October 25, 1924 to February 9, 1925 (?)

*North Queensland Guardian*  
(ed. Fred Paterson, E. Campbell,  
Danny McCarthy)

May 1, 1937 to May 1940 (suppressed)

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Bus Services

A Municipal Bakery

"Hitlerism" in Townsville

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Hurd, Pat. June 17, 1979.

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Ponti, Guiseppa. August 28, 1978.

Quinn, Eileen. April 2 and 16, 1979.

Winkley, Tom. June 26, 1978.

(ii) Correspondence with:

Henderson, Jim. October 15, 1979.

(iii) Informal communications with:

Cali, Ross. May 14, 1979

Elliot, E.V. May 3, 1979

Henderson, Jim. July 20, 1979

Hogan, Jim. February 4, 1979

Quinn, Eileen. May 20 and 28, 1979, October 15, 1979.

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*North Queensland Register*

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- Sullivan, M.G. Dissent in the Labor Party, 1938-1944. BA Hons. thesis in Government, University of Queensland, 1968. ■

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 G.C. Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920*, p. 337.
- 2 Andrew Eric Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland: A Study of F.W. Paterson's Victory in Bowen, 1944. (BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1972).

## 1. Origins of the North Queensland Communist Party

- 1 Fred Martyn, Far Northern District Secretary of the Australian Workers Association (AWA), cited in E.H. Lane, *Dawn to Dusk: Reminiscences of a Rebel*, p. 103.
- 2 Lane, *Dawn to Dusk*, p. 48.
- 3 For details of the program see E.N. Birks, "As a Boy in Paraguay", *Australian Quarterly* 7 (June 1935); J.B. Henderson, "William Lane, the Prophet of Socialism — the Tragic Paraguayan Experiment", *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 8 (1967-68); J.T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia* (Melbourne 1921), pp.161-2. One year after the colony had been settled dissent within the group had led to the founding of a second colony: Cosme. By 1900 a disillusioned Lane had left Paraguay to settle in New Zealand.
4. For further information about the IWW see L.G. Churchward, "The American Influence on the Australian Labor Movement", *Historical Studies* 5 (1952); R. Coates, "Notes on the Industrial Workers of the World", *Labour History* 6 (May 1964); and I. Turner, *Sydney's Burning*.
- 5 E.W. Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement: A Marxist Interpretation* (Sydney 1945), p. 70.
- 6 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 7 Lane, *Dawn to Dusk*, p. 168.
- 8 M.G. Sullivan, Dissent in the Labor Party, 1938-1944. (BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1968), p. 70.
- 9 Lane, *Dawn to Dusk*, p. 194
- 10 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 11 For example *Knowledge and Unity*, December 31, 1918. Militant Queensland unionists had shown an interest in the

- OBU and the state was represented at the Melbourne OBU Conference of 1910 by Tim Moroney (Railways) and Billy Wallace (Painters).
- 12 *Brisbane Courier*, January 23, 1919, January 24, 1919 and March 23, 1919.
  - 13 Sullivan, *Dissent in the Labor Party*, pp. 22-24. The other people convicted were: Ludwik Roslan (a Pole), Normal Jeffrey, Herbert James Huggett, Jerome Gillis Cahill, Edward Cahill, William Elder, Gus Orance, Percival James and Joe Doyle.
  - 14 It was published in the name of the Combined Propaganda Committee of the Queensland Socialist League.
  - 15 Kent's Buildings, Adelaide Street, Brisbane.
  - 16 Letter from the Russian Association to David Lloyd George, reproduced in *Knowledge and Unity*, March 22, 1919.
  - 17 *Knowledge and Unity*, September 2, 1920, November 27, 1920.
  - 18 *The Communist* (editor W.J. Thomas) published only three issues. The first was published in August 1920 as the journal of the Queensland ASP; there was no edition in September. The second paper, dated October 1920, called itself the Official Organ of the Queensland Communist Group. The third, in November, was the last edition.
  - 19 Information concerning the founding of the Queensland Communist Party has been culled from *The Communist*, *Knowledge and Unity*, and A.B. Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia 1920-35: Policy and Organisation*. (PhD thesis, ANU, 1966).
  - 20 Alistair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History* (Stanford, 1969), p. 11.
  - 21 The Comintern or Communist International was founded in 1919. Its second Congress in 1920 prescribed 21 conditions for the admission of other parties, including acceptance of control from the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI).
  - 22 Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement*, p. 115.
  - 23 The conference of December 1922 was called the Second Annual Conference.
  - 24 Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement*, p. 116.
  - 25 For a discussion of this conflict see K.H. Kennedy, "Queensland Labor's Anti-Communist Pledge Crisis", in D.J. Murphy et al., *Labor in Power* (Brisbane, 1979).
  - 26 *Knowledge and Unity* ceased publication in August 1921. *New Order* was first published May 5, 1924.
  - 27 *New Order*, May 5, 1924, June 28, 1924.
  - 28 *Ibid.*, May 24, 1924.
  - 29 Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979.
  - 30 *New Order* ceased publication in August 1924, its successor *The Toiler* first appeared October 25, 1924.
  - 31 *The Toiler*, December 19, 1924, May 9, 1925.
  - 32 Jones, *Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland*, pp. 82-83.

- 33 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979. These families earned between three and five pounds a week. Most of the men worked in the freezers at the meatworks, and were therefore unemployed during a part of the year.
- 34 For details of the dispute see K.H. Kennedy, "The South Johnstone Strike and Railway Lockout, 1927", *Labour History* 31 (November, 1976).
- 35 Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979.
- 36 Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland, pp. 87-88.
- 37 For a discussion of the Queensland Resolution see J.D. Blake, "The Australian Communist Party and the Comintern in the early 1930s", *Labour History* 23 (November, 1972).
- 38 Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland, p. 89.
- 39 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p. 283.
- 40 Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979.
- 41 Campbell, *History of the Australian Labour Movement*, p. 130.
- 42 *Queensland Guardian*, November 26, 1943.
- 43 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 16, 1979.
- 44 See Chapter 3.
- 45 *Queensland Guardian*, November 26, 1943.
- 46 Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979.
- 47 *Communist Review*, March 1934, p. 12.
- 48 See Chapter 2.
- 49 Ralph Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party* (Melbourne, 1966), p. 52.
- 50 R. Dixon, "Fifteen Years of Communism", *Communist Review* 2 (January 1936), pp. 39-40.
- 51 Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979.
- 5 R. Dixon, *Labour in Queensland* (Brisbane 1937), unpaginated.
- 53 In addition to the works cited, this description of the united front policy draws on Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*; L.L. Sharkey, *An Outline History of the Australian Communist Party* (Sydney 1944); Blake, "The Australian Communist Party and Comintern"; and Reports to the Central Committee Meeting of July 24, 1936, given by J.B. Miles and Jack Henry.

## 2. The Sugar Workers' Strike of 1935

- 1 Jean Devanny, *Sugar Heaven* (Sydney, 1936), Dedication.
- 2 In the provincial cities, parliamentarians were elected under the banners of Hermit Park Labor, King O'Malley Labor, North Queensland Labor and Andrew Fisher Labor. In Brisbane, Taylor (Enoggera) and Marriott (Bulimba) were expelled from the ALP for their activities in the Aid to Russia organisation. The Protestant Labor Party, which fielded 23 candidates in 1938 was highly sectarian in character, but also reflected disenchantment with the ALP

machine.

3. Devanny, *Sugar Heaven*, p.298. Some of the detail in chapters 2 and 3 has been taken from this novel, the accuracy of which has been vouched for by eyewitnesses of the strike. (Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979, and Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979). Twelve years after publication a Central Committee member recommended *Sugar Heaven* to a Sydney Party Conference as a “classic report of an excellently conducted strike”. A Russian edition of the book was released August 17, 1963. (Pat Hurd, interview, June 17, 1979). The names of the participants have been established through several oral sources.
- 4 See Chapter 5.
- 5 E.H. Derrick, “The Challenge of North Queensland Fevers”, *Australasian Annals of Medicine* 6 (September 1957), p. 177.
- 6 For information about Weil’s Disease in North Queensland see: E.H. Derrick and G.E.B. Clayton, “The Presence of Leptospirosis of a mild type in Queensland”, *Medical Journal of Australia* 1 (1937); T.J.P. Cotter and D.P.H. Sawers, “A Laboratory and Epidemiological Investigation of an Outbreak of Weil’s Disease in Northern Queensland”, *Medical Journal of Australia* 2 (1934); D.W. Johnson, “The Australian Leptospirosis”, *Medical Journal of Australia* 20 (1950); G.C. Morrissey, “The Occurrence of Leptospirosis (Weil’s Disease) in Australia”, *Medical Journal of Australia* 2 (1934); W.C. Sawers, “Some Aspects of the Leptospirosis Problem in Australia”, *Medical Journal of Australia* 1 (1938).
- 7 *The Queensland Industrial Gazette*, September 25, 1934, p. 291. The 1934 strike has received little attention from historians. It is afforded half a paragraph in G. Cresciani, “The Proletarian Migrants: Fascism and Italian Anarchists in Australia”, *Australian Quarterly* 51, (March 1979) p. 14; the viewpoint of the Herbert River Cane Growers’ Association is mentioned in A.V. Ford, *Operations of the Queensland Cane Growers’ Association in the Herbert River District, 1927-1965* (B.A. Hons. thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1970) p. 30.
- 8 *The Queensland Industrial Gazette*, September 25, 1934, p. 470, March 23, 1935, p. 40.
- 9 *Ibid.*, September 21, 1935, pp. 422 and 426.
- 10 Giacomina Guerra, interview, June 10, 1979. (Translated from the Italian).
- 11 *Workers Weekly*, August 27, 1935.
- 12 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 16, 1979.
- 13 Johnson, “The Australian Leptospirosis”, p. 730.
- 14 Sawers, “Some Aspects of the Leptospirosis Problem in Australia”, p. 1090.
- 15 *Workers Weekly*, August 2, 1935 and August 9, 1935.
- 16 *Ibid.*, August 16, 1935.
- 17 *The Worker*, September 24, 1935.
- 18 See Chapter 3.
- 19 *Workers Weekly*, August 30, 1935.
- 20 *Ibid.*, September 3, 1935.

- 21 *The Worker*, September 3, 1935. In 1935 Fallon was state secretary of the AWU. and vice-president of the QCE. Within a year he was state president of the ALP and AWU.
- 22 *Workers Weekly*, September 17, 1935.
- 23 *Ibid.*, September 10, 1935; also *The Worker*, September 24, 1935.
- 24 *Workers Weekly*, September 13, 1935.
- 25 *Sunday Mail*, September 8, 1935.
- 26 *Workers Weekly*, September 17, 1935.
- 27 See Chapter 5.
- 28 *The Queensland Industrial Gazette*, September 21, 1935, p. 409.
- 29 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979.
- 30 *Queensland Industrial Gazette*, December 24, 1934, p. 618.
- 31 *Workers Weekly*, September 27, 1935.
- 32 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 16, 1979.
- 33 *Workers Weekly*, June 5, 1936 and July 7, 1936.
- 9 *Workers Weekly*, September 3, 1935.
- 10 Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979. The canecutters in their turn sent relief to the miners during their 1938 strike.
- 11 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 12 *Workers Weekly*, September 10, 1935 and September 27, 1935.
- 13 *Ibid.*, September 3, 1935.
- 14 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979.
- 15 See Chapter 6.
- 16 For information about Italian migrants see: J.M. Bertei, Innisfail (BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1959); W.D. Borrie & D.R.G. Parker, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation* (Melbourne 1954); M.A. Gurdon, *Australian Attitudes to Italy and Italians 1922-36, with Special Reference to Queensland* (BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1970); L.D. Henderson, *Italians in the Hinchinbrook Shire, 1921-1939* (B.A.Hons. thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1978); C.A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne, 1963); N. Pyke, "An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia", *Australian Quarterly* 20 (September, 1948).

### 3. Weil's Disease and the Popular Front

- 1 Devanny, *Sugar Heaven*, Dedication.
- 2 *The Toiler*, October 25, 1924.
- 3 *The Workers Weekly*, August 9, 1935.
- 4 *The Worker*, August 24, 1935.
- 5 *Ibid.*, August 27, 1935.
- 6 Evidence of this practice was received by the federal arbitration court at its hearing of W.B. Hay's application for directions regarding the ballot for general secretary of the AWU in 1944. *Queensland Guardian*, May 19, 1944.
- 7 Devanny, *Sugar Heaven*, pp. 289-290.
- 8 Giuseppe Ponti, interview, August 28, 1978.
- 9 *Workers Weekly*, September 3, 1935.
- 10 Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979. The canecutters in their turn sent relief to the miners during their 1938 strike.
- 11 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 12 *Workers Weekly*, September 10, 1935 and September 27, 1935.
- 13 *Ibid.*, September 3, 1935.
- 14 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979.
- 15 See Chapter 6.
- 16 For information about Italian migrants see: J.M. Bertei, Innisfail (BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1959); W.D. Borrie & D.R.G. Parker, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation* (Melbourne 1954); M.A. Gurdon, *Australian Attitudes to Italy and Italians 1922-36, with Special Reference to Queensland* (BA Hons. thesis, University of Queensland, 1970); L.D. Henderson, *Italians in the Hinchinbrook Shire, 1921-1939* (B.A.Hons. thesis, James Cook University of North Queensland, 1978); C.A. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* (Melbourne, 1963); N. Pyke, "An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia", *Australian Quarterly* 20 (September, 1948).
- 17 For details of numbers of immigrants see Pyke, "An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia", p. 105.
- 18 Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, p. 211
- 19 *Brisbane Courier*, April 1, 1924.

- 20 *Sydney Labour Daily*, April 4, 1924. In a collection of newspaper cuttings compiled by L. Henderson.
- 21 Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into and Report on the Social and Economic Effect of Increase in Number of Aliens in North Queensland. (The Ferry Report). *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, 1925, Vol. 3, p. 12.
- 22 Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, p. 97.
- 23 The Ferry Report, p. 17.
- 24 Bertei, Innisfail, pp. 60-68.
- 25 Gordon, *Australian Attitudes*, p. 106. The speaker was Arthur Murgatroyd.
- 26 Giuseppe Ponti, interview, August 28, 1978.
- 27 Note, however, an alternative view expressed by Bertei, Innisfail, p. 75.
- 28 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p. 222.
- 2 See Chapter 8.
- 30 *Workers Weekly*, February 29, 1936, August 28, 1936, January 12, 1937.
- Republican Government”, in Gabriel Jackson, (ed.), *The Spanish Civil War: Domestic Crisis or International Conspiracy?* (Boston, 1967), p. 53.
- 3 For a discussion of the causes of the Spanish Civil War see Jackson, *The Spanish Civil War*, M. Ercoli (Palmiro Togliatti), *The Spanish Revolution* (New York, 1936); Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (London, 1961).
- 4 There were two free libraries in NSW. E.M. Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia: Reactions to the European Crises, 1935-1939* (Canberra, 1970), p. 4.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 3-8.
- 6 The *Catholic Worker* of October 3, 1936 spoke of “... the most ferocious persecution since Diocletian”. Cited by Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement in Australia*, p. 78.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- 8 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 86-87.
- 9 Susan Blackburn, *Maurice Blackburn and the Australian Labor Party, 1934-1943: A Study of Principle in Politics*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, (n.p. 1969), p. 11.
- 10 *Workers Weekly*, August 7, 1936, August 21, 1936, August 28, 1936.
- 11 *Ibid.*, September 4, 1936, October 27, 1936.
- 12 E.V. Elliott, informal communication, May 3, 1979. 13. Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979. He was rejected on this basis.
- 14 Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*,

#### 4. The Spanish Civil War

- p. 50.
- 15 Nettie Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, a Spanish Relief Committee pamphlet, p. 29.
- 16 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, p. 86.
- 17 Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement*, p. 113.
- 18 Pat Hurd, interview, June 17, 1979.
- 19 For information about these meetings see *Workers Weekly*, January 1, 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, October 30, 1937, January 21, 1939, February 3, 1939, April 21, 1939.
- 20 *Queensland Guardian*, June 23, 1944.
21. The ALP won every North Queensland seat in the state elections of 1935, 1938 and 1941.
- 22 *Workers Weekly*, October 6, 1936.
- 23 Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p. 31. Branches of the church-sponsored Joint Spanish Aid Society were set up in Adelaide and Brisbane.
- 24 A housewife's budget for early 1941 is reproduced as Appendix F. The basic wage during this period was £3/14/0 a week.
- 25 For details of these contributions see *Workers Weekly*, November 6, 1936 and December 1, 1936; *North Queensland Guardian*, February 3, 1939.
- 26 Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, pp. 6-9, 16-17.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 20. Also *North Queensland Guardian*, January 13, 1939.
- 28 Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p. 28.
- 29 *Workers Weekly*, November 3, 1936 and November 24, 1936.
- 30 Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p. 28.
- 31 See Chapter 3.
- 32 Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p. 25. Also *North Queensland Guardian*, April 21, 1939. Further reference is made to Baratto in Chapter 5.
- 33 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 34 Celia Gallego, interview, July 8, 1979.
- 35 Private papers in the possession of Pat Hurd.
- 36 *Workers Weekly*, September 4, 1936.
- 37 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 30, 1937.
- 38 *Ibid.*, September 6, 1938.
- 39 For details see *Workers Weekly*, October 16, 1936, November 3, 1936, November 10, 1936, November 17, 1936, November 24, 1936 and January 1, 1937.
- 40 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 23, 1937 and October 30, 1937.
- 41 *Workers Weekly*, November 24, 1936; *North Queensland Guardian*, May 8, 1937 and January 6, 1939.
- 42 Pat Hurd, interview, June 17, 1979.
- 43 For details of the Yugoslav contribution see *Workers Weekly*, October 23, 1936 and November 10, 1936. In Yugoslavia fascism and communism came to be associated with the rival provinces of Serbia and Croatia respectively. Under the influence of Germany, the Serbians came to see regional and political differences in racial terms, and their treatment of the Croatian people might best be described as genocidal.



- 44 For details of the Ayr and Home Hill campaigns see *Workers Weekly*, November 3, 1936, December 1, 1936, January 5, 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, February 17, 1939.
- 45 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 46 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 8, 1937.
- 47 Palmer, *Australians in Spain*, p. 29.
- 48 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 30, 1937.
- 49 For details of the Innisfail campaign see *Workers Weekly*, November 6, 1936, November 24, 1936, December 1, 1936, January 1, 1937, January 8, 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937, July 7, 1937, October 30, 1937, January 13, 1939, February 3, 1939 and February 17, 1939. For further information about the Mourilyan Anti-Fascist Club see Chapter 5.
- 50 *Workers Weekly*, October 30, 1936.
- 51 *Ibid.*, January 1, 1937.
- 52 See Appendix A.
- 53 fascism and Italian anarchists in Australia”, *Australian Quarterly* 51 (March 1979); “Italian Anti-Fascism in Australia, 1922-1945”, in E.L. Wheelwright & K. Buckley (eds.), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, Vol.3 (Sydney, 1978).
- 3 Cresciani, “The Proletarian Migrants”, p. 5.
- 4 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 5 Mario Cazzolino, interview August 5, 1979.
- 6 Celia Gallego, interview, August 9, 1979.
- 7 For details see Pyke, “An Outline History of Italian Immigration into Australia”.
- 8 Giacomina Guerra, interview, June 10, 1979. (Translated from the Italian.)
- 9 Pyke, “An Outline History of Italian Immigration”, p. 107.
- 10 Jean Devanny wrote about a meeting organised by the Italian comrades at a sugar mill outside Ingham, at which the crowd became very hostile because it believed that an attack was being made on Italy rather than on fascism. Private papers held by Pat Hurd.

## 5. The Anti-Fascists

- 1 The Ferry Report, p. 26.
- 2 For a description of Italian anti-fascism which emphasises the part played by the anarchists see four interdependent articles written by Gianfranco Cresciani: “The Italian Resistance to Fascism in Australia: 1922-1940”, *Teaching History* 7 (July 1973); “The Second Awakening: The Italia Libera Movement”, *Labour History* 30 (May 1976); “The Proletarian Migrants:
- 11 Club Italiano and S. De Giovanni’s. Cresciani, “The Proletarian Migrants”, p. 18.
- 12 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 13 Cresciani, “Italian Resistance to Fascism”, p. 45.
- 14 Cresciani, “Italian Anti-Fascism”, p. 92. Also Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.

- 15 Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p. 42.
- 16 *Il Risveglio* and *La Riscossa*.
- 17 Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", pp. 37-38.
- 18 *Italo-Australian*, March 14, 1925. Cited by Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p. 39.
- 19 Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", pp. 39-40.
- 20 Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p. 6.
- 21 Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p. 40.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 23 Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p. 9. Though two anti-fascists were arrested on this occasion, they were represented by Paterson in one of his earliest cases and acquitted.
- 24 Cresciani, "The Italian Resistance to Fascism", p. 12.
- 25 Mr Quinn (prosecutor): ... if you took such a big interest in the welfare of your country and your people, why did you come to Australia, and why don't you go back?  
Witness (Carmagnola): Because I am ashamed to call myself an Italian under the present regime.  
Mr Quinn: Do you think any decent Australian is proud of you?  
Witness: Yes, they should be ... I would be prepared to fight for Australia if her people were under a tyrant.  
Mr Quinn: We don't want you.  
*Townsville Daily Bulletin*, February 13, 1932.
- 26 Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", pp. 13-14.
- 27 *Workers Weekly*, December 21, 1934.
- 28 Cresciani, "Italian Resistance to Fascism", p. 46.
- 29 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 30 See Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants".
- 31 *Workers Weekly*, December 21, 1934.
- 32 Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p. 15.
- 33 MAWF was set up in Australia in August 1932.
- 34 *Workers Weekly*, January 10, 1936.
- 35 *Ibid.*, January 21, 1936.
- 36 Warnings about the presence of fascist spies in the ethnic communities were featured prominently in *La Riscossa*. Cresciani notes such warnings directed at Townsville, Cairns, Darwin, Innisfail, Ingham, Brisbane and Halifax. Cresciani, "The Proletarian Migrants", p. 18.
- 37 *Workers Weekly*, May 12, 1936.
- 38 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 39 *North Queensland Guardian*, January 13, 1939.
- 40 Ross Cali, informal communication, May 14, 1979.
- 41 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 23, 1937.
- 42 Giacomina Guerra, interview, June 10, 1979.
- 43 Japan's invasion of China was seen as an integral part of the rise of world fascism.
- 44 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 23,

- 1937.
- 45 *Ibid.*, May 1, 1937.
- 46 Cresciani, “The Proletarian Migrants”, p. 13. Bossone was accused of inciting the unemployed to raise the red flag and to “send to hell even kings and rulers” in their struggle to achieve freedom.
- 47 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 8, 1937.
- 48 Cresciani, “The Proletarian Migrants”, p. 15.
- 49 *North Queensland Guardian*, April 21, 1939.
- 50 *Ibid.*, May 5, 1939.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 For details of the tour see *North Queensland Guardian*, May 12, 1939, May 26, 1939, June 2, 1939 and June 9, 1939.
- 53 See Chapter 3.
- 54 *North Queensland Guardian*, June 2, 1939.
- 55 As late as 1938 the Townsville delegate to the Australian Natives Association Annual Conference, Arthur Murgatroyd, told the meeting that within three days of landing in Townsville six Italian bricklayers had been employed, while two white men had been put off.
- 56 *North Queensland Guardian*, June 9, 1939 and August 25, 1939.
- 57 *Ibid.*, June 30, 1939.
- 58 The Provisional Constitution of the Australian Association of Italian Democrats is reproduced as Appendix D.
- Townsville Women’s Progress Club, March 1939. *North Queensland Guardian*, March 17, 1939.
- 2 *Party Builder* (September 1942) p. 1. *Party Builder* was the monthly organisational journal of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Australia. It published five editions between June and November 1942, while the party was proscribed. Its function was to coordinate the recruiting campaign of that year.
- 3 Devanny, private papers in the possession of P. Hurd.
- 4 Industrial component in May 1942: Queensland 39% compared with NSW 53%. *Party Builder* (August 1942), p. 5.
- 5 For information on the effects of the Australian trade union movement on women see Edna Ryan & Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work 1788-1974* (Sydney, 1975).
- 6 Pat Hurd, interview, June 17, 1979.
- 7 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979.
- 8 See Chapter 3.
- 9 Devanny, private papers in the possession of P. Hurd.
- 10 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979.
- 11 *Workers Weekly*, January 1, 1936.
- 12 Rules and Constitution of the Women’s Progress Club of Townsville, p. 1. This document is given in full in Appendix E.
- 13 *North Queensland Guardian*, March 17, 1939.
- 14 *Ibid.*, June 16, 1939.
- 15 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 16, 1979.
- 16 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937.

## 6. Women in the Popular Front

- 1 Ann Horne, addressing a meeting of the

- 17 The Queensland Communist Party appears to have been committed to the relief of Chinese refugees from the Japanese invasion of China. This would constitute a logical extension of its work against fascism. The subject is difficult to research. Local communists have no memory of any Chinese joining the local party, although Bordujenko reported that large donations to party funds were made by the owners of the Ogden Street (Townsville) gambling dens. It is likely that the relationship was similar to that which existed between the party and the early Italian Anti-Fascist clubs. During 1938 the *North Queensland Guardian* published an appeal from the Chinese Relief Fund's secretary, F.Y. Chun, who called on donors to leave money and clothes at Gee You's store at Babinda. By early 1939 a Cairns branch of the fund existed, and a Mackay branch was instituted by the Trades and Labor Council during January. That year the Chinese community marched in the Townsville May Day procession, and in September the *Guardian* carried a report of a Young Chinese Association dance at the Roof Garden. The Townsville group was affiliated with the Peace Council.
- 18 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937 and May 5, 1939.
- 19 Eileen Quinn, informal communication, May 20, 1979.
- 20 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937, March 17, 1939 and April 28, 1939.
- 21 During the period 1935 to 1944 May Day was celebrated on the first of May in North Queensland.
- 22 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 12, 1939.
- 23 *Ibid.*, June 2, 1939. National Register: introduced May 11, 1939. Consisted of a census of men between the ages of 18 and 64, to facilitate "... the allocation of the manpower of the nation in a national emergency ..." Minister for Defence, G.A. Street. *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 159.
- 24 *North Queensland Guardian*, June 2, 1939.
- 25 *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, June 1, 1939.
- 26 *Ibid.*, June 7, 1939.
- 27 *North Queensland Guardian*, June 9, 1939.
- 28 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 16, 1979.
- 29 See Constitution, Appendix E.
- 30 *North Queensland Guardian*, February 23, 1937 and March 17, 1939.
- 31 Tom Aikens (1900- ). Alderman (ALP) Cloncurry, 1924-1930; Townsville 1936-1942; (HLP) 1943-1949; MLA (Hermit Park Labor, NQLP, NQP) 1944-1977. Aikens was expelled from the ALP in August 1940.
- 32 Florence Milburn.
- 33 *North Queensland Guardian*, February 23, 1939 to March 8, 1939.
- 34 *Ibid.*, March 17, 1939.
- 35 May Holman, MLA Forrest, WA. When elected in 1925 Holman was the only woman member of an Australian parliament.parliament.
- 36 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937 and March 17, 1939.
- 37 *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, June 6, 1939.

- 38 Eileen Quinn, informal communication, May 20, 1979.
- 39 *North Queensland Guardian*, August 25, 1939.
- 40 By 1939 WPCs had been established in Innisfail, Cairns, Babinda, Ayr and Home Hill. Possibly some ideological confusion led to a *Ladies' Progress Club* being formed at Millaa Millaa.
- 41 *North Queensland Guardian*, February 24, 1939.
- 42 December 21, 1939.
- 43 *Ibid.*, May 26, 1939.
- 44 Eileen Quinn, informal communication, May 20, 1979.
- 45 *Workers Weekly*, April 24, 1936; *North Queensland Guardian*, May 12, 1939.
- 46 *North Queensland Guardian*, April 14, 1939.
- 47 Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 The hospital guilds and boards were of some political importance prior to 1945. Most were run on the district system, which provided for the constitution of hospital districts and placed all hospital services in such districts under a hospital board. These boards were elected during local authority elections. Hospital finance was borne by the government and the local authority, in the proportion 60% and 40% respectively. Clem Lack, (ed.) *Three Decades of Queensland Political History, 1929-1960* (Brisbane, 1960). Footnote to p.2 27.
- 50 *Workers Weekly*, July 10, 1936.
- 51 Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979.
- 52 Eileen Quinn, informal communication, May 20, 1979.
- 53 *The Tribune*, December 2, 1942. In 1942 *The Tribune* was an illegal news sheet produced by the Central Committee in Sydney.
- 54 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 20, 1938, May 26, 1939, June 2, 1939, June 30, 1939 and October 6, 1939.
- 55 During the recruiting campaigns of 1942 and 1943 the party aimed at increasing female membership to 25% of the whole. *Party Builder*, July 1942. 1900 women were recruited during 1942. *North Queensland Guardian*, March 5, 1943.

## 7. The Communist Party in North Queensland Society

- 1 *North Queensland Guardian*, March 17, 1939. Advertisement.
- 2 For details see Robyn Colwill, "Unemployment in Queensland During the Depression, 1929-39", *Queensland Historical Review* 6 (1977).
- 3 See Ian Moles, *A Majority of One: Tom Aikens and Independent Politics in Townsville* (St. Lucia, 1979), Chapter 4.
- 4 Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia*, pp. 60-61.
- 5 *Workers Weekly*, January 28, 1936.
- 6 *Ibid.*, February 4, 1936.
- 7 *Ibid.*, March 3, 1936, March 31, 1936, October 30, 1937; *North Queensland Guardian*, January 6, 1939.
- 8 *North Queensland Guardian*, February 17,

- 1939.
- 9 *Workers Weekly*, February 4, 1936.
- 10 *Ibid.*, April 7, 1936.
- 11 F. Matzkows, interview, August 17, 1979.
- 12 *North Queensland Guardian*, February 17, 1939.
- 13 *Ibid.*, April 26, 1940.
14. *Ibid.*
- 15 *Workers Weekly*, April 14, 1936.
- 16 Reports of various meetings, especially during 1936.
- 17 *Workers Weekly*, January 1, 1936.
- 18 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 3, 1937.
- 19 F. Matzkows, interview, August 27, 1979.
- 20 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937, March 17, 1939 and January 5, 1940.
- 21 Eileen Quinn, informal communication, May 28, 1979.
- 22 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 23 Fred Matzkows, interview, August 27, 1979.
- 24 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 25 George Bordujenko, interview, May 7, 1979. Also Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979. "He often 'forgot' to send the bill."
- 26 *Workers Weekly*, June 9, 1936.
- 27 Fred Matzkows, interview, August 27, 1979.
- 28 George Bordujenko, interview, May 7, 1979.
- 29 *North Queensland Guardian*, September 1, 1939, March 17, 1939, November 17, 1939, January 5, 1940.
- 30 *Ibid.*, February 24, 1939.
- 31 *Ibid.*, May 3, 1940.
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 See electoral figures, Appendix A.
34. *North Queensland Guardian*, February 10, 1939 and March 31, 1939.

## 8. Public Meetings

- 1 *Pep Up Party Propaganda!* CPA pamphlet, n.p., n.d. (1941).
- 2 Arthur Murgatroyd, interview, June 27, 1978.
- 3 *Workers Weekly*, February 28, 1936.
- 4 *Ibid.*, July 7, 1936.
- 5 Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979. Henderson was CPA secretary in Collinsville and Chairman of the Collinsville Hospital Board. He was elected to the Wangaratta Shire Council in 1939.
- 6 *Workers Weekly*, July 10, 1936.
- 7 *Ibid.*, July 7, 1936 and July 10, 1936.
- 8 *Ibid.*, July 14, 1936.
- 9 *Ibid.*, July 24, 1936.
- 10 *Ibid.*, July 7, 1936, July 10, 1936 and July 24, 1936.
- 11 Celia Gallego, interview, July 8, 1979.
- 12 Millaa Millaa, August 1936. *Workers Weekly*, August 7, 1936.
- 13 *North Queensland Guardian*, July 1937.
- 14 Celia Gallego, interview, July 8, 1979.
- 15 *Workers Weekly*, January 17, 1936.
- 16 *North Queensland Guardian*, 28 October 28, 1938.
- 17 Fred Matzkows, interview, August 27, 1979.

- 18 *North Queensland Guardian*, January 20, 1939.
- 19 *Ibid.*, January 27, 1939.
- 20 Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party in North Queensland, p.23. This work provides a fuller discussion of the CPA's electoral campaigns. The results of state elections held during this period are listed as Appendix A.
- 21 *Workers Weekly*, November 10, 1936 and December 8, 1936.
- 22 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 23, 1937, October 30, 1937.
- 23 *Ibid.* Also Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party, p. 108.
- 24 Charles Collins. Another Riordan (E.J. Riordan) secured the seat at this election.
- 25 *Workers Weekly*, June 26, 1936.
- 26 1935: Sherrington (ALP) won the seat with 5590 votes or 63.73% of the vote. The second candidate gained 1661 votes, while Henry polled 1520.  
1938: Pease (ALP) won the seat but polled only 4852; the second candidate dropped to 1643 while Henry rose slightly to 1563. The remaining votes (12.2%) were polled by a Protestant Labor candidate.
- 27 Jones, Electoral Support for the Communist Party.
- 28 *North Queensland Guardian*, April 14, 1939.
- 29 This policy statement is given as Appendix C.
- 30 *North Queensland Guardian*, April 28, 1939.
- 31 *Ibid.*, May 19, 1939.
- 32 State electoral figures have been computed from election results published in *Queensland Parliamentary Papers* for the years 1936, 1937, 1939 and 1940.
- 33 *Workers Weekly*, March 27, 1936, April 17, 1936.
- 34 *North Queensland Guardian*, March 3, 1939.
- 35 *Ibid.*, February 3, 1939 and February 17, 1939.
- 36 *Ibid.*, March 10, 1939.
- 37 See Ian Moles, *A Majority of One*.
- 38 *North Queensland Guardian*, March 31, 1939.
- 39 *Ibid.*, April 21, 1939.

## 9. The Popular Front and the Press

- 1 Advertisement published in the *North Queensland Guardian*, February 24, 1939.
- 2 For more detailed treatment of the early press see Chapter 1. Newspapers are listed as Appendix G.
- 3 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 4 *Workers Weekly* sales figures were drawn from sales charts and correspondence published by the *Workers Weekly* of May 8, 1936 to December 4, 1936.
- 5 *Workers Weekly*, August 18, 1936.
- 6 One copy of this is held by the Mitchell Library.
- 7 Photocopies held by James Cook University Library.
- 8 One copy held by the Mitchell Library.
- 9 Devanny. Private papers held by P. Hurd.
- 10 *Workers Weekly*, August 15, 1936.
- 11 Giacomina Guerra, interview, June 10,

- 1979, and Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 12 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979.
- 13 *Workers Weekly*, January 1, 1937.
- 14 *Ibid.*, January 8, 1937.
- 15 *Ibid.*, January 12, 1937.
- 16 Jim Hogan, informal communication, February 4, 1979.
- 17 Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979.
- 18 George Bordujenko, interview, May 7, 1979.
- 19 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937.
- 20 *Ibid.*, May 1, 1937, May 8, 1937, July 14, 1937, July 31, 1937.
- 21 Jim Henderson, written communication, October 15, 1979. Other staff were: business manager, J. Johnson, later G. Bordujenko; also A. Robinson and Pat Clancy.
- 22 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 1, 1937.
- 23 Paterson, a Rhodes scholar, had studied theology at Oxford University.
- 24 Pat Hurd, interview, June 17, 1979.
- 25 *North Queensland Guardian*, January 27, 1939.
- 26 *Ibid.*, March 17, 1939.
- 27 For further discussion of this column see Chapter 6.
- 28 *North Queensland Guardian*, January 20, 1939.
- 29 The paper reported 40 cases of typhoid fever diagnosed in Innisfail during October 1938.
- 30 *North Queensland Guardian*, April 28,

- 1939.
- 31 *Ibid.*, May 19, 1939. The encouragement of readers to patronise small businessmen was ideologically acceptable during the popular front period when the base of the party was extended to embrace the middle class and small farmers.
- 32 The two papers had a similar format, and were designed to serve the same region.
- 33 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 23, 1937.

## 10. The End of the Popular Front

- 1 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 2, 1979.
- 2 J.R. Robertson, "1930-39", in Frank Crowley, *A New History of Australia* (Melbourne, 1974), p. 457.
- 3 This centred on Menzies' threat to invoke the Crimes Act against maritime unions attempting by direct action to prevent the export of scrap and pig iron from the eastern ports to Japan, on the ground that it would be used for war purposes. For details see Geoffrey Sawer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law* (Melbourne, 1963), Vol. 2, pp. 116-117.
- 4 *North Queensland Guardian*, May 5, 1939.
- 5 See Chapter 6.
- 6 *North Queensland Guardian*, June 2, 1939, June 23, 1939, July 7, 1939.
- 7 *Ibid.*, August 25, 1939 and September 1, 1939.
- 8 *Ibid.*, September 1, 1939.
- 9 *Ibid.*, August 25, 1939 and September 1, 1939.



- 10 *Ibid.*, September 1, 1939 and September 8, 1939.
- 11 *Ibid.*, September 8, 1939, September 15, 1939.
- 12 After Lyons' death Menzies became prime minister and Hughes attorney-general.
- 13 On September 5 the Queensland Legislative Assembly had approved a motion authorising the government to cooperate with the federal government "... in matters affecting the safety of the Commonwealth ..." See Lack, *Three Decades of Queensland Political History*, p. 172.
- 14 *North Queensland Guardian*, September editions.
- 15 Andrews, *Isolationism and Appeasement*, p. 185.
- 16 *North Queensland Guardian*, October 11, 1939.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Ibid.*, January 5, 1940.
- 19 Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979.
- 20 Ralph Gibson, *My Years in the Communist Party*, pp. 84-85.
- 21 *North Queensland Guardian*, January 5, 1940.
- 22 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 23 *North Queensland Guardian*, February 23, 1940.
- 24 *Ibid.*, February 9, 1940 and March 1, 1940.
- 25 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 26 *North Queensland Guardian*, February 9,

- 1940, March 15, 1940, May 10, 1940.
- 27 *Ibid.*, May 24, 1940. (Final edition).
- 28 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979, and Fred Matzkows, interview, August 27, 1979.

## Epilogue

- 1 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 2 Fred Matzkows, interview, August 27, 1979.
- 3 Jim Henderson, informal communication, July 20, 1979.
- 4 George Bordujenko, interview, April 30, 1979.
- 5 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 6 Guiseppi Ponti, interview, August 28, 1978.
- 7 At least one anti-fascist, Francesco Fantin, was murdered at Loveday Internment Camp in South Australia.
- 8 *Tribune*, December 23, 1942.
- 9 *North Queensland Guardian*, January 29, 1943.
- 10 *Queensland Guardian*, January 7, 1944.
- 11 Mario Cazzolino, interview, August 5, 1979.
- 12 Eileen Quinn, interview, April 16, 1979.
- 13 *Queensland Guardian*, November 12, 1943.
- 14 See Appendix 1.
- 15 *Tribune*, August 8, 1941. This was an illegal newspaper.
- 16 *Queensland Guardian*, July 22, 1944, July 28, 1944, August 25, 1944.
- 17 Eileen Quinn, informal communication,

October 15, 1979.

- 18 J.B. Miles, Report to the Central Committee meeting held July 24, 1936.
- 19 Jack Henry, interview conducted by D. Hunt, February 1, 1976. Tape held by the interviewer, Townsville College of Advanced Education.■

# Diane Menghetti

Diane Menghetti, the author of *The Red North*, was born in 1940 and died in 2012.

She first had a career as a nurse working in Papua New Guinea, northern Australia and elsewhere. In the 1970s, in her thirties, Menghetti decided to complete her education. She was one of the first mature-age students to be accepted at James Cook University at the time. She graduated in 1980.

In 1984 Menghetti was awarded her doctorate in history at JCU for work on the social history of Charters Towers. Her PhD thesis, which integrated oral history with historical photographs of the town, was published by the JCU History Department in 1989 under the title, *I Remember: Memories of Charters Towers*.

From 1988 Menghetti worked as a history lecturer at James Cook University, becoming the Head of the Discipline of History from 1997-1999. In the school she researched and taught Australian history (especially mining history) and Queensland's cultural heritage.

On retirement in 2003 she continued in an adjunct position at James Cook University. Menghetti was made a Life Member of the National Tertiary Education Union in recognition of her service to the organisation.

Her history work included nine books, more than 70 journal and review articles and papers presented at conferences in Australia and overseas, as well as some heritage journalism.

Among her major history publications are: *The Red North*, a history of radical politics in north Queensland during the depression of the 1930s; *Blair Athol: the Life and Death of a Town*, developed from a four-year project to locate, collect and store all available materials pertaining to the now-defunct mining town of Blair Athol and included the collection of a significant amount of oral testimony; *Ravenswood: Five Heritage Trails*, a guide book based on extensive research of the mining history of Ravenswood and the compiling a set of heritage trails for tourists visiting the town. ■

South of the border, Queensland may be better known for the reactionary Joh Bjelke-Petersen regime of the 1970s and 1980s, and more recently as the centre of Pauline Hanson's racist One Nation Party

Yet in the 1930s and 1940s, the 'Red North' — the area north from Mackay to Cairns — developed as the single strongest base of the Communist Party of Australia and Fred Paterson became the only communist ever elected to an Australian parliament, as the member for the seat of Bowen in the Queensland state legislature from 1944 to 1950.

It is this period which is the theme of Diane Menghetti's pathbreaking book, *The Red North: The Popular Front in North Queensland*, originally published in 1981 and long out of print. This republication should help a contemporary national audience to understand the fact that as well as a reactionary history, northern Queensland has also had a very radical past.

The Red North is a fascinating episode and one deserving of serious study by all those interested in seeing the development of a serious progressive force in Australian politics.

*Resistance books*

