

# SA LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (Adelaide Branch)

Autumn 2016



Ted Gnatenko *Photo courtesy Fernando Goncalves*

## Included in this Issue

New website coming - Karl Liebknecht - Vale Ted Gnatenko -  
Winter of Discontent - May Day 2016 - Tom Price Premier - Sacking  
Australian Seafarers - S.A. Politics in the 70's - Save Our Sons

## Advance notice for our next meeting

Please put Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup> June in your diary.  
Our speaker will be Rhonda Sharp talking about the evolution of superannuation in Australia.  
This will be an informative talk, make sure you are there. Full details will be advised.

Greetings from your Acting President. President Jude Elton is convalescing well after a successful medical intervention, and we trust she will return to her post in the Spring. In the meantime, this Newsletter is one of our best ever, thanks to the editorial effort of our industrious Co-ordinator Allison Murchie in eliciting superb contributions.

The weather is getting colder and wetter as autumn turns into winter. But members and friends of the Adelaide Branch need not fear that we will hibernate. An interesting program of meetings is in prospect, and this issue of our Newsletter is packed with interesting fireside reading. See inside for news of our forthcoming exciting new website. This will improve contact with our members and friends, and make us more accessible to researchers and the younger generation in this digital age.

The centenary years of the Great War roll on, an opportunity to expound labour values about the question of war and peace. This issue we dedicate an article to the great Marxist Socialist and peace activist Karl Liebknecht.

An obituary article recalls the life and work of the worker, unionist and educationist Ted Gnatenko, one of the icons of the labour movement in South Australia. He will be sadly missed but his legacy lives on. Gramsci would have recognised him as a genuine organic intellectual, one of the rank and file who thought and fought for the movement. The Adelaide Branch commiserates with his family.

We would be remiss in our work if we did not comment on the Commonwealth Double Dissolution. The poll is set for Saturday July 2. The Society is not politically partisan. So the Branch does not tell members and friends how to vote. But in the darkness of this neo-liberal age it must be said that the union campaign to Put the Liberals Last serves a valid historical purpose.

Our congratulations go to the SA May Day Collective for another successful March, Rally and Dinner. Those who were fortunate enough to be able to participate found the experience up lifting. The Rally in Light Square in particular showcased labour class consciousness and international solidarity. The choice of the Collective to invite labour activists to address the Dinner was inspired. See report inside.

The Liberal policy of destroying cabotage, the legal obligation of Australian registered ships to be crewed by Australians, is another case of the neo-liberal plague afflicting the country and destroying decent Australian jobs. The clear purpose of the Abbott-Turnbull government has been to force down seagoing wages and conditions to pander to stevedoring interests. The solidarity of the entire Australian labour movement must be extended in this struggle to the soon to be amalgamated MUA and CFMEU.

At a recent seminar we heard Stephanie McCarthy retrieve for the labour movement the long lost story and legacy of her great grandfather Tom Price. An excellent account of her presentation is provided within by Andy Alcock, himself a stalwart of the movement and the Adelaide Branch of our Society. His summary dwells amongst other things sympathetically with the religious influences on early socialism and labourism in South Australia and Australia generally, background on which Andy is well qualified to comment.

The history of the labour movement is a resource for the movement today and into the future. It is instructive therefore to dwell on the successes as well as the defeats of the movement. It is in this spirit that we turn our attention to the Dunstan Decade in South Australia and the national impact of the women of the Save Our Sons campaign against the Vietnam War.

We wish you good reading and hope to see you braving the weather to attend a Labour History event this Winter. **David Faber Vice-President**

## **Labour History Society**

### **Our very own website!**

As a result of Jude Elton's submission outlining the need for Labour History (SA) to have a dedicated website, we have been successful in gaining assistance with website design through the Sustainable Online Community Engagement (SOCE) program at the University of SA. Ann Lewis, final year Media Arts student based at Magill campus, has chosen the Society for her website design project.

Allison Murchie, Kevin Kaeding and I met with Ann in late March and we were very pleased with her initial proposal for the homepage and two



*Ann Lewis, Allison Murchie, Prof. Alice Dodd,  
Kevin Kaeding, Marlene Fenwick*

further pages of the website. We recognise that our Society is quite fortunate to have been chosen by Ann for her project, because as well as having already worked as a graphic designer, she has first-hand union experience which means she is uniquely aware of the type of information we hope to convey to the wider public.

## **Marlene Fenwick**

### **Member Profile - Dr. David Faber**

David Faber is currently our Acting President in the temporary absence of Jude Elton. David has had a lifelong involvement with the Labour Movement, as an activist, researcher, scholar and rank and file member. His Labour History journey has taken him from his home State of Tasmania, to Adelaide, thence to live and study in Italy, and back again to Adelaide. David holds a Doctorate in History which was awarded to him in 2008 after many years of painstaking research under the supervision of the legendary Tom Sheridan. David had a significant participant observer role in the NoWar Iraq movement of 2003. He is currently also the Convenor of Left Unity, is on the Executive of the Australian Friends of Palestine, and has a recent Adjunct appointment in the School of Education at Flinders University. He has now served for 8 years on our Executive culminating in his election as Vice President for 2015/2016. David believes in putting activism theory into practice, hence his motivation for joining the Society. He says the Society's work in cultivating the traditions of the Labour Movement provides a resource for the future. David will be speaking at the October members and friends meeting.

## Karl Liebknecht: Making War on War

Karl Liebknecht was the son of German Marxist Social Democratic aristocracy. He was born on 13 August 1871 in Leipzig, the year his father Wilhelm, a deputy in the Imperial Reichstag and socioeconomic writer, was tried for high treason for refusing to vote credit for Bismark's ultimately successful war on the French Second Empire of Napoleon III. Educated at the universities of Leipzig and Berlin, where as a student he developed his Marxism and led discussion groups on social questions, he took a doctorate in Political Economy and Law at Wurzburg in 1897. The following year he set up a Berlin legal practice with his brother. The practice specialised in defending socialists, including those charged with clandestine propaganda inside the Russian Empire, then even more reactionary than the German Empire. Liebknecht himself was also involved with this internationalist work. In 1900 he joined the German Socialist Party his father had assisted in founding.

In 1904 he published *Militarism and Anti-Militarism* and was honoured in 1907 by the Kaiser's government with prosecution like his father for high treason. At his trial he humiliated the prosecution by quoting the definition of high treason published by one of its high powered lawyers, and told the court 'the aim of my life is to overthrow the monarchy... I believe the day is not far distant when the principles which I represent will be recognized as patriotic, as honourable, as true.' Despite being sentenced to 18 months military imprisonment, the notoriety surrounding the case saw him elected to the Prussian State parliament or Landtag. In 1910 he toured the US, being much taken with republican freedom as it contrasted with his monarchical homeland. In 1912 he was elected to the Reichstag for Potsdam-Osthavelland, an insult to the Kaiser as the constituency took in the imperial summer palace at Sans Souci.

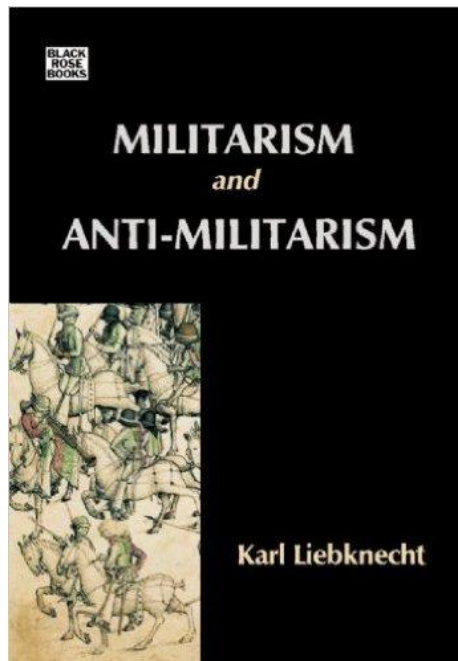


In 1914 Liebknecht abstained from voting for the sake of party unity with the bulk of the Socialist Party for war credit for the imperial war effort, ostensibly directed against Czarism. He later said he could not understand why he had not voted against the war outright. In September 1914 he went on a fact finding mission to Belgium, returning home with evidence gainsaying official German reports of Belgian provocation against the invading forces. By December he was calling for a ceasefire and a new Socialist International. In March 1915 he told the Landtag 'only democratization can erect a wall against imperialistic and adventurous politics...the millions of victims...butchered in this war, are

butchered... because the mass of the people were deprived of any rights in the countries concerned.' At the end of the month he was called up in the Army reserve and sent to the Eastern front where he buried bodies rather than kill until his health broke down. By March 1916 he was speaking again in the Landtag, criticising the influence of militarism on education. But his most decisive intervention came with his Mayday manifesto against the war, for which he was again jailed. Released as a

result of the German revolution of November 1918, he became involved in the ill-fated Spartacist rising provoked by the Social Democrat Provisional Government and put down by Freikorps mercenaries recruited from veterans. Arrested, tortured and put to death with colleagues including Rosa Luxemburg, Liebknecht's death was protested by the international labour movement in demonstrations as far afield as Italy and elsewhere.

**David Faber**



### **Latest News**

The Anti-Poverty Network SA's first ever newsletter is online, and ready for all to read and share!! Here is the link: <http://antipovertynetworksa.org/newsletter/>.

The newsletter is full of personal stories, news, and analysis about issues affecting welfare recipients and other low-income people, including pieces about the cashless debit card, homelessness, new powers for employment services providers, and public transport fares.

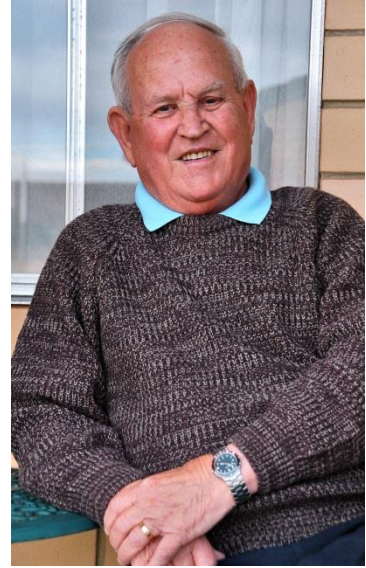
Feel free to print copies of the newsletter to distribute, or if you like, we can print some copies and mail them to you.

**Fedor (Ted) Gnatenko**  
**worker activist and educator**

**Born:** 11 August 1929

**Died:** 9 February 2016

Fedor (Ted) Gnatenko was born of a Bulgarian mother and Ukrainian father in 1929 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. He completed trade school in 1948, then at the age of 19 volunteered in the Bulgarian Youth Brigade before travelling around Europe looking for a better life. For Ted the post-war era was “very terrible” and he applied to migrate to Australia because it was the furthest distance from Europe and its troubles, and had winter temperatures up to 23 degrees! Ted arrived in Australia with his best mate on September 5 1951, with only one suitcase and a few words of English between them. Sent to the Bonegilla Migrant Camp in Albury NSW, he found the Australian environment very strange with trees and plants he'd never seen before, but local people friendly, although reserved.



As a post war migrant contracted to work for the government for two years, Ted was assigned to Leigh Creek coal fields. He travelled to Adelaide, and having the address of a friend of a friend but no money, he exchanged his watch for five pounds and a taxi ride – he thought the driver was being generous until he found later that his Omega watch was worth fifty pounds! However, when he discovered Leigh Creek was 500km from the nearest city Ted refused to get on the ETSA bus, saying he would rather be shipped back to Europe! Eventually he got himself a job as a maintenance fitter, first at Wylies spring works in Mile End then for a year at Gardeners food preservers.

In 1953 he became a maintenance fitter in the panel-stamping shop at the GMH plant in Woodville where he was dismayed at the lack of worker involvement in the engineering union [the Amalgamated Engineers Union (AEU)]. In 1963 Ted transferred to the new GMH plant at Elizabeth, where production-line workers had an even faster pace of work, with fewer and shorter breaks. In 1964, following the success of the EJ Holden series, the unions pushed for a three pound a week wage increase. Despite huge stop-work protests, GMH flatly refused to negotiate and the campaign failed even with ACTU intervention, and eventually the unions recommended a return to work. Without a strike fund, workers had lost a month's wages, and Ted, dismayed at the way workers had been sold out, began to campaign for a more democratic system of union organisation. He was well placed to do this, “I could communicate in six languages, and as a maintenance person I could stop and talk to anyone in the plant. I was resolved that I would never ever participate in a fiasco of that nature again.”

Ted campaigned for better shop steward representation, and after being elected one himself - “the most rewarding and momentous day of my life.” Ted helped establish a strike fund, workers paying 50c a week, and a system where decisions had to be ratified by workers. Soon there were weekly lunchtime meetings of the combined shop committee numbering 100. This committee focussed initially on smaller matters such as ear protection and overalls, but later took on bigger issues such as superannuation.

Ted became famous for his dismissal from the GMH Elizabeth plant and his eventual reinstatement in the mid-70s. Towards the end of 1974 the combined shop stewards committee at the Elizabeth plant became concerned about likely mass sackings with the introduction of new CKD (completely knocked down) production system involving the importation of car engine and body parts for assembly in Australia and called a lunchtime meeting to demand answers from GMH. When management warned Ted that there would be “serious consequences” if the meeting went ahead on GMH premises, he said was not able to change a democratic vote, and at 3.30 that afternoon he was summarily dismissed. It was Nov 20, Ted and Ruth’s wedding anniversary.

The combined shop stewards meeting voted indefinite industrial action until Ted’s reinstatement, but after considering GMH’s interest in provoking a long strike – there were 30,000 unsold cars in the storage yards – it was agreed that Ted should instead seek reinstatement on the grounds of unfair dismissal (section 15.1.e of the Act) through the Industrial Commission rather than strike action.

The next two years saw Ted’s case for reinstatement bounce back and forth through the entire Australian legal system: the South Australian Industrial Commission and Supreme Court, the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, and the High Court, with both sides appealing against adverse judgements at every stage. Ultimately successful, Ted Gnatenko had a triumphal return to the Elizabeth plant on December 6<sup>th</sup> 1976, with his fellow workers forming a guard of honour, and TV and newspapers recording the occasion. Ted recalled, “I arrived at my bench, it had not been used for two years and was very dusty, and there was my safety helmet and my sign saying, *TED-IN*. I was full of tears”

Having won the right of reinstatement on the grounds of unfair dismissal for all workers, Ted soon left GMH, returning to the education officer job which the metal workers union had created for him during the two years of the court case. In this new role, Ted campaigned tirelessly for the establishment of training programs as part of the Metals Industry Award. Ted was also instrumental in the extension of the union’s education program to include access to tertiary study, a small group of shop stewards from the Elizabeth plant boosting crucial numbers in the first Associate Diploma class in the new Labour Studies program at the Adelaide campus of SACE in 1979. Ted was also influential in the establishment of TUTA (the national Trade Union Training Authority) in 1975, seeing it as an important forum for workers to share ideas and information. And in yet another field of endeavor, Ted was closely involved in the Dunstan Government’s Industrial Democracy project in the late 1970s.

In all his work as a leader of the then-powerful shop steward movement Ted Gnatenko displayed a boundless commitment to the workers’ cause. He was unfailingly energetic and imaginative in the strategies and tactics he developed. Ted will be remembered with respect and affection, not only by those who supported his position but also by many of those who opposed it, who recognised his selflessness and sincerity and the strength of his native intellect. Ted is survived by his wife Ruth, his children Tania and Mark, and three grandchildren.

Article provided by **Ken Bridge** and friends    *Photo courtesy Fernando Goncalves*

## **TED GNATENKO v GENERAL MOTORS HOLDEN LTD THE LEGAL TRAIL - 1974 TO 1976**

This article has been written as a tribute to the life and work of Fedor (Ted) Gnatenko (1929-2016), a renowned Trade Union activist, leader and educationist. It recalls the period when Ted was sacked by GMH in 1974 and then ultimately found by the Court to have been unfairly dismissed some two years later.

The first part in this issue will examine the sequence of legal proceedings that followed his dismissal. The second part will examine the arguments put by the respective parties and the reasons for the decision of the State Industrial Court when the case was finally heard and determined. At the time of his dismissal Ted held the office of Senior Shop Steward of the then Amalgamated Metal Workers Union at the Elizabeth plant, where over 5000 workers were employed.

His sacking arose out of a meeting of employees convened by Ted and other Shop Stewards to discuss GMH's intention to make a new model car outside of Australia to be assembled in Australia.

Prior to that mass meeting being held, Ted was warned by a senior manager of GMH that if the meeting proceeded on company property, he would be dismissed. Ted then notified the employees of the Company's intention, so they could decide where the meeting should take place. The employees decided to go ahead with the meeting. Later that day Ted was dismissed on the grounds of misconduct in that he instigated and/or assisted in organising an unauthorised meeting in breach of the Award, and despite being warned of the potential consequences.

On 22 November 1974, proceedings alleging unfair dismissal were lodged in the Industrial Court of SA. Shortly thereafter GMH sought an order of prohibition from the Supreme Court of SA, on the grounds that there was an inconsistency between the State Industrial Act and the Federal GMH Award, and the Federal Award over rode the State Act.

On 27 March 1975 the Supreme Court directed that the order nisi for prohibition be made absolute. Thus the State Industrial Court was prevented from hearing the application.

Significant industrial disputation then followed at GMH, which became the subject of conferences before Commissioner Clarkson of the Australian Commission.

It was at this point that a decision made by the Commissioner put the State Court back into the frame again. He varied the GMH Award by inserting a provision that had the effect of enabling the State Court to hear the application.

However not to be deterred GMH went to the High Court and argued that the Commission did not have the jurisdiction to make such a variation. On 12 March 1976 the High Court dismissed this application. The Company then appealed the decision of Clarkson C. to a Full Bench of the Australian Commission. That appeal also failed. Finally on 7 June 1976 the Supreme Court of SA discharged the order for prohibition thus clearing the way for a hearing of the original application on its merits.

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**Greg Stevens**

## **A winter of Malcontent**

As we go to press, a union bashing federal election in July seems ever more certain. The Murdoch press is howling for it, and the Commonwealth Budget has already been brought forward to facilitate it. Debate already rages around legislation to recycle the infamous Australian Building & Construction Commission in the wake of the stage managed Dyson Royal Commission. This is proof if any were still needed that behind the Turnbull charm and reluctant eventual countenancing of boutique liberal reforms on such serious matters as equal marriage and the Republic, there lurks a hard core neo-liberal agenda to cut wages and public services to the extent that this is politically feasible. Recent reports indicate that some unpalatable Abbott era measures of retrenchment in health and education may be ditched. Others will be retained in deference to conservative policy continuity. Perhaps the main innovation of the Turnbull administration in respect of its neo-conservative predecessor is its commitment to political window dressing. But make no mistake. The make-over of the Tory pig does not make it any less of a pig, lipstick or no lipstick.

Labour historian and public intellectual Humphrey McQueen sagely notes that neo-liberalism is both more and less than a bad idea. It corresponds to requirements for cost cutting of capitalism in crisis. But as Marx observed, it is as ideology that people generally become aware of reality. The battle of ideas remains important, so long as we understand that ideas are not mere notions and opinions but reflect realities with practical consequences. Increased unemployment and suicide rates follow in the train of neo-liberal free market small state dogma.

Neo-liberalism is conspicuous for its contradictions. While health and education expenditures are conceived as burdens, military expenditure blossoms as the idea of the State is cut to militaristic security essentials. The insane commitment to purchasing that jackass of all trades, the abortive Joint Strike Fighter, out of subservience to the US alliance, is economically and strategically in contravention of the national interest. So too is our participation in the anti-Chinese pivot of the Empire towards Asia. In 2014 ANU strategist Hugh White observed in Adelaide that such brinkmanship disturbingly recalled parallels with great power rivalry in 1914. Deployment of Marines and long range bombers in the Territory conform all too readily to this pattern. We should stand stoutly for peace, rather than freedom of navigation provocations in the Spratley islands. The South China Seas are so named for a reason. They are the territorial waters of an assertive China, hers to sail whenever she has the national strength to do so. Such issues may be sleepers in this campaign: they deserve more attention.

This raises the question of the readiness of the Opposition to seize the day, even as the opinion polls show the major parties neck and neck, with Turnbull a decreasingly popular preferred Prime Minister. The crucial point as ever will be how these figures translate into seats on the floor of the House of Representatives. Despite any appearance to the contrary, this election will be another crucial one for Australian democracy and the labour movement.

**David Faber**

## May Day

This year's May Day celebrations were a great success. The march held on Saturday attracted hundreds of enthusiastic marchers, many holding placards and proudly waving union banners. The message was clear: we have had enough of the current Coalition Government and its anti-worker attacks. The banners said it for all:

**We are Union  
Build a Better Future  
Our Coast, Our Jobs, Our Future  
Australian Crews Australian Ships**

(This last banner of the MUA led the march)

The march went down King William Street and Currie Street for speeches and sharing time with comrades at Light Square. Speakers were Jimmy O'Connor, Linda Tirado (from the USA), Bonnie Brodie and Joe Szakacs. Jamie Newlyn did an excellent job of running the day and keeping everyone on message on and track.



Sunday's May Day dinner was yet again a sell out and one of the best yet. The annual May Day grant went to APHEDA to assist in bringing participants to Adelaide for the Anna Stewart Memorial Project. The Spanner award for commitment to the ideals of May Day was awarded to long-time activist in the union movement Darren Roberts. Speakers were Hannah Matthewson and Wil Stracke. Hannah talked about her experiences as one of the wharfies who was sacked by Hutchinson and the long campaign of 137 days that ensued and resulted in victory for the workers. Wil talked about the campaign run by Victoria Trades Hall Council to beat the Liberal Napthine one-term government through the "We are Union" campaign. Both speakers were inspirational and had the audience on their feet.

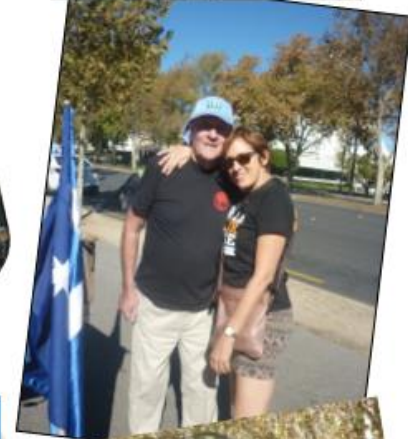
Jamie Newlyn was more than just MC for the night; he too had everyone ready to "Stand Up Fight Back." As President of Unions S.A. he is all too aware of the issues facing workers and the struggle ahead. Sally Mitchell yet again led the singing and this year there was even more passion in the voices. It is now time to get organised and take on the campaign message of "Put the Liberal Last."

For those of you on Facebook, check out SA May Day, SA Unions and Maritime Union of Australia SA Branch for more photos and to listen to the talks given by Hannah and Wil.

### Allison Murchie

*Photo of Darren Roberts provided by Gael Roberts. Photos on following pages include Frances Bedford, Jimmy Connors, Jamie Newlyn, Linda Tirado, Janet Giles, Luke Heffernan, Allen Harris, Glenn Blackmore, Matt Blowes, Hannah Matthewson, Wil Stracke, Marcia Munn, Campbell Duignan, Jim Doyle, Marlene Fenwick, Steph Key, Martin O'Malley and many others.*

**MAY DAY 2016**





## **TOM PRICE**

### **From Stone Cutter to Premier and Christian Socialism**

The speaker at the April 2016 meeting was Stephanie McCarthy, the author of the book, *Tom Price – from Stone Cutter to Premier*. Stephanie had 35 years of writing for stage, screen and radio and was the author of several novels before she turned her hand to writing the biography about Tom Price. Maybe the fact that her subject happened to be her great grandfather provided her with the perseverance to successively complete her 8 year project, the research of which led her to travel to Wales and Liverpool. She certainly gave a very lively and inspirational talk to the ASSLH members at the meeting and her book is a very interesting read.



Tom Price was the first Labor premier of South Australia representing the United Labor Party. It was quite amazing that he reached this position given that he was born into a family of battling Welsh working class family whose father was an alcoholic and whose mother was illiterate. He started his apprenticeship as a stonemason at the very young age of 9 years and had to deal with the challenges of living in the slums of Liverpool.

Despite starting work at such an early age, Tom went to night school and studied hard to improve his education.

He managed to marry the woman he loved, Annie Lloyd, and establish a successful stonemasonry business. The reason they decided to migrate to South Australia was that he had developed stonecutter's lung disease, which is now known as silicosis.

Sadly, this disease shortened his life considerably and he died at the relatively early age of 57, but, he managed to achieve a lot in this short time.

In South Australia, he worked on Parliament House in North Terrace and became the president of the Operative Masons' and Bricklayers' Society and then, because of his oratory skills, was selected as a candidate for the United Labor Party (ULP) in the seat of Sturt in 1893.

Tom was a strong supporter of the right of women to vote which was achieved in 1894 and was the president of the Working Women's Trade Union.

In 1905, he was able to form a minority government with the help of 8 liberals of the Independent Liberal Party, the first labour party in the world to do so. He became premier and minister of education and

Tom Price introduced and supported many social reforms while in parliament - including free state secondary schools, the formation of wages boards and a minimum wage, establishing the Municipal Tramways Trust through nationalisation, improved conditions in workplaces through the introduction of a Factories Act, the appointment of Augusta Zadow as the first full-time factories inspector in SA and limited reform of the upper house.

Tom Price played an important role in helping to develop South Australia's reputation as a reasonably politically progressive state in the early years of our nation.

His wife, Annie, fully supported his principles and also made her mark in the politics of the day in SA in the women's movement and the Women's Christian Temperance Union.. After her husband died, she helped keep his memory alive and became the first female first female JP and the first in the British Empire.

The Methodist Church in Britain played an important role in the formation of trade unions, the Chartist Movement and the promotion of Christian socialism – especially the Bible Christians and the Primitive Methodists. All the Tolpuddle Martyrs were Methodists and were transported to Australia for 6 years because they held a meeting to form the Dorset Farm Labourers Association, a union to be an affiliate of Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Union of Great Britain. Their crime was that they declared an oath of loyalty to each other. At the time, the only oaths allowed were to the British royalty.

Many of the chapels were built with the support of Liberal party members and they often had dispensaries and kitchens associated with the – to assist the sick and injured and to provide food to families of worker who were underpaid. The owners of factories and mines rarely felt responsibility for workers who were injured or sick because of their dangerous and unhealthy worksites.

Many of the miners who came to SA were Methodists. They came from Wales and Cornwall where the Wesleyan Revival had particularly taken hold. He was a member and a lay preacher of the Wesleyan Methodist Church before the various Methodist sects united in 1901. Tom Price described himself as a Fabian and a Christian Socialist.

Ironically, the Wesleyans tended to be more open minded theologically and more conservative politically. On the other hand, the Primitives and the Bible Christians were fundamentalist theologically and tended to be more sympathetic to Christian Socialism. The Wesleyans were not as strongly opposed to the drinking of alcohol, but because of his experiences with his alcoholic father, Price strongly promoted temperance.

Interestingly, another well- known Christian Socialist was Tom Mann, an Anglican and an active British trade unionist who came to Australia between 1901 and 1910. Mann was very active in trades union in Australia, established the Victorian Socialist Party and worked to improve the conditions of the workers at the Broken Hill Mines and the Port Pirie lead smelter.

The AMWU's Tom Mann Theatre at its headquarters in Sydney is a monument to Mann's union work in Australia.

**Andy Alcock**

## **Sacking Australian Seafarers - What's going on?**

“A two-month stand-off between the crew of the cargo ship MV Portland and Alcoa has finished, after security guards escorted union workers off the ship. The Maritime Union of Australia said a private security firm was engaged to escort several workers off the ship about 1:00am (AEDT). They had been staying on board the ship in the south-west Victorian port of Portland in protest at Alcoa's decision to switch to a foreign ship and crew.”

This is how it was reported by the ABC earlier this year, following the 13 January eviction of MUA crew members off the MV Portland. Following is a more detailed overview outlining what is happening with the Australian maritime industry, and why.

In of itself this story is disturbing. Australian workers protesting in defence of their very livelihoods were removed from their ship in the middle of the night by thugs hired by Alcoa. The 'security guards' then escorted an overseas crew on-board, who sailed the ship off to Singapore. And as the MV Portland went over the horizon so did 40 more decent Australian jobs.

However this dispute, while notable given the use of physical force, had an unfortunately all too familiar outcome. Yet another Australian ship left the Australian coast and yet more Australian seafaring jobs disappeared. The MV Alcoa crew is now part of an ever-lengthening list of Australian crews - the Alexander Spirit, the Tandara Spirit, the Hughli Spirit, the British Loyalty, the CSL Melbourne, the British Fidelity – all taken off the Australian coast under the watch of the current Abbott/ Turnbull Governments.

The Federal Government's role in these shameful actions has been anything but neutral. A genuine 'hands off' approach would have resulted in far fewer jobs going off-shore. The Governments policy position is clear. It is to abolish cabotage. Cabotage is the legal right of Australian seafarers to carry Australian cargo on the Australian coast. The MV Portland, for example, worked only the Australian coast and had carried product between Portland, Victoria and Kwinana, WA for over 26 years before this shameful event. Cabotage has been an established part of the Australian law for generations, and has enjoyed bi-partisan support until recently.

The direct consequence of the abolition of cabotage would be the loss of thousands of Australian jobs on the coast. The Government attempted to pass a law in 2015 to do just that. However they failed to secure majority support for this in the Senate. This was due to the predictable opposition of the ALP and Green Senators, as well as cross bench Senators including Ricky Muir, Jacquie Lambie, Glenn Lazarus, and Nick Xenophon.

Despite this legislative failure the Government then simply proceeded to try and achieve the same outcome by administrative means. The current Act provides for the issuing of Temporary Licences to vessels. This was meant to cover circumstances in the event of a shortage of vessels (and potentially crew) to enable trade to continue. There is clearly a legal loophole that enables the Department of Transport (clearly with political direction) to issue such Licences even if a vessel and Australian crew ARE available to do the work.

So why, with ever increasing unemployment numbers, would a Government set about to systematically destroy not only Australian jobs but an entire Australian industry? This is a good question.

Again to illustrate by way of the MV Portland example. Alcoa is now shifting its products on the Australian coast by a foreign crew being paid at least half as much as the Australian crew. And possibly a great deal less than that. Let's call that the 'enforceability margin'- the difference between what the law says is the minimum amount legally payable, and what the

employer can get away with paying. So there is an immediate and direct improvement in the bottom line for Alcoa's Australian operation. There is no clearer illustration of this Governments commitment to Corporate wealth, including global corporates, at the expense of Australian citizens.

The dominant neo-liberal ideology of the current LNP Government espouses the widely discredited 'trickle down' 'theory'. Paraphrasing: "As long as businesses (eg Alcoa) and wealthy people are doing well we have a strong economy". And "A strong economy will see all boats rise with the tide." This 'theory' is not new of course. We can trace this back now over 40 years. Neo-liberalism 'progressed' from Milton Friedman's theories espoused in the Chicago School of Economics, to the practical 'experiment' under Pinochet's military dictatorship in Chile post 1973. And, of course, then on to the global 'mainstreaming' under Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s. Most parts of the planet, Australia obviously included- have been systematically infected with the disease.

In 2016 we do not need to theorise or guess what happens to countries (Governments and economies) dominated by this ideology. There is an all too familiar series of consistent themes.

Unions are attacked. Public assets are privatised. Public services are reduced. Taxation for the wealthy, Corporations and individuals is slashed. Workers' wages and conditions are driven down as a result of weakened unions and anti-worker laws. It has happened time and time again around the world, and is happening again in Australia right now.

Rather than resulting in a 'trickle down' of wealth (workers have died waiting for this!) the series of themes applied result in a 'flood up'. Globally in 2016 the 63 wealthiest people control more wealth than the poorest 50% of the global population of 3 500 000 000 global citizens. This is the ultimate illustration of the impact of neo-liberal agenda.

Neo-liberalism is the ultimate "Golden Rule". Those who have the gold make the rules and thereby make more gold for themselves!! The Federal Government without a doubt sees an additional benefit from this systematic attack on Australian seafarers. It serves to weaken the MUA. It is consistent with the neo-liberal agenda of smashing effective unions removes one of the real barriers to the reduction in wages and conditions. And the ultimate goal of maximising employers' profits is assisted greatly by this.

There is a significant irony in the current Government attacks on the MUA and CFMEU in particular. But for these systematic attacks merger talks between the two unions would not be happening. So as the current Minister of Labour whines and complains about such a prospect she should maybe look in a mirror, as well as around her cabinet table (and perhaps consider the role of her Parliamentary predecessor Peter Reith) when she tries to apportion blame.

And maybe future generations of Australian workers will owe a debt of gratitude to her and her motley crew. In an increasingly hostile industrial landscape dominated by mind bogglingly large global corporates a large, very well resourced, globally connected powerful union may yet come to play a critical role in the advancing of working class interests in Australia.

**Campbell Dignan**

MUA SA Branch Organiser

## South Australian politics in the 1970s

In 1970 South Australia was emerging from two decades that had changed the face of Australia and much of the world. The post war era had seen increasing numbers of women in the workforce, unprecedented migration from southern Europe, and the development of education and expectations. The Beatles, the Kennedys, Martin Luther King, the space race, Vietnam, and flower power were all external influences for change that were beamed into Australian homes courtesy of the new media, television.



Raised in this climate, the first baby boomer babies were turning 21, being called-up for National Service, becoming financially independent and wanting to participate in the wealth of new ideas and opportunities.

For South Australians an early manifestation of these new expectations was the recognition in 1969 by the Liberal Country League (LCL) government of Steele Hall that the gerrymander which had kept Sir Thomas Playford's LCL government in power from 1938 to 1965 could not be maintained.

*"Electoral reform was Hall's great contribution to South Australian political history. Without his 1969 reform bill, the future course of events in the state would certainly have been quite different .... As a piece of legislative statesmanship it earned the Premier deserved credit."* [Parkin, Andrew, Embracing the Dunstan decade, pp. 476-477, Flinders history of South Australia, 1986.]



The election of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) led by Don Dunstan on 30 May 1970 began almost nine years of social reform unprecedented in South Australia's history. Major issues at the time appeared to be based on infrastructure rather than social reform. The Chowilla vs Dartmouth Dam debate had brought on the election when the Speaker,

independent Tom Stott, voted against the government. Also the Metropolitan Adelaide Transportation Study (MATS) that proposed a network of motorways in the mid 1960s, cut a swathe of uncertainty for land prices through metropolitan Adelaide. But Dunstan's policy speech for the 1970 election identified his vision as having a different emphasis. *"South Australia will become the technological, the design, the social reform, and the artistic centre of Australia. ... We'll set a standard of social advancement that the whole of Australia will envy."* [ALP Policy speech, Don Dunstan, 1970]



The first term of the ALP government led by Dunstan lasted from 1970 to 1973. Examples of social reform legislation passed during this period included the Age of Majority (Reduction) Act, 1971, that reduced the age of majority from 21 to 18, the Corporal Punishment Abolition Act, 1971, the Daylight Saving Act, 1971, the Ombudsman Act, 1972, the Listening

Devices Act, 1972, an Act to establish the South Australian Theatre Company, 1972, the Community Welfare Act, 1972, an Act to constitute an Environment Protection Council, 1972, the Coast Protection Act, 1972, an Act to establish the South Australian Film Corporation, 1972, an Act to provide for the safety, health and welfare of persons engaged in industry, 1972, and an Act to provide protection for consumers, 1972.

As 1972 and the Parliamentary session came to a close The Advertiser reported the volume of government business, 'The State Parliament is expected to finish next week after dealing with more than 100 Bills. Late sittings will be necessary to complete the work still before Parliament.' But the failure of the Government's Constitution Act Amendment Bill (Council) to pass in the Legislative Council in November 1972 is one example of the difficulties encountered by the Labor government attempting to get reform legislation through a Legislative Council dominated by the Liberal Country League (LCL).

Dunstan had brought a new youthful image to state politics, in November 1972 he was photographed dancing on stage in the finale of the rock musical *Hair*, and the pink shorts he wore to Parliament in the same month became part of Parliamentary history. But events at the end of the parliamentary session were largely overshadowed by the Federal election campaign and the election of the Whitlam Labor government.



The state election held on 10 March 1973 produced a further shift away from conservative politics in South Australia. The LCL had suffered from a split with key members, Steele Hall and Robin Millhouse, forming the Liberal Movement within the LCL.

**Allison Murchie** Source: *State Library of South Australia*



## Save Our Sons



The Save Our Sons movement was established in Sydney in 1965 and branches formed across Australia. Most of the members were middle-aged and often middle-class women whose sons were old enough to be called up for National Service. It was non-political and non-religious.

They protested through silent vigils and by handing out leaflets. They also supported in court

those who were charged with resisting conscription. They wrote monthly newsletters and protested throughout the Vietnam War; they organised petitions, rallies, letter writing and peaceful demonstrations; they promoted the rights of conscientious objectors and draft resisters. Artuhur Calwell dubbed conscription as “a lottery of death.”

In 1971 five SOS members were found guilty of wilful trespass for handing out leaflets to young conscripts; they were sent to gaol for 14 days, and their actions probably led to more opposition to both the war and conscription.

Thousands of mothers left the security of their homes and entered the public sphere, protesting against anti-conscription legislation. They were mocked as Communists, rabblers, naïve mothers and neglectful wives. Over a period of 10 years they became some of the most vocal and effective critics against the Vietnam War. They also found their own political voice and became increasingly radical. They proved that, “the personal is political.”



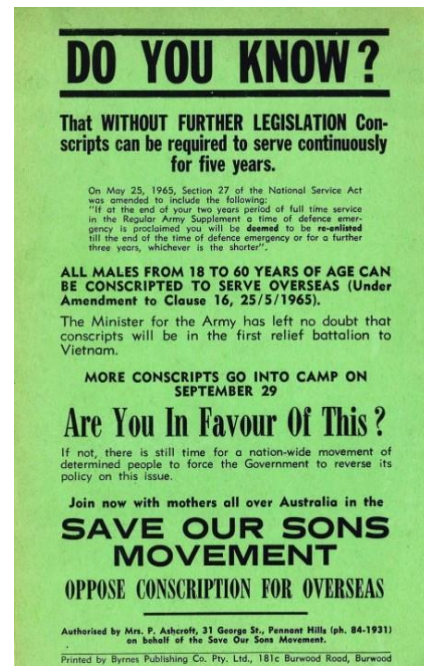
*Note: Adelaide's Beryl Miller on right hand-side*

Unable to give our leaflets as a result of it being made illegal the members developed a new strategy and wore aprons to spread their message. This gained them even more publicity and growing support from the public. Many women for the SOS movement became even more political through various organisations, especially through the Union of Australian Women, of which Beryl Miller (see above) was a tireless worker, committed to the organisation in both Victoria and South Australia for many decades.

## Allison Murchie

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs Canberra Website, ABC Hindsight.

Photos: Adelaide Communists (photos 1 and 2), Department of Veterans Affairs Canberra Website (photo 3 and 4)



## Quote by Penny Wong on Q&A on the ABC

"Feminism has fought no wars. It has killed no opponents. It has set up no concentration camps, starved no enemies, practiced no cruelties. Its battles have been for education, for the vote, for better working conditions, for safety in the streets, for child care, for social welfare, for rape crisis centres, women's refuges, reforms in the law. If someone says, 'Oh, I'm not a feminist', I ask, 'Why? What's your problem?'"

## Aims and Objectives

The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History was founded in 1961 to study “the working class situation ... and social history in the fullest sense.” The Society aims not only to encourage teaching and research in labour history but also the preservation of the records of working people and the labour movement. It desires to make history a vital part of popular consciousness, a matter for reflection and debate, at a time when it is under attack from prominent conservative intellectuals.

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2015-2016

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Except where explicitly stated, news, commentary and discussion are provided for educational and information purposes and do not represent the official position of the Society

Meetings are usually held at the Box Factory in Regent Street South, Adelaide and are advertised in the newsletter, by email and by post to members and friends. Admission is free and all are welcome.

This newsletter is a publication of the Adelaide Branch of the ASSLH. It is not affiliated to the Australian Labor Party or any other political party. Members are encouraged to make contributions to this newsletter.

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Photos of local events by Allison Murchie