

SA LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

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



Spring Edition

Newsletter No 5



Inside.....

- Jude Elton on Aboriginal employment and agency—challenging colonial myths
- Death of a Newspaper—Phil Robins
- Dr Luke Faulkner on the Accord
- Key achievements for Women in Australia
- Facts about Gough Whitlam

.....AND much more!

Message from the President

LABOR POLITICS & LABOUR HISTORY- remaining Independent – a fine line

A few weeks ago I watched Julia Gillard deliver a speech to the Queensland Branch of the ALP – 16th Sept 2012. It was a well crafted speech – well delivered and almost looked like the launch of the 2013 Election Campaign. The warnings were there for all to see – ***What would life be like under a Tony Abbott Liberal National Government?***



Of course, for a moment I pondered on ‘What is Labour History’ and how do events and election campaigns affect an organisation like ours? *We are non political – a historical and research organisation*, but many of us within the organisation have ‘our own History’ by which we are branded one way or another. Some members of Labour History are Communists, Greens, former Democrats and a few were even once members of the dreaded DLP. However most of our members are Labor to the core – very strongly attached to the Trade Union Movement and the environment – a really great mixture. How do we record history and be part of it also?

In difficult times – especially when many Labour people are disturbed about policy and struggling with the current ALP Labor Brand – the only organisation left – still around ‘for that precious Labour Link’ could well be Labour History – Hang in there, renew your membership and become active.

So where do we stand in difficult and challenging times like now when Trade Union members and many workers are under threat - much much more than just ‘Work-choices’? Labour History has become a truly National Body – next year will see another National Conference (probably in Sydney), preserving our Labour History Magazine along with grass roots stories local branch history continues to be a priority – no matter how you feel ...there is an urgent need to preserve the detail of all that has happened in the past. After listening to Julia Gillard listing the issues of today as she sees them, the battle between this remarkable woman and Tony Abbott will be history next year to be written and preserved.

Gary Lockwood
President.

* Front cover: historical banner
celebrating 8 Hour Day

Aboriginal employment and agency—challenging colonial myths

This was the title of a talk given by Jude Elton at our April meeting. Jude is well known throughout Adelaide for her work in the trade union and women's movements. She is currently a curator with History SA.

In her talk Jude explored myths constructed about the employment of Aboriginal peoples in the white colonial economy – fictions relating to workforce participation; the value of Aboriginal labour; pay and conditions; and industrial activism.

Aboriginal peoples have economic, religious and cultural systems connected to land that have operated for at least 40,000 years. With white invasion and settlement they lost control of their land and their economic independence. Three main options for survival remained: handouts and rations; so-called criminal activity such as cattle 'stealing' and prostitution; and work for the whites. Myth-making has emphasised passive reliance on handouts and 'criminality', and minimised employment participation and agency.

While it is asserted that Aboriginal people only worked in a narrow range of jobs such as stock worker and domestic, the reality was quite different. Soon after invasion in 1836, Kaurna and other peoples from the Murray River congregated in Adelaide and took up jobs as trackers and guides and worked on the land. By 1846 they were employed in domestic service, in stores and as messengers. They had taken up apprenticeships; become seamen and were working at whaling and in agriculture. Hundreds of Aboriginal shepherds were employed across the colony by 1850.



During periods of unemployment such as the 1890s and 1930s employers were pressured to dismiss Aborigines in favour of white workers. However, labour shortages and jobs growth led to more job opportunities. Aboriginal people served in both World Wars. During the Second World War they became mechanics and drivers and increasingly took up jobs in expanding government departments and local councils. In the 1950s community campaigns gave them access to further education – for example Lowitje O'Donahue was in the first batch of Aboriginal nurses to graduate from the Royal Adelaide Hospital in the 1950s.

From the 19th century, myths about the value of Aboriginal labour denigrated Aboriginal people as supposedly less skilled and less able to learn than other workers. These assertions were supported by the ideas of Social Darwinism, which constructed a hierarchy of races and classes in an attempt to justify imperial and class oppression and exploitation.

But contrary evidence shows that Aboriginal workers demonstrated a speedy capacity to learn and great aptitude in a wide variety of tasks. Employers and government officials from as early as 1843, gave glowing reports of the demonstrated

Aboriginal employment and agency—challenging colonial myths (cont)

skill and reliability of Aboriginal labour. Aboriginal workers quickly became gun shearers. They were essential to the success of the pastoral industry.

Contrary to assertions that Aboriginal workers did not deserve and never received equal pay and conditions, many of them were paid the same as white workers from the nineteenth century in recognition of their abilities. Aboriginal workers across a range of industries received award wages and conditions as the award system developed.

Far from being passive and dependent, Aboriginal workers were active in employment and joined unions from the late 1800s. They were members of the early South Australian Shearers Union for example, and participated in strikes.

In conclusion Jude argued that the persistence of inaccuracies about Aboriginal employment and agency creates an unjust 'deficit' model of Aboriginal capacities and undermines self-determination. This continues to impact negatively and unfairly on policy development and implementation. Aboriginal people have demonstrated many skills and a huge capacity to learn; they have been loyal and militant un-

Phil Robins—Death of a Newspaper

At our June meeting we had a presentation of a very well-researched paper by Phil Robins on the rise and fall of the Labor Herald. Phil started work as a copy boy at the Advertiser in 1954 and went on to a long career with newspapers.

There was once a golden age in Adelaide from 1910 to 1924 when we had three morning broadsheets, *The Register*, *The Advertiser* and *the Daily Herald*.

The first issue of the *South Australian Gazette and Colonial Register* was printed in England and shipped to the colony in 1836. *The South Australian Advertiser* was founded in 1858. *The Herald* story is a bit different. South Australia was a free colony. Democratic ideas thrived and it was time for a radical publication; industrial unions were active; the Shearers' strike and the Maritime strikes forced workers to become political. The United Labor Party was formed in South Australia in 1891. From this environment *The Weekly Herald* emerged and the first issue was a four page broadsheet published on 12th October 1894. It stated that its mission "... will be to help work out true and permanent social and industrial reform. It seems to us that never before, since printing was first invented, has there been felt such a want for honest and unfettered journalism."

In 1899 the title changed to *The Herald*. In 1905 Tom Price became S.A.'s first Labor Premier. In 1910 *The Herald* became *The Daily Herald* and the first daily issue came out on 7th March 1910.

Phil Robins—Death of a Newspaper (cont)

A month later John Verran led Labor to victory in S.A. and eleven days later Andrew Fisher won for Labor federally – these were the world's first majority Labor governments.

William Wedd was the first editor and Henry Kneebone was the second but was associated with the paper for its 14 years' of existence. It was considered an amazing feat that he managed to keep the newspaper afloat. In 1916 the major issue was conscription – *The Herald* debated the issue with Labor writing strong articles in favour and trade unions running full-page ads against it. Kneebone argued against conscription. The Herald Board was split down the middle on the issue.



In the 1924 state election Kneebone won the seat of East Torrens and resigned from his job as Managing editor of *the Herald*. The last issue came out on 16th June 1924. It was a quality paper but it did not have the resources to continue publication. It had 12 journalists and never ran to more than 20 pages with a maximum circulation of about 20,000. It offered an alternative message at a time of great social change and helped Labor get elected several times.

The Labor Advocate formed in 1932; it became *The Workers' Weekly Herald* in 1935; in 1949 it again became *The Herald* with Ern Crimes as managing editor. Publication was suspended in 1952 and it re-emerged in 1957 as *The Herald*, an eight page monthly. Crimes continued in his role until 1985. Phil Robins was managing editor from 1985 to 1993 when it was taken over by Gary Orr. In 1995 it was decided for the first time to have a national ALP journal, *The National Labor Herald*, which soon became the *Labor Herald*. It grew from 24 pages to a full colour magazine of 48 pages from 1998 to 2001. It was replaced in 2005 by a web journal called *Labor Herald* with Gary Orr as the first editor. It died with barely a whimper in 2008.

“ The history of working people in Australia is a story that needs to be told and shared with our young people. A National Museum of Labour would ensure that this education is provided to future generations. ”

Ged Kearney, President ACTU

I recently read a book called "*Reflecting Labor – Images of myth and origin over 100 years*" by Roger McDonald. I found it a most interesting review of the history of the Labor Party and have included a few quotes which I hope you find of value.

His opening comments were:

"I have a personal image of a place where I can stand to one side, catching reflections of the labour movement and of Labor. It is the smoko room of an Australian shearing shed – whether in the present day, or one hundred years ago, at the time of the foundation of the party. In the rhythm of a day's work, the smoko room is a place where breath is drawn, calm restored, bodily aches temporarily eased and where, for a few brief periods a day, solitude is wrested from the clamor of machinery or the clatter of blade shears and the race against the clock. ...In the image of the shed the beginnings of Labor can be seen happening over again daily."

He goes on to say: "Emancipation of the working class through the ballot box was Labor's founding principle. From within the Labor movement, from work patterns originating in Australian conditions, and from the antipathy to the idea of British class relations prevailing here, Labor established a party of wide appeal – attracting not just workers but progressives, radicals and nationalists. In 1891 the foundation of Labor was a chance for all workers to 'rally round one banner' whether they were 'gold lace or sweat rags.'"

"At various times, most notably in 1910 under Andrew Fisher, in 1940 under John Curtin, and in 1972 under Gough Whitlam, Labor has found satisfaction in reflection of values implicit in widespread national hopes."

At Barcaldine in Queensland in 1991 Prime Minister Bob Hawke said:

"No one place, no single State can make an unchallenged claim to be the birth-place of our great party. But if there is a single place that brings together all the themes, the spirit, and the meaning of the events which, together, led to the creation of the ALP ... [it was when] members of the Shearers' Union, the forerunner of the Australian Workers' Union ... were striking for the right to organise, the right to exist as a union."

Roger McDonald is a well known Australian author whose novels include *1915*, *Slipstream*, *Rough Wallaby*, *Water Man*, *The Slap*, *Mr Darwin's Shooter*, *The Ballad of Desmond Kale*, and *When Colts Ran*. He was nominated for the Miles Franklin Award in 1994 and 1999.

Allison Murchie

Solidarity Forever

A song by Ralph Chaplin—1915

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

**Chorus: Solidarity forever, solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
For the Union makes us strong**

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

**Chorus: Solidarity forever, solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
For the Union makes us strong**

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

**Chorus: Solidarity forever, solidarity forever
Solidarity forever
For the Union makes us strong**



The Beef March

The Great Depression led to high unemployment which caused anxiety and humiliation as people struggled to survive and to find enough to support their families. People were given relief tickets to get food in shops, but as one woman said "If there was other people in the shop they served everybody else first, kept you waiting and then when you got the things they weren't fresh ... They were dreadfully rude and hard to you." It became an age of shame, poverty, distress and uncertainty. Bitterness led to aggression.



On the 1st of August 1930, 100 unemployed men and women met at 10.00am at Port Adelaide and marched to Adelaide, with others gathering along the way joining them. They carried red flags and banners including "We want Work or Full Sustenance" and "Withdraw Police and Scabs from the Waterfront". They met at the Newmarket Hotel and 450 marched down North Terrace, Hindley Street, King William Street and stopped at the Treasury Building in Victoria Square at 12.45pm demanding to meet the Premier, Lionel Hill.

An hour later they blocked off Flinders Street. Foot police and mounted police descended on them to restore order. There was no violence and they returned to Port Adelaide by train.

A few months later on 9th January 1931, 50 or so unemployed met at the offices of the Waterside Workers Federation in Nile Street at Port Adelaide to complain about the Government removing beef from the ration cards for the unemployed. They were not supported by the trade unions. They marched to Adelaide singing

The Beef March (cont)

the Red Flag and were joined by 1,000 unemployed at the Southwark Brewery – they had marched from the Labor Exchange in the city. They had a police escort as they made their way to Victoria Square. Some two thousand gathered. Without warning bricks were thrown and a policeman's jaw was broken. The crowd was armed with sticks and crude weapons; the police with batons and the mounted police attacked. Blood flowed on both sides and many were knocked down and trodden on, including women. The Premier looked on from an upstairs building. Most escaped by running down Grote Street while others stayed to fight until they were overpowered. The police were considered to be unnecessarily aggressive but the press blamed the protestors. Seventeen were injured including one woman, and twelve men were arrested.

Source: "Those Turbulent Years – a History of the City of Adelaide 1919-79"
by Rob Linn; Professional Historians Association (SA).

Women's Colours

The colours originated with the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in the United Kingdom in 1908. The colours were said to represent:

White: purity

Purple: dignity, self-reverence and self-respect

Green: hope and new life

The colours unified the movement and also emphasised the femininity of the suffragettes.

This tricolour soon became the visual cue for the women's movement in Australia and they were worn on International Women's Day and on banners and posters.

The introduction of the colour gold representing "a new dawn" has been commonly used to represent the second wave of feminism.

Source: Victorian Trades Hall Council Women's Officer



Wayne Hanson AM
and Allison Murchie



r History members in action



photos taken at the dinner held on
27th July 2012, at which we were
hilariously entertained by
guest speaker Anthony Durkin



Key achievements for Women in Australia

1894	Women in S.A. Get the right to vote and to stand for parliament, the first place to achieve this.
1902	Women in NSW and Commonwealth get the vote.
1930	Women are receiving 54% of male wage rates.
1939	In World War 11 women entered the workforce in large numbers and for the first time many earned wages close to the male rates, most receive 90%. Women replace men in a wide range of industries. Work based child care facilities are provided.
1946	Men replace women in industry. Child care centres are closed.
1950	The female wage rate is lifted to 75% of the male wage rate.
1969	The ACTU Equal Pay Case paves the way for women to receive pay equal to that of men performing the same duties by 1975.
1972	The ACTU second equal pay case results in the principle of equal pay for equal work being established.
1979	The right of women workers to 12 months unpaid maternity leave is achieved.
1987	ACTU Congress elects 5 women to the ACTU Executive.
1995	Jennie George elected as first woman President of the ACTU.
2000	Sharan Burrow elected as President of ACTU.

Source: Australian Council of Trade Unions

**“ There is no education like
adversity ”**

Benjamin Disraeli (English statesman and writer)

**“ You cannot shake hands with a
clenched fist. ”**

Indira Ghandi (Indian Prime Minister)

The Harvester Judgment

This 1907 decision was the legal case that set the rate of pay for a fair basic wage. It was handed down by Justice Henry Higgins in the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration. This Court had been set up that year in order to arbitrate disputes between unions and employers. Higgins had been a long term supporter of the labour movement but was opposed to militant unions who ignored his rulings. Sunshine Harvester Works was a company that built agricultural machinery and was owned by Hugh McKay.



Higgins ruled in his decision that an employee should be guaranteed a wage that would give them a standard of living that was reasonable for “a human being in a civilised society.” This was regardless of the employer's ability to pay. This became the basic wage. He set a wage of 7/- a week for an unskilled worker. (1907 2 CAR 2-3.)

This decision was later overturned by the High Court but it was still considered to be a benchmark in Australian industrial case law. Higgins continued to apply this reasoning in subsequent cases.

Haydon Manning will talk on

Labour's Working Class Voter Base

at the AGM of the Society on Sunday 28th October 2012

See back page for further details

Gough Whitlam's major achievements

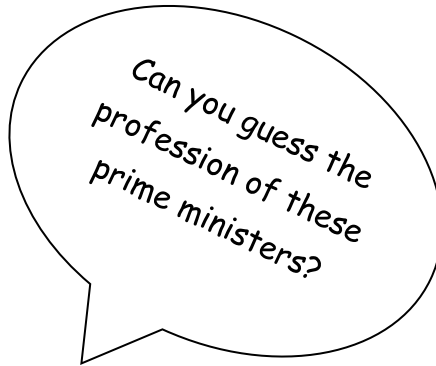
Gough Whitlam was Prime Minister of Australia from 5th December 1972 to 11th November 1975; he had been a member of the ALP since 1945 and Member for Werriwa from 1952-1978. His government was one of reform and it implemented reforms in every field of public policy. A record number of Bills were introduced and enacted. Here are just a few of them:

- Established the Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Initiated Australia's first federal legislation on human rights, the environment and heritage
- Established Legal Aid
- Established the National Film and Television School
- Launched construction of the National Gallery
- Reopened Australian embassy in Peking
- Established Trade Practices Commission
- Established Law Reform Commission
- Established Australian Film Commission
- Established Australia Council
- Abolished university tuition fees
- Introduced Family Law Act providing for National Family Court
- Introduced Racial Discrimination Act
- Established Medibank
- British honours system replaced by Order of Australia awards
- Introduced social welfare reforms including supporting mothers benefit and welfare for the homeless
- Handed title deeds to part of traditional lands to Gurindi people in the Northern Territory

This is quite an amazing list for one short term in government.

The Senate rejected 93 Bills, more than the total number (68) rejected since Federation. His government was dismissed by Governor-General Sir John Kerr as he had not been able to secure passage of Supply Bills through the Senate.

Source: National Archives of Australia



Prime Minister	Party	Term
Francis Forde	Labor Party	1945 (8 days)
Ben Chifley	Labor Party	1945-49
Robert Menzies	Liberal Party	1949-66
Harold Holt	Liberal Party	1966-67
John McEwen	Country Party	1967-68 (23 days)
John Gorton	Liberal Party	1968-71
William McMahon	Liberal Party	1971-72
Gough Whitlam	Labor Party	1972-75
Malcolm Fraser	Liberal Party	1975-83
Bob Hawke	Labor Party	1983-91
Paul Keating	Labor Party	1991-96
John Howard	Liberal Party	1996-2007
Kevin Rudd	Labor Party	2007-10
Julia Gillard	Labor Party	2010



See Page 17 for the answers!



Dr Luke Faulkner on the Accord

In our first meeting for the year on another hot Adelaide day we were very pleased to be given a most informative and extremely well researched presentation by Dr Luke Faulkner. Luke is Associate Head of School, School of Management at the University of South Australia. He spent 10 years undertaking this research of the Accord between the Australian Labor Party and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The Accord was first proposed at the 1978 ALP Conference in Hobart by Bob Hawke and eventually came into being in 1983 and was carried by the Hawke/Keating government. It was seen as being crucial to the achievement of economic growth, employment creation and inflation control.



**“The Accord:
did it work
and, if so,
which bits
worked
best?”**

There were many phases to the agreement and Mark 1 was about wage indexation flowing through to Mark 2 and Mark 3 that were about Structural Efficiency, Centralisation, Awards and finally Enterprise Bargaining from 1991 to 1996. Effectively we had three industrial relations - centralised, industry and enterprise bargaining - systems over 12 years.

The bosses consistently pushed the line that to be more productive we need to be more flexible. Luke's response is “rubbish!”

He undertook a triangulated methodology of research, surveys and interviews, and chose to do this in the car component parts industry. He contacted 123 of the highest turnover companies, interviewing senior managers and unionists as part of his research. His objective was to determine what influence the Accord had on flexibility and productivity in the Australian automotive industry. He chose this industry because it was big, diverse, political (the Button Plan), industrially volatile and under pressure from the community to improve.

What is flexibility? Issues to be addressed included changing standard hours of work, changing skills (functional flexibility), organisational flexibility, product innovation and procedural flexibility. What is productivity? This includes quantity produced in a given time, range of goods produced, quality of goods (customer satisfaction), sales volume and profitability.

Dr Luke Faulkner (cont)

After extensive research his findings were –

- ✓ there were more improvements during the Enterprise Bargaining stage
- ✓ the Accord worked in the car components industry
- ✓ there was a slight improvement in industrial relations.

The conclusion is that better industrial relations leads to better production, but if a company already had good industrial relations there was little benefit from the Accord. Perhaps those present already knew this but Luke had to **prove** it.

The reason Enterprise Bargaining worked was bosses and workers, through their unions, had to talk to each other and not constantly be forced into arbitration. Consultation works. A major drawback was that all workers benefited whether they were a member of the union or not, so some workers chose not to be members any more even though unionised workforces fared better in the negotiations. Unions became complacent and workers lost the desire to organise. Real wages didn't improve.

Yes, the Accord worked, workers got pay rises, businesses won their flexibility. It worked for the country and the businesses but not for the unions. As Luke said, it “defanged” the unions and the union movement still has not recovered. The Accord finished in 1996 with the election of the Howard Government.



Prime Ministers' Occupations:

Forde – teacher, Chifley – engine driver, trade unionist, Holt – lawyer, McEwen – public servant, farmer, Gorton – orchardist, pilot, Menzies—lawyer; McMahon – Lawyer, Whitlam – lawyer, Fraser – grazier, Hawke – trade unionist, Keating – council clerk, Howard – lawyer, Rudd – diplomat, public servant, Gillard – lawyer. How many did you get right?



Member Comment

Many recently published articles and comments from radio commentators and many politicians decry the need for us in Australia to acknowledge and limit our use of resources and production of 'greenhouse gases'. We constantly read that Australia's contribution is just so small that it won't make any difference. Well, it's time to get real.

The 2009 CO₂e/tonnes/person/year ratings (Source: Carbon Planet) for us and our close neighbours and competitors are:

Australia (pop. 22million) 18.75

South Africa (pop. 50m), 7.27

China (pop. 1.3billion) 4.57

Brazil (pop. 193m) 1.81

Indonesia (pop. 234m) 1.67

India (pop. 1.2billion) 1.18

Vietnam (pop. 86 million) 1.10.

Quite rightly their people aspire to the same level of 'development' and 'consumption' as we do. Really! Surely they do. If so, then they quite rightly could increase their outputs to our levels which would mean:

China 4fold

India 16fold

Vietnam 17fold

Indonesia 11fold

Brazil 10fold

and we certainly would have no basis for real complaint.

An indication; an increase such as those equates to an average of around an extra 16 CO₂e/t/p/y for every one of around 3.1 billion people in just these listed countries. Australia's total current annual output is 412.5million CO₂e/t/p/y; for just these countries to catch up would require an **increase** of a huge 48,893 million CO₂e/tonnes annually – 7 times their present combined outputs. Fortunately some countries, particularly China, have implemented major 'green' reforms and programs and have actually committed to a reduction from present levels – local gossip has it that no other countries are 'leading'. Dream on folks!

And 'Dream On' is the operative. The problem is not simply about the amount of 'greenhouse gases' produced. It's about the resources used to produce the things that cause the gases. Do we really think that we can continue to exist living at the same 'consumption' levels as we do now while the rest of the developing world increases its consumption by at least 7 times? This consumption will either require some serious 'battles' for finite resources or we will have to considerably lower our standard of living and live much more frugally, morally and sustainably than we have been used to.

Denis Fenwick
27th June 2011

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.

Executive Committee 2011-2012

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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 held at the Box Factory in Regent Street South, Adelaide and are advertised through 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 Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. It is not affiliated to the Australian Labor Party or any other political party.

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

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Sunday 28TH October 2012

**This will be held from 1.30pm to 2.00pm followed
by a most interesting talk by Haydon Manning**

“Labor’s Working Class Voter Base”

Haydon is Associate Professor in the School of Social and Policy Studies at Flinders University. He is a frequent commentator on State and national politics and his main research interest is on political attitudes, voting behaviour, elections and political parties.



After noon tea provided

Venue: The Box Factory 59 Regent Street South Adelaide

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