

LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

Labour History Society (South Australia) Incorporated

Spring 2017



State Library of SA, B 213/77/52.12, Bodies on the production line,
GM Holden Ltd, Woodville, 1933-19934

Included in this Issue

Marriage Equality, National Tertiary Education Union, Thank you Marlene Fenwick, Ingrid Voorendt, Marx's Ecology, Book Review – Stories of a Reluctant Radical, Vale Marie Lean, Kirsty Boden, 1931 Beef March, Women's Memorial Gardens, October function - Sir Josiah Symon.

“We can’t go back to the past”?

Like me, you may have been confronted with the statement ‘we can’t go back to the past’, or a variant of it, in industrial forums and debates over recent years. It is difficult to argue against. Of course we can’t actually go back in time. But is that what is meant? Other messages are being conveyed in this phrase, which serve particular interests.

The call to not look back; not to criticise the present in comparison with the past; runs alongside sweeping changes to industrial law and provisions made since the beginning of the 1990s. These changes reflect a tough political and economic climate dominated by neo-liberal economics and globalisation. There has been little space, including within the labour movement, in which to challenge measures that are not in the interests of working people and their communities.

Some within the labour movement have actively promoted the restructuring of industrial arrangements. Others have worked hard to influence the direction of change and to mitigate its effects by organising and negotiating. In this difficult struggle, where unions have much reduced power, there has been a fear of becoming stuck in ‘negative’ criticism. In order to prevent an ‘energy-sapping focus’ on the past, we have been encouraged to leave past arrangements behind as either no longer appropriate or attainable. At the same time, critical analyses of new industrial provisions and their effects have been marginalised.

Employers have gained power and profits from the reorganised industrial regime. Inequality has burgeoned. Past provisions were far from ideal, but a comparison of current and pre-1990s industrial provisions shows how much workers and their unions have lost. The greatly reduced capacity of workers to influence working hours; leave; forms of employment; job security and remuneration is evident in deteriorating real wages and conditions. Union bargaining rights and access to workplaces have suffered considerably, with predictably negative results for union membership.

The past provides comparisons with which to assess current assertions that what we have is the best we can get. It also gives pointers for positive change. It is useful to know that past demands stemmed from an independent vision formulated by workers of their rightful place in the world and what they as equal human beings are entitled to. Demands could be daring and cause outrage amongst employers and their supporters. Gains didn’t come easily: the battle for the 8 hour day was difficult and protracted, but ultimately successful. In times of high unemployment provisions and union membership were lost, to be regained later.

Reversing the collapse in union membership and deterioration in the lives of working people today is not a matter of going back to the past, but recognising that past advances in industrial and social provisions were imaginative break-throughs won in spite of frequent ridicule and political opposition. They were also facilitated by gradual improvements in the democratic rights of labour. Many of these rights are denied under current industrial legislation. An historical analysis suggests that they must be reasserted, and developed further, if significant gains in union membership and work entitlements are to be secured.

At the forefront of these rights is the democratic right of working people in their unions to define their own needs and goals, and to seek to have these enshrined, without prohibitions, in legally binding industrial mechanisms. This includes the right to formulate, campaign and argue for new employment standards rather than wait upon the vagaries of parliament.

Working people require a reinstatement of the right to industry-wide bargaining. Access to comprehensive, rather than minimal protections, including for those not in a position to organise (e.g. because of language, age or size of workplace), is also needed now, just as it was in the past.

Current laws relating to union access to workplaces, limitations on industrial action and penal powers are far inferior to the (not ideal) provisions of the more recent past. In his presentation to an open meeting of the Labour History Society on 18 June this year, Professor Andrew Stewart noted that, 'Australian law and practice has repeatedly been identified as breaching ILO standards by, among other things: limiting both the level and scope of bargaining; prohibiting 'sympathy' action; precluding action over social or economic issues; not extending protections to all workers; [and] power to suspend/terminate protected action...beyond essential services'.

There is much to recoup of what has been lost and improvements to be made over-and-above past arrangements. However, the winds of change are beginning to blow. The Labour History Society has a role to play in the exciting process of progressive transformation. By exploring and promulgating labour history the Society is not engaging in mere nostalgia. We can inspire, support and reinforce change for the benefit of all.

Jude Elton

President, SA Branch

Adelaide says YES to Marriage Equality

On a beautiful spring day on the 16th September well over 6,000 people gathered on the steps of Parliament House and stopped the traffic on North Terrace. Their message was very loud and very clear. It's time for marriage equality in Australia.

The issue has been around for far too long and a dithering federal coalition government has tied itself in knots trying to avoid taking the issue to parliament, resulting in the current fake referendum we are currently going through. This is costing us \$122 million. Many countries have legislated to make gay marriage legal:

- Netherlands 2001
- Canada 2005
- Spain 2005
- South Africa 2006
- Portugal 2010
- Iceland 2010
- Argentina 2010
- New Zealand 2013
- France 2013
- England, Scotland, Wales 2014
- Pitcairn Islands 2015
- Ireland 2015
- United States 2015
- Greenland 2015
- Guerrero (Mexico) 2015
- Colombia 2016

Countries where it is illegal include

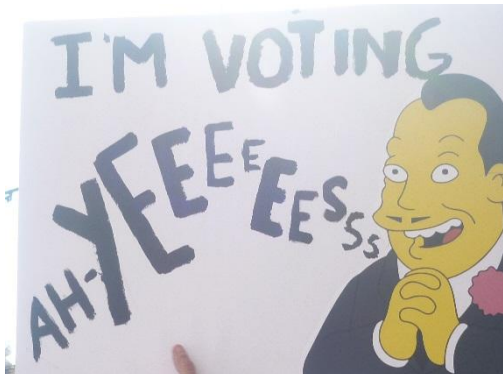
- AUSTRALIA,
- Iran
- Iraq
- Pakistan
- Saudi Arabia
- Russia



Many false arguments have been put forward – that it will destroy the institution of marriage or that it will impact on your religious rights. The arguments are numerous and spurious.

Those at the Adelaide rally had heard them all and they had had enough. Union members met at various points in the city and marched to Parliament House. Many speakers, including Penny Wong, Jamie Newlyn, Ian Hunter, Sarah Hanson-Young, Alex Greenwich (Australian Marriage Equality co-chair) and Rev. Sue Wickham, shared their views with the crowd. After the speeches the protesters marched down King William Street to Victoria Square, receiving support from the by-standers. A strong message from Penny Wong was that the fight is not over and it will be a tough campaign to come.♦

Allison Murchie Photos by Allison Murchie



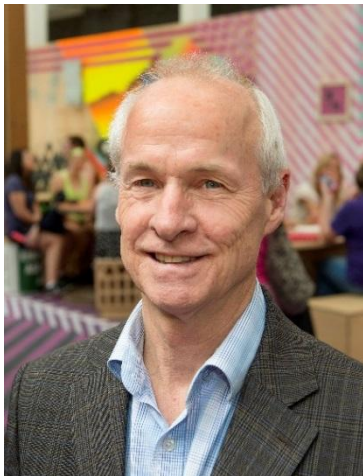
Labour History Society (SA Chapter)

National Tertiary Education Union - A short history

NTEU was formed on 1 October 1993. It was an amalgamation of five tertiary education unions, two representing academics and three representing other staff employed in the tertiary education sector. In SA, the new Union had comprehensive coverage of academic staff and limited coverage of general staff in higher education. Its formation coincided with ACTU promotion of industry unionism, the adoption of enterprise bargaining as the principal form of industrial regulation in Australia and with a major restructuring of higher education, initiated by John Dawkins, which dissolved the binary system and established a unified system of higher education where colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology became universities.

The task faced by NTEU was not only to secure wage increases but to preserve and improve working conditions that lay in awards. Its approach was a program of co-ordinated bargaining at each university, underpinned by nationally agreed mandatory provisions that became minimum settlement points in enterprise agreements.

Organisationally, the national union reflects its history. It retains a federal structure with a democratic base – a Branch in each university electing its own representatives to a National Council that meets annually to determine policy. However, over time NTEU has centralised its finances and property assets, staff and member training programs, industrial and media coordination, national publications, and much of its policy development and research. While its staff are employed nationally, 75% are located in a Branch or State office.



In SA, there are three branches – Adelaide, Flinders and UniSA. Each has an elected Committee that meets regularly to run activities with a strong local focus. While the Committee itself is composed of members who volunteer their time, each Branch has a paid Organiser and Industrial Officer to support and represent members as well as the Committee. Membership recruitment is conducted locally as is workplace bargaining as well as industrial and other campaigning.

At the state level, the Union has a Division Secretary, who with a Division Council co-ordinates the provision of branch resources as well as running state-wide events. Currently, there are 2,000 NTEU members in SA. Industrially, although the Union is small it punches above its weight in terms of achieving wage increases and working conditions. It has been a pace setter in many areas, including parental leave and superannuation. But, it is also a Union that immerses itself in the higher education debates of the day (such as staff and student representation on University Councils), gives high priority to political lobbying (such as campaigning against budget cuts to universities), takes a public stand on social issues of interest to our members (such as marriage equality) and acts in solidarity with other unions and organisations to advance social justice and environmental sustainability locally, nationally and internationally.

NTEU SA Division is affiliated to SA Unions and the May Day Committee and now to the Labour History Society.

Ron Slee

NTEU Division President.

Photo of Ron Slee: NTEU website

Thank you Marlene



Marlene Fenwick, our long serving Secretary and membership officer has retired from the Executive Committee and we wish to thank her for her outstanding contribution to the Society throughout this time. I asked Marlene about her time with the Executive and this was her response:

While I was working in the Florey electorate office, Gary Lockwood who I'd known for many years, also worked there. He asked if I could assist with the labour history newsletter – I think it was 2010 when I began that task. At the AGM in 2012, I was elected Secretary and a couple of years later I took on the membership record-keeping, a job I couldn't have done

without the assistance of my off-sider Denis Fenwick, who's been my guru when it comes to spreadsheets, statistics and reporting!

Denis and I lived in the Queensland outback at the time of the Vietnam moratorium so we missed the protests, demonstrations and sit-ins and often even the radio news, regretfully. Then we returned to the city and a young family and local issues took up all my time and energy. I became an ALP voter by choice in the 70's so being a member of Labour History means that I've been enabled to 'catch up' on so many facets of labour history which I would otherwise never have read or heard about. Our meetings at the Box Factory have provided a path into other understandings, ideals and principles.

Thank you Marlene and Denis and we look forward to catching up at future meetings.♦



With husband Denis



Marlene and life member Jim Doyle



At May Day dinner with Sally McManus and Jude Elton



May Day March 2017

Photos provide by Allison Murchie

Ingrid Voorendt
19/11/1948-4/4/2008



When local labour activist Ingrid Voorendt became seriously ill a fund was established by close comrades to provide her with support. Following her death and final closure of the fund early in 2017 the amount remaining was donated to the South Australian Branch of the Labour History Society. A portable public address system for Society meetings and community use was purchased using the donation. This purchase was made in discussion with the donors and considering the expressed needs of Society members.

The focus on membership support and community use reflects the person and politics of Ingrid Voorendt, whose life and contribution to the labour movement we remember and celebrate here. A vibrant woman committed to left and progressive politics, study and community organisation is revealed in the recollections of comrades Stewart Sweeney, Kathie Muir and Andy Mack.

Stewart Sweeney notes that Ingrid grew up in Whyalla as the youngest of a large migrant family. She 'combined a European (Dutch- specifically Utrecht) sensibility with Whyalla grit and practicality'. She 'never forgot where she came from'. He observes that Ingrid 'had an intuitive understanding of class and clear insights into how it influenced the past and present'.

Having moved from Whyalla to Adelaide, Kathie Muir recalls that Ingrid became a project officer with the Community Youth Support Scheme and an active member of the Australian Social Welfare Union (ASWU). She was instrumental in setting up CHOW (Community Housing for Older Women) in 1988-89. CHOW aimed to provide secure housing for low income older women within 10k of the City. It began as a feminist co-operative, with Ingrid herself participating in a community house in Bowden/Brompton.

Andy Mack was state Secretary of the Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees Association (ATAEA) when Ingrid joined him on staff. He comments:

...Ingrid's union work affirms what we know of her selfless, unstinting and tireless commitments to welfare and workers' rights. She provided absolute support for my role as ATAEA branch secretary and federal president. Ingrid took on the job at an especially fraught industrial relations time of manic forced union amalgamations, award restructuring, the Federal government's Accord demolition of the system of wage justice in favour the demand that wages only rise in line with increases in productivity, on top of the usual array of unionists' demands, management intransigence and conflicts with other unions over coverage.

Ingrid's previous years of support for welfare issues from single women's' housing to ASWU, with the accompanying variety of very difficult situations and conflicts, stood her in good stead to work with us as an organiser and industrial officer. At the time we were a small, inadequately funded union covering a vast array of industries from kids' entertainment centres, racecourses to film theatre production, cinema and tv... She carried out the very difficult jobs, and dealt with appalling employers with calm strength of purpose, and soon became recognised by all members as the most capable organiser we could have had.

We also shared the aspiration to promote good relations with unions and workers' associations in the region, and thus put much effort to building Australia-Asia Workers Links in South Australia.

The extensive range of union commitments cheerfully and constructively taken on by Ingrid included working with me on all aspects of running a small organisation from membership drives, office and accounting work to appearances in industrial courts. A major task that Ingrid promoted and we carried out, was to increase the participation of women in union management from zero to 50%...the bulk of worst-off workers covered by our awards & agreements were women.

...Ingrid represented to me the most admirable form of union representative, cheerfully and unstintingly putting her full efforts to advancing workers' rights and a fair deal.

In 1994 Ingrid completed a Bachelor of Labour Studies through the University of Adelaide's Centre for Labour Studies. Under supervisor Tom Sheridan, she then commenced a PhD, researching a history of the Police Association of South Australia. At the same time she tutored in several courses, including Work & Society, Political Economy and Kathie Muir's course Labour, Culture & the Media. Illness prevented her from finishing her doctorate.

Those who worked with Ingrid remember her personal traits with great fondness and admiration. Kathie Muir notes that she was 'very modest and unassuming. She didn't like pretension and was quick to identify and deflate pomposity'. She 'had a wicked sense of humour'. Andy Mack also affirms her 'humour and strength of amazing willpower'. Stewart Sweeney observed that Ingrid 'possessed a calmness and kindness that contrasted nicely with a surprisingly wicked wit'.

Stewart finally remembers, 'A dancer, cyclist, runner and above all swimmer who moved through the water as she did through life with apparently effortless strength and grace'.♦

Jude Elton

Photo: Kathie Muir

Marx's Ecology: materialism & nature
John Bellamy Foster, Monthly Review Press, New York 2000

This is the book for any 'Greenie' who wants to understand the ecological, political and socioeconomic implications of the far famed doyen of Socialist thought. As such it works both as an introduction to the German philosopher's work and an application of it to the ecological dilemma facing our capitalist society. Marx based his dynamic theory of historical relationships on ancient Graeco-roman Epicurean materialist thinking. This enabled him to focus on both socioeconomic questions and the human relationship with nature so disturbed by capitalist development.



Even in the 19th century of our present common historical era, Marx addressed ecological issues entailed by the relentless search for ever more profit, which subordinated even then natural imperatives to economic obsessions. In fact in his later years, having left his multivolume magnum opus *Capital* somewhat incomplete, he devoted himself to study of capitalist agriculture and the degrading effect he considered it to have on the soil. Overall Marx thought that our era would end in Socialism or barbarism, namely the socioeconomic and ecological collapse we are in fact facing. Green approaches to the challenge of our times can only profit from measurement with the Marxist opus, because it is doubtful politically that mass insecurity will render the public susceptible to the Green message unless the social and economic concerns of the majority are adequately addressed.♦

David Faber

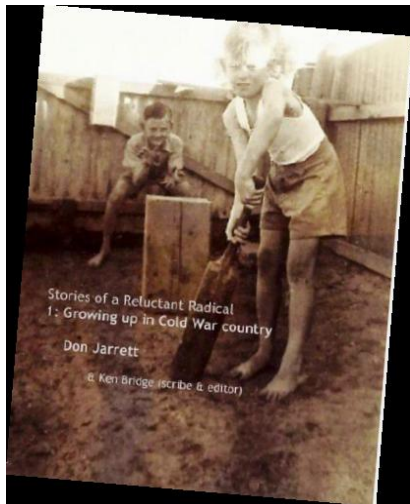
Photo: Wikipedia, Public Domain

1914: The Voice of the Unemployed

On 2 August 1914 the Letters column of *The Advertiser* hosted correspondence from one EL Royals, unemployed, of Osmond Terrace, Norwood. Royals criticised the apparent triumphalism about achievements for the unemployment by AWU Secretary Frank Lundie, leader of the Industrialist wing of the ALP, which the paper had previously carried. The newspaper may have been pleased to carry news of dissent within the labour movement, or acting out of a sense of editorial balance, or both. The letter chastised Lundie from a Marxist point of view for not energetically promoting shorter working hours as a remedy for labour over-supply. It reported conditions current today, when there are too few jobs to go around, and the unemployed are made to suffer excessive competition amongst themselves. The letter bespeaks a profound Socialist political and economic literacy, rare enough even today. ♦

David Faber

Stories of a Reluctant Radical: Memoirs of Don Jarrett vols. 1 &2



The stories told in these memoirs give a vivid picture of life and work in South Australia's Mid-North, West Coast and Port Adelaide from the 1920s through the Cold War. Don Jarrett's personal recollections are both moving and entertaining. There are tales of mischief and love of country. They also show what it was like for a child and young man with Communist parents to live in times of religious and political prejudice and active discrimination.

Scribe and editor Ken Bridge worked with Don to provide short, punchy anecdotes told in Don's own words, accompanied by illustrations and broader contextual information from other sources. The two

easy-to-read volumes can be picked up and dipped into at leisure.

Growing Up In Cold War Country

Volume one commences with Don Jarrett's father Charlie's tough childhood and failed farm on the Wilochra Plains, which sets the scene for difficult relations between father and son. Charlie's Communist politics would have profound negative effects on Don's childhood experiences and early employment. But it also offered a very different world view than that of the virulently anti-Communist, conservative Catholic Church that dominated Port Augusta. Graphic tales indicate family sensitivity to racism and injustice that Don carries through his life.

Don's memories of his own childhood reveal an aptitude for study and sport. They also show systematic bullying and discrimination that undermined education, group participation and social life. These accounts of anti-Communist prejudice taken out on children deserve to be heard and acknowledged.

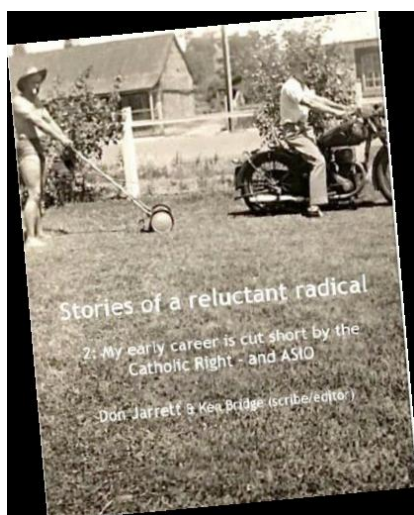
Driven out of high school, '*I was tired of all the put downs all the time. I just sort of gave it away*', Don Jarrett won a position as an electrical fitter apprentice on the railways. But the persecution of a young 'Commo' didn't stop. He recounts harassment at work and night school that finally drove him away from Port Augusta and the mid-north.

In spite of hurtful experiences, Don is still able to convey the beauty of the countryside. In his descriptions of the good times, readers can picture the magnificent Flinders Ranges and camping under a sky full of stars.

My Early Career Is Cut Short by the Catholic Right and ASIO

Volume two begins in 1952 with Don Jarrett describing hostel life in Adelaide as he takes up a technician-in-training position with the Australian Postmaster-General's Department (PMG). Class and political conflicts soon emerge when he moves to the Personnel Branch. Don's accounts of subtle and not-so-subtle undermining apparently because of his left wing views and family Communist Party connections (brother-in-law Eddie Robertson was also state Secretary of the CPA) show the personal effects of Cold War anti-Communist victimisation. In spite of obvious

competence and conscientiousness, Don is subjected to targeted unfair treatment and a series of transfers. There are attempts to frame him for subversive activities.



Giving the PMG away and trying to leave politics behind, Don Jarrett secured employment with the Elder Smith stock company, first at Yankalilla and then the West Coast. He presents entertaining snapshots of stock agent work and life on farms and in towns. Fun tales from the West Coast include stories of dances, fishing, swimming, football and bonfires in the bush.

But Don could not ignore his political awareness and conscience. He notes racism against Aboriginal people; previous Aboriginal massacres; the Maralinga bomb tests; and the 1956 shearers strike. He is very uncomfortable with being asked to take action against farmers on behalf of banks. Don is warned off talking to striking shearers. After contact with family Communist Party members he is accused of theft, which he strenuously denies. The descriptions of management accusations and his resignation (in spite of being shown to be innocent) make exciting reading.

Back in Adelaide Don Jarrett rejoined the PMG at Port Adelaide and became involved with the Communist Party. In spite of successfully completing Third Division Public Service exams Don's results were not gazetted, which meant he could not apply for promotion. He suspects anti-Communist forces at work. His suspicions are heightened by accusations of financial mismanagement and intimidation by Postal Investigation Officers. Don's account of these accusations, his stand against them and personal research show a brave and determined young man.

Don Jarrett describes how he went from job to job in Port Adelaide while suspended and under investigation. He recalls being dismissed when employers somehow found out about the accusations against him. Following pressure on his parents, Don finally agreed to admit a minor financial infringement. This saw the end of his Post Office career, but not his activism.

We look forward to the next instalment of Don Jarrett's memoirs.♦

Jude Elton

Don Jarrett (& Ken Bridge – scribe/editor), *Stories of a Reluctant Radical (Vols 1 & 2)*, Blurb Publishing, November 2016. Cost: \$20 each volume (80 page 'deluxe' softcover edition - cost price)

Marie Lean - tireless battler for the working class

(Article and photo provided by Len Lean, courtesy The Guardian.)



Comrades and friends were saddened to hear of the passing of Party stalwart Marie Lean, who passed away in Adelaide on 26 July. Marie was born at Katoomba in 1931. Her father was a member of the Communist Party and she followed first by joining and becoming an active member of the Eureka Youth League.

She attended the World Youth Festival in 1946 held in Bucharest, [where] she was part of the Australian dance group which performed at the festival. Marie joined the Communist Party in 1951 at the age of 20 years; a total of 66 years membership. She was also a founding member of the SPA and has been a SA State Committee member since 1971 until 2014. She was secretary of the SA State committee in 1993 to 2000. Marie was elected to the Central Committee (CC) at the Party's 7th Congress in 1992 and a member of the CC Executive. She was a conscientious member of the CC and its Executive and made valuable contributions to the work of these two bodies.

Marie was an active member of the Union of Australian Women, peace activist particularly in the Ban the Bomb Campaign, and Anti-Vietnam war Campaign. Growing up in Sydney and with her love of ballet, she performed folk dances at factory gate meetings before party speakers addressed workers. One of her first jobs was working at the Hotel and Restaurant Union Offices doing clerical work, which allowed her time to do some party work. It was also a valuable area to get to know workers who had been exploited.

Arriving in Adelaide from Sydney, Marie quickly joined in party work, was an active member of the Western Branch and became secretary of the branch. Marie put out party leaflets at the gates of two large factories in the Mile End area, Perry Engineering and Howard Bagshaws.

One of Marie's responsibilities was to organise a Junior Eureka League (JELs) activity including monthly visits to interesting places where they could learn about the working class struggles and history. They visited the *Acarlaide* ship in Port Adelaide and were given a tour by the Seamen's Union, visits to museums and art galleries and had annual Christmas beach camps which Dos Rooney had charge. Marie also attended the Eureka Youth League camps each year to ensure they ran smoothly with a mixture of political exercises and sporting activities. She also ensured the hungry participants were fed and retired at a reasonable hour.

Marie was an active member of the Union of Australian Women (UAW); became president when Beryl Miller left for Sydney and when Margaret Pamment became the new secretary, Marie gave great support to Margaret. At demonstrations and marches such as the Trade Union Labour Day March (now defunct) May Day March, annual Women's Equal Pay march, and anti-Vietnam war marches Marie was conspicuous marching, with either one of her children – Michael being the first then David and finally Peter completed the picture.

Politically Marie never took a backward step, she did not know how. She was a good debater on working class affairs and on international events. For a number of years Marie worked in an early childhood centre doing clerical work. She represented the centre on a state government committee. She always had a Socialist working class opinion on issues and was selected by the committee to attend an international conference on early childhood

development in Romania. Marie worked tirelessly for the Communist Party for 66 years for the benefit of all the working class. ♦

Speech by Bob Briton at the celebration of the life of comrade Marie Lean

People who know me know that I don't usually wear a suit. Just lately, I'm usually putting it on to take part in an event such as this one. I've done it for much loved, great comrades like Alan Miller and Frank Gosden who lived to a ripe old age, Les and Connie Purkis and for Max Cordwell, who was lost to our ranks much too soon. I regret to say, it is a well-worn suit. Today I have put it on for comrade Marie Lean.

Many of these people joined our Party during its hay day and suffered through the big splits in our movement. Some of you here lived through those tumultuous times and maybe still you feel the same about the issues but we all share our dream of a new society without exploitation based on grass roots democracy. And we would all respect the sheer intellectual and physical endurance of people like Marie to keep this hope alive while living in a society base on theft, alienation and division.

I first met Marie when I first came to Adelaide to live in 1990. She was at everything. She was in many committees to do with the struggle for an end to war, for women's rights and the many other burning needs of the people of the world. She never tired of promoting our Party press. She became State Secretary of the Party at a terrible time caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union when a lot of people drifted away from our movement disappointed and defeated. Marie was never defeated.

I have to mention here that Marie was involved to the extent she was because of the support she had from Len. And on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, I would like to pass on our most heart-felt sympathy to him and the family. We know that you have suffered a lot during the past few years of Marie's illness. I hope you can take comfort from the fact that you always in our thoughts and carried our best wishes.

Comrade Marie was a quiet and capable leader; not at all of the table slapping, big-talking, self-promoting variety. If I could make one criticism, she never had the appropriate amount of confidence in her well-founded opinions. That is my only and my last criticism of the flip side of her very admirable qualities. It is one of the features of our movement that a necessary spirit of criticism and self-criticism follows even to the grave. It is done in the spirit of comradeship and, in this instance, of love.

Comrade Marie taught us a lot through her stories that she would repeat many times. It may have been a sign of the affliction she would ultimately be struck down by. The one that impacted me most was about when she received her first pay packet as a teenager. She proudly presented it to her father, a staunch Party member, and said "This is what I earned last week". Her father said, "No, you earned much more than that. This is simply what they have paid you." Marie and her generation were steeped in the Marxist-Leninist understanding of the world in a way we haven't been. The loss of her generation is a challenge to us. But we will do it.

As I said, I met Marie at a very trying time for our Party. She left us at a far more promising time. The clubs we are involved in are thriving. We have a new Branch based on the University of Adelaide. We have members of that Branch with ages ranging from 16 to 90 years old. It would warm your heart to see it. The students are covering the campus with our recruiting posters and are starting to have an impact on the student politics of the university. We are recruiting actively and even leading trade unionists. It lifts our spirits to see this development and we owe the opportunity to do this to comrades like Marie Lean. We will miss you but we will continue to build our Party in your honour. ♦

Vale Kirsty Boden

Tributes have properly flowed for Kirsty Boden, the young Loxton woman and distinguished graduate of the Flinders University nursing program who was murdered while assisting the stricken during the London Bridge terrorist attack on 3 June this year.

Her courage and professionalism in rallying to the scene of the emergency have been justly applauded.

Less attention has been paid to the fact that these were not merely personal attributes, but characteristics of a tertiary trained and educated skilled worker with a profound sense of vocational responsibility and duty.

In a profession still substantially feminine, nurses are sometimes placed on a pedestal, only to be pilloried when they take industrial action to defend the pay rates appropriate for the unsociable hours they work. Hopefully Kirsty's sacrifice will contribute to shaming those who exploit this double standard.

Vale Kirsty Boden

David Faber

Photo: Public Domain



The 1931 Beef March & its significance today

On Friday 9 January 1931 violence exploded at the junction of King William Street and Victoria Square when a demonstration of the unemployed protesting the withdrawal of beef from government sustenance rations clashed with police. Seventeen persons were hospitalised including one woman and ten police. Twelve persons were arrested, including six members of the Communist Party of Australia. How did this come about, who was mainly responsible and what were the immediate consequences? What use can the Anti-Poverty movement make in the 21st century of historical memory of this watershed 20th century event?



The background of the violence reached back into years of class conflict focussed on employment issues, particularly in Port Adelaide. By the middle of the previous decade growth in South Australia's predominantly agrarian economy had slowed as post-war recovery stalled. This was already the case when the Gunn Labor government was elected in April 1924, in an era when State governments were

more important to popular living standards than they are today. By August challenging conditions and factional instability had seen the Premiership pass to Lionel Hill, who had made his name as a parliamentary opponent of Conscription in 1916. Hill lost office in 1927, by which time the Commonwealth Bruce Government was energetically persecuting the working class to reduce wages and boost exports. Bruce's efforts to tame the transport industry led to bitter struggles on the wharves. Port Adelaide strikers were defeated in 1928 by paramilitary and police action and 'volunteer' scab labour which exploited racial tensions. By Christmas State unemployment was underestimated as at about 7,000 breadwinners. Bruce's interference with the wage setting Arbitration system saw him lose his seat and the election in 1929, just as John Howard did in 2007 over Work Choices. The Scullin Federal Labor Government almost immediately had to deal with the Wall Street Crash, poor terms of trade in agricultural commodities, and inherited the financial consequences of years of conservative pork barrelling in infrastructure development funded foreign loans. South Australia was arguably the State hardest hit. In 1929 17.8% of trade unionists in South Australia were without work, as against a national average of 13.1%.

So how did the Beef March develop and how did the violence arise? The trouble started because the Labor State Government was in a parlous financial situation and the Master Butchers Association were unhappy with the rate of payment to supply beef amongst inferior cuts of meat to the unemployed tendering vouchers. So the unemployed were told they could go without beef and rely on a monotonous diet of mutton, sausages and mince. Primary beneficiary of this deal in the Port was the Mathews chain of butchers. At a meeting of the Unemployed Workers' Movement in the Port Adelaide Waterside Workers' Hall, led amongst others by Wally Bourne, a proposal was passed to march to Parliament House from the Port and complain. Because of sad experience with the police, a Workers' Defence Corps was formed and trained as bodyguards from the younger unemployed men. It was decided that banners would be affixed to 2 x 2" timbers, and that the banner bearers would

wear tin forearm guards on the left arm. These, together with cobble stones collected on the route, were the sole means of defence and offense carried by the marchers, who received an enthusiastic community send off from the Port. The Port marchers were met at the top of Port Road by marchers recruited from elsewhere in Adelaide. At Parliament it was realised that the House of Assembly was not in session, so about 10,000 people (official press estimate 2,000) proceeded to wait on the Premier at the Treasury Building, now a prestigious hotel. They waited for about half an hour. Exactly what happened next depends somewhat on your point of view. The capitalist press, acting as official mouthpiece, claimed the following day that projectiles were thrown injuring police before a baton was drawn [by a hitherto peaceful crowd?] But there can be little doubt that the police were prepared. As Wally Bourne remembered it:

When the door was opened...instead of the minister being there to greet us, there was the police force in all its glory, and behind us...– in the square itself, was the mounted police. In other words we were completely ambushed, and that was the actual riot...the police came out swinging their batons...

The authorities from the Premier on down to the newspapers stigmatised 'the riot' as Communist inspired. Now the march certainly was Communist inspired, but the inspiration of a few Communists would have gotten them no-where if it were not for the community feeling provoked by the decision to withdraw beef from the rations. For that the Government and the Master Butchers were to blame. But the person most responsible for what appears to have been in great part at least a police riot seems to have been the Police Commissioner, Brigadier General Sir Raymond Lionel Leane. An Anzac who rose from a captaincy on Gallipoli, Leane was a convinced pillar of the establishment, known in military circles as 'Bull' because of his robust personality, who had been known to personally lead baton charges against the workers of Port Adelaide. It is highly unlikely that police tactics against the Beef March were anything other than carefully planned, or planned without his personal attention. A sympathetic biographer has commented:

In 1928 with strong government backing he crushed the Port Adelaide wharf strike, enrolling 3,000 special constables; and during the Depression ruthlessly curbed demonstrations by the unemployed which he judged to be communist inspired.

He also oversaw an anti-communist dragnet in the wake of the March which effectively repressed the Communist Party and the Unemployed Workers' Movement.

What can be learned from these events for today's struggles? Folk memory and popular traditions are political resources we can use to inspire us. It is inspiring that the unemployed of the 30s stood up for themselves and fought back against their oppression, as we are seeking to do today. It is not a matter of aping the tactics of yesteryear, but valuing the example of the past to build a future in the present. There are specific lessons to be learned too from the things we have in common today with the men and women of the past. It has truly been said that the dynamic force in human history is that of class struggle, the socioeconomic tension between the haves and the have nots which unites our efforts with those of the Beef Marchers. We can use this symbolic and very real unity to make our case, reminding ourselves all along that tradition is a good tool and a bad master. We must make the most of the past to invent creatively a future which our betters will not make for us.♦

Dr David Faber

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Delivered to the Anti-Poverty Network of SA, Box Factory 6/5/2017

Photo: King William Street 9th January 1931, Courtesy State Library of SA, B 60882.

Pioneer Women's Memorial Gardens

The Pioneer Women's Memorial in the Garden of Remembrance is a tribute to the pioneer women of South Australia. Tucked behind Government House, and just off busy King William Street, it is a peaceful place that many enjoy visiting. It is also the much loved venue for Adelaide Writers Week when it comes alive with crowds gathering in the garden and the memorial taking centre stage with the attending writers.



There was strong support for a memorial to early women settlers especially those who had endured so much in the outback area. It was decided that the memorial should not be a burden on future generations of women. Adelaide Miethke conceived of a 'Book of Remembrance' to raise funds, each sponsor, for the cost of one shilling recording her name and those of her ancestors on the Leaves of Remembrance. The completed book contained more than 20 000 names and raised over £1000 pounds. However most of the funds came from fetes, competitions, bridge parties, sports carnivals and other events. A total of £6250 was raised and this was dedicated in 1937 to establishing a Flying sister base at Alice Springs, and £1000 for a Pioneer Women's Garden of Remembrance, to be given to the Adelaide City Council.

The Memorial Garden was paid for by the Women's Centenary Council of South Australia. The Women's Centenary Council (WCC) comprised representatives of 72 women's organizations and in March 1935 met to discuss projects for South Australia's 1936 centenary. Unveiled by Lady Muriel Barclay-Harvey on the 19 April 1941. Around 2 000 people were reported to have attended. The ceremony also officially declared open the base funded in Alice Springs, where the proceedings from Adelaide were broadcast via the national network.

The garden was designed by landscape designer Elsie Cornish and the statue created by Ola Cohn. A time recorder designed by Government Astronomer George Dodwell is located on the left side of the statue.♦

Catherine Manning, History SA, 'Pioneer Women's Memorial' SA History Hub, History Trust of South Australia, <http://sahistoryhub.com.au/things/pioneer-womens-memorial>, accessed 5 April 2017. Photo: SLISA, B10683 at the opening in 1941.

The Labour History Society SA

Invites you to hear

Mark Dean

talk on

Industrialisation and de-industrialisation in South Australia

2.00 pm, Sunday 15 October 2017

**at the Box Factory, 59 Regent Street South,
Adelaide**



South Australia's modern economy was built on automotive manufacturing industrialisation from the mid-1930s in response to economic crisis, and in view of positive economic opportunities for the state and its citizens moving into the era of globalisation. However, since the 1980s SA's experience has been understood more accurately as one of de-industrialisation, with a range of associated social and economic consequences. Facing the impending closure of Holden, a number of questions can be asked about the state's current predicament: What political and economic

circumstances have led to the end of automotive manufacturing in SA? How can we interpret the influence of globalisation on SA's industrial economy? What role have social, political and economic institutions played in building the state's advanced economy, and in contributing to its dismantling?

Mark Dean completed a PhD in political economy at The University of Adelaide in 2017. He currently works as a Research Assistant at the Australian Industrial Transformation Institute at Flinders University.

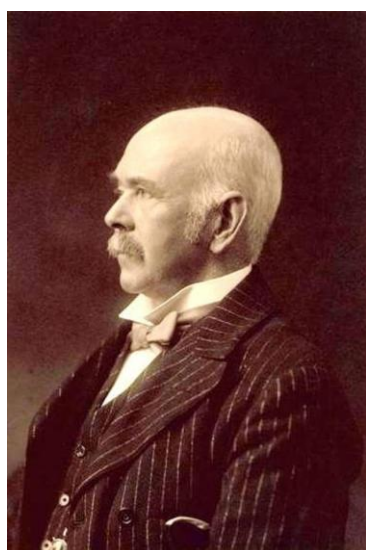
All welcome - FREE EVENT – no booking necessary – afternoon tea provided.

Enquiries: jude.elton@internode.on.net

Sir Josiah Symon's Anti-Socialism

Josiah Symon was born to a lower middle class artisan father in Scotland in 1846 and there began his climb into the bourgeoisie through intellectual merit. He emigrated to South Australia in 1866 and became articled legal clerk to a cousin at Mount Gambier. Within four years a brief he drafted came to the attention of Sir Samuel Way, and Josiah transferred his articles to Adelaide, and was called to the bar in 1871. In 1881 he entered the House of Assembly for Sturt, was appointed QC, became Attorney General and married Eleanor Cowle at St Peter's Cathedral. President of the SA Free Trade League and an honorary member of the British Cobden Club, he was doctrinaire enough to lose the 1887 contest for the south-eastern constituency of Victoria on principle, opposing protectionism and the payment of members. He believed with Tennyson that because 'right is right, to follow the right is wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'

An ardent imperialist and Australian nationalist, he was knighted for services to the Federation movement in 1901, and topped the Senate poll that year. He served in Reid's right wing Liberal Commonwealth Government of 1904-5 as Attorney General.



In 1906 he again topped the poll as an Anti-Socialist, but in 1910 stood aside from the Fusion with Deakin's Protectionists. In 1913 he lost his seat standing as an Independent liberal conservative. A conscriptionist, he took the loss of the 1916 Referendum badly, telling the Tory Adelaide *Register* that it was 'a temporary triumph for the ignorant and misguided, but a permanent stain on Australia.'

After he retired, Symon bequeathed his collection of law books to the University of Adelaide and the remainder of his extensive 'gentleman's library', with an emphasis on English literature, to the State Library, which maintains it as a special collection. Importantly, this Anti-Socialist possessed no Socialist works. It would appear that he only knew his enemy second hand, through such volumes as *The Case against Socialism: A handbook for speakers & candidates*, introduced by AJ Balfour. This manual argued that all Socialists aimed at 'complete Socialism' and 'collective ownership', not to mention 'social and economic equality between the sexes.' The socialisation by a democratic State of the means of production, distribution and exchange under Social Democratic rule was crafty opportunism and the thin edge of the wedge. In fact 'municipal services' necessarily involved 'subversive changes' which 'in their social and economic aspects, fall in no way short of those designed by the Social Democrats themselves.' The emancipation of labour from capitalism and landlordism was revolutionary or evolutionary, the difference involved being only one of degree. On the other hand, Symon maintained, existed the option of 'industrial freedom'. Symon believed that 'the State is an organisation for police purposes, having no constructive or moral duties.' ♦

David Faber

Photo: Wikipedia, Public Domain

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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2016-2017

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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.

General enquiries can be made to the Secretary,

