

SA LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

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

Spring 2015



David Faber, Andrew Leigh, Kevin Kaeding, Jude Elton, Ralph Clarke
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AGM
18th October 2015
Speaker Will Sergeant



Flier at end of newsletter

President's Report

Growing inequality: reasons & redress

This newsletter includes a report on the address by Shadow Assistant Treasurer Andrew Leigh at the Society's August meeting, where he traced changes in social and economic inequality in Australia. Leigh identified several factors contributing to a growing disparity of wealth and income. One of these was a decline in union membership.

This decline and its connection to inequality emphasises the continuing importance of trade unions, and the people and culture that contribute to their endurance in hard times. The newsletter acknowledges union leadership and culture in the article on soon to be retiring Australian Workers Union Secretary Wayne Hanson and the annual AWU Members and Friends Dinner. Union culture is also celebrated in the piece on modern union banners. A review of the recent history of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, *Organise, educate, control* notes its analysis of leadership and activism at all levels of the unions that have come together to form the modern AMWU.

Political theorising and debate are explored in two very different contributions; one on 'Gramsci and labour history' and another on Adelaide's own Speakers Corner in Botanic Park.

Finally, the continuing battle against discrimination and inequality on the basis of sexuality is acknowledged in the topic for this year's AGM. We are delighted that historian and activist Will Sergeant has agreed to speak on 'Bert Edwards: King of the West End'. Bert was gaoled with hard labour because of his sexuality. He was also a lifelong supporter of working people and the poor of Adelaide's West End. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in South Australia under the government of Don Dunstan.

Jude Elton



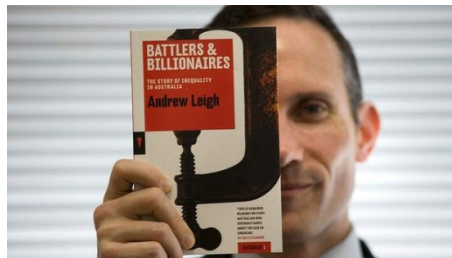
In 1881 the University of Adelaide became the first Australian university to admit women.

In 1840 the Corporation of Adelaide (now Adelaide City Council) established as the first municipal authority in Australia.

Andrew Leigh – Inequality in Australia

The Society hosted a very well attended function on the topic of Inequality in Australia.

On the 16th of August (Sunday night) Andrew Leigh (Labor member for Fraser, Shadow Assistant Treasurer and former Professor of Economics at the Australian National University in Canberra spoke to friends and members .He drew some of his material from his recent book, Battlers to Billionaires. He made a number of very interesting points as he outlined briefly the history of income inequality from pre-white settlement to the current day. These included: that indigenous society was very egalitarian - this continued into early days of settlement and that inequality began to emerge as land became a commodity and was accumulated - this continued up to the 1890s and WW1.



Between the wars the trend abated and this was so into the 50s and 60s. However the trend towards greater inequality began to re-emerge from the 80s, exacerbated by 3 factors

1. the decline in union membership, from about half the workforce to currently less than a fifth
2. cuts in the top tax rate from the 80s onward
3. the twin forces of globalization and technology

He argues this is a recipe for a static society and one that ought to be questioned as to whether this is what we want. The challenge will be how these trends can be turned around.

Steve Acton



Members and friends at the Andrew Leigh talk

Veteran Trade Unionist to retire



Australian Workers Union SA Branch Secretary, Wayne Hanson, has decided to bring down the curtain on his lengthy career with his retirement in mid-2016. Wayne announced his decision at the annual AWU Members Dinner at the Convention Centre, attended by some 500 delegates, members and friends. The dinner supports the Neil Sachse Spinal Injury Foundation. It has been held for the past 10 years. Scott McDine, AWU National Secretary since July 2014, was a special guest and addressed those present.

Wayne has been a staunch unionist ever since he started his apprenticeship at Pope Products, where he worked for many years before becoming a full time official. He had been a Site Delegate and then the Site Convenor for the Australasian Society of Engineers (the ASE) at Popes, which had a closed shop for the 1800 employees. From 1986 Wayne worked as an Organiser for the ASE until that Union amalgamated with the Federated Ironworkers Association in 1991 to form a Union that was known as FIMEE. In 1993 FIMEE amalgamated with the AWU and became the AWU/FIMEE. That name changed to the AWU in 1995.

Wayne became an Assistant Secretary of the AWU in that year, and, when Secretary Bob Sneath was elected as a member of the Legislative Council in 2000, Wayne moved up to that position. The following year Branch Elections were held and Wayne was successful in retaining the position. Since 2001 Wayne and his team have been returned to office on four occasions unopposed. Wayne will be replaced as Branch Secretary by well-known AWU identity, Peter Lamps.

Labour History News pays tribute to Wayne for the leadership he has given to those thousands of AWU members who rely upon their Union to fight for decent wages and conditions on their behalf.



Greg Stevens

Gramsci & Labour History



Echo of the fame of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), the Italian Communist political leader and thinker, crossed the language barrier into English half a century ago. But many readers will be grateful for some detail of his life of working class militancy. Gramsci was born Sardinian to an Italian provincial petty official father who fell foul of political intrigue accused of maladministration. Resulting poverty through the loss of a jailed breadwinner afflicted his lower middle class family throughout his youth and education. All this gave him a lifelong sympathy with the underdog, whose travails he had shared. Nevertheless the tenacious young hunchback rose from scholar to journalist, becoming a young Socialist along the way. Journalism was in his hands a form of cultural advocacy which developed into political leadership. Particularly seminal was his editorship in the wake of the Great War of the Torinese journal *Ordine Nuovo/New Order*, which opened its pages during the Red Biennium of 1919-20 to discussion of industrial disputation at the FIAT works in particular. After the split from the Partito Socialista Italiano to form the Communist Party in January 1921, Gramsci rose in due course to the peak position of General Secretary. Eventually implicated in a plot to overthrow the Fascist regime which had come to power in October 1922, he was prosecuted by the feared Tribunale Speciale and sentenced to prison in the hope, in the words of the prosecutor, to stop his brain working.

Gramsci then was an informed political actor who meditated deeply on historical processes to change the world for the better as Marx had called for. He continued to do so in prison, which could not stop him working out the lessons of his and his nation's political experience. These reflections were written down in a series of exercise books known to history as the *Quaderni del Carcere* or *Prison Notebooks*, smuggled out by his sister in law after his death due to deliberate medical neglect. Therein he had a few choice words to say which will resonate with practitioners and readers of labour history.

The history of subordinate social groupings is necessarily disaggregated and episodic. It is undoubted that there is a tendency in the historical activity of these groups towards consolidation if only on a provisional basis. But this tendency is continually fragmented by the activity of the ruling classes...Subaltern groups suffer the historical initiative of the ruling elites, even when they rise up in rebellion...In reality even when they appear triumphant, subaltern groups are only in a state of defensive alert...Every trace of autonomous initiative is accordingly of inestimable value for the integral historian. It is therefore clear that any such historiography cannot but be treated by monograph, and that every such monograph will demand a great accumulation of material which will often be difficult to collect.

David Faber

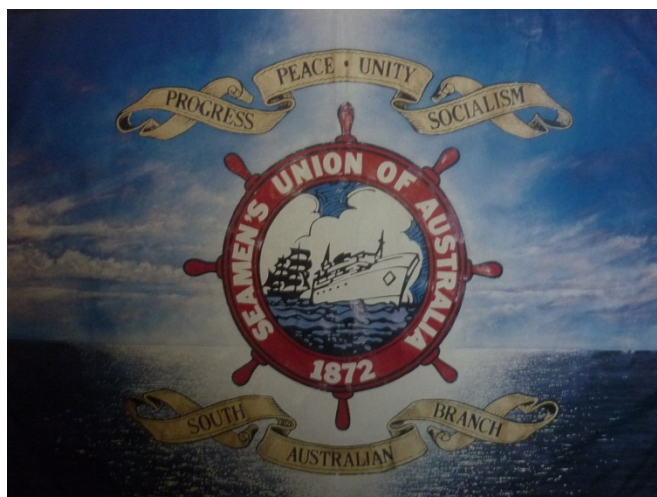
Modern Trade Union Banners

Trade union banners originated in the early 19th century; trade unions had recently formed and the banners were a way of building unity. Hundreds of banners were made in England and by the end of the century Australian unions began making banners. Many of these early banners have been lost or destroyed.

“Trade Union banners celebrate the achievements of generations of working people; their work; their skills; their hopes and suffering and their contribution to building the Australia of today. The banners represent unity, solidarity and pride in both collective action and support.” ¹

In S.A. only about 15 of the early banners have survived and are in poor condition. In 1984, the centenary of the UTLC a major arts project was undertaken which included the design and production of several new banners; further funding was obtained and the project grew with the result of a major exhibition. Each banner was designed and made differently; a couple of unions ran design competitions; artists were commissioned and developed the banners in collaboration with the unions;

The Seaman's Union banner has a specially knotted border and it was done by Ken Irvine, a union member. Kathie Muir made the banner for the Food Preservers Union using applique, quilting and embroidery in satins. Kay Lawrence and Elaine Gardner made the Women in Trade Unions Network banner after extensive discussion and women in the network helped with the quilting. Twenty three banners were completed and several others made later.



“When I got a chance to paint the Seamen's Union banner, I jumped at it. I've always admired their gutsy attitude towards political issues – especially peace. When designing the banner, I felt it was important to keep the old helmsman's wheel design as it so strongly identified with the union. I'm glad they like it” Mark Thomson, Artist ²

“The new banner is more three-dimensional and it's really brought the feeling of the sea to life – it's incredible, it's very beautiful ...Our members are so proud of the banner. It always draws so much comment and praise when it goes out to the public. It's Ron Barklay's, the State Secretary – it's Ron's pride and joy.” Ken McLennan, Acting Secretary.³



"The first parade of the banner was a very emotional experience. The women were glowing with pride, almost 'crowing' with delight at being part of the process ... Their joy was wonderful. ... I don't think I have never felt so good about a project as a whole, and a piece of work in particular." Elaine Gardner, Artist⁴

"Kay and Elaine trusted in our ideas, that these were strong and would point the way to the appropriate final image....At all times it was a fantastic group process and a really successful exchange." Jude Elton, Committee Member⁵



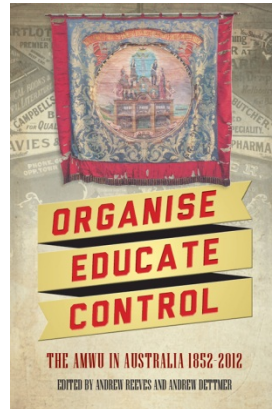
Allison Murchie

1-5: Sourced from booklet "Modern Trade Union Banners – An exhibition of recently commissioned S.A. union banners."



Molly Byrne was the first ALP woman elected to the South Australian House of Assembly in 1965.

Organise, educate, control: the AMWU in Australia 1852-2012
**Eds. Andrew Reeves & Andrew Dettmer, Monash University
Publishing, 2013.**



This collection of 14 essays, stories and interviews does not claim to present a comprehensive history of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. Rather, a range of activists and academics explore different aspects of the union's history in Australia, from formation in 1852 to 2012. The collection has been brought together by two editors: Andrew Reeves, currently an academic who has published extensively in the areas of labour and industrial history and material cultural studies, and Andrew Dettmer, National President of the AMWU.

The section devoted to 'AMWU Politics' includes an examination of the union's political and industrial relations strategies from the mid nineteenth century to the present by Nikki Balnave and Greg Patmore. They highlight its 'militancy and political sophistication.' Andrew Scott focuses on one illustration of this sophistication in his essay on the 1987 publication *Australia Reconstructed*. He uses interviews with key participants in the booklet's development, to explore reasons for the AMWU's international outlook and in particular its interest in Sweden, which so informed content.

Two of the many amalgamations that led to the current union are also examined. Andrew Dettmer traces the amalgamation of the Association of Drafting, Supervisory & Technical Employees (ADSTE) with the then Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), while Bobbie Oliver assesses the processes and impact of successive amalgamations in Western Australia. Aspects of the history of individual unions prior to amalgamation are also included. Cathy Brigden tells the story of the Female Confectioners Union in Melbourne and Tasmania between 1916 and 1945. Relations between the Melbourne Typographical Society and the Melbourne Trades & Labour Council are examined by Andrew Reeves. Keir Reeves explores the mobilising of young engineers in Victoria, 1941-1961.

Union banners are celebrated in a further chapter by Andrew Reeves. This illustrated essay analyses the iconography of a number of banners, including that of the Gawler Federated Agricultural Implement Association.

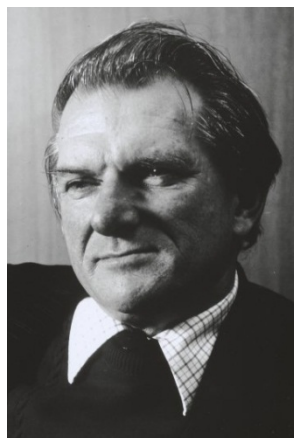


AMWU banners

The section 'AMWU People' features fascinating and sometimes moving interviews with and stories by officials and activists. Laurie Carmichael tells the story of his longstanding union and political activism in an interview with Andrew Dettmer. His commitment to research and education at all levels of the union movement shines through. Robyn McQueeney presents the work and union experiences of three Tasmanian women. Their different paths to union involvement are apparent, as is their courage and continuing allegiance. The politics of AMWU organiser 'Red' Fred Thompson and his influence in Far North Queensland and the Northern Territory are analysed by Cora Trevarthen.

'AMWU People' also includes three contributions relating to particular occupational groups and workplaces. Glenys Lindner remembers her families' connection over several generations to the Electrolytic Zinc Works in Hobart, while Ric McCracken describes the working culture of metalworkers at the Perth Midland Railway Workshops. Shop stewards John Hempseed and Chris Harper provide a detailed account of the Queensland Coal Shop Stewards organisation from formation in 1974.

The editors of this rich collection hope that it will inspire continuing union activism by readers. It would be gratifying if it also spurred further research, recording of interviews and publication on additional aspects of AMWU history. There is very little in this book about South Australia and no South Australian contributors. Perhaps there are previous and/or current South Australian officials and members out there who would like to convey something of their experience of workplaces, unions prior to and after amalgamations and their own activism in a further publication?



Laurie Carmichael

Jude Elton

Speakers Corner

Grass rings were set aside within Botanic Park for public speaking. From the 1890s in particular, these attracted large audiences on a Sunday afternoon. The ring near Frome Road, Speakers Corner, remained an important element of Botanic Park life until the 1970s. Noel Lothian (director of Adelaide Botanic Garden 1948–80) recalled that prospective Labor politicians 'had to prove their worth down there' (Aitken, p169).

Organisations wishing to speak in the park had to apply to the Botanic Garden's Board for a permit. Each speaker had to be named and approved. Increasingly, police reports were called for before approval was granted, although permits were rarely refused. A failure to renew the permit of IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) speakers on one occasion led to arrests when members spoke regardless. Protests were organised in their support and they later regained the right to be heard. IWW speakers during the Great Depression included Aboriginal orator Ted O'Reilly.

Organisations and individuals using this public forum were diverse. Members of religious groups were predominantly of an evangelical persuasion. They included temperance societies and the Rosary Crusade. Trade unions regularly held meetings of members in the Park, particularly transport and building unions associated with workplaces nearby. Political groups fielding speakers included the Labor Party, the Communist Party, the Socialist Party and the Democratic Labor Party. Pro and anti-conscription speakers raised their voices during the First World War. Other groups reflected issues current at particular times and minority perspectives not otherwise heard. Such groups included the Labor Regulation League, the Central Council of the Unemployed, the Single Tax Society, the Rationalist Association, the Australian Pensioners League and the Consumer Protection Committee.

Speakers Corner no longer attracts audiences. The three rows of wooden seats in the ring near Frome Road are now mainly used by picnickers and during WOMADelaide.

Jude Elton, History SA, 'Botanic Park', SA History Hub, History SA, <http://sahistoryhub.com.au/places/botanic-park>, accessed 3 August 2015.



Rex Munn Cultural Heritage Award



Rex Munn was one of the inaugural members of the Port of Adelaide National Trust branch. He was president of the MUA Veterans Association, a member of SA Unions Community Action Group, vice president of the Mayday Committee, member of the Asbestos Advisory Committee to the Government, member of the Fair Go for Pensioners Committee and a foundation member of the Port Adelaide branch of the National Trust.

His motto was “retired from the workforce but not from the struggle.”

He was also a volunteer at the Port Adelaide Maritime Museum, an enthusiastic gardener, home brewer and passionate long- time supporter of the Tea Tree Gully Football Club.

To celebrate and remember the contributions that Rex made to the community, Port of Adelaide National Trust initiated the Rex Munn Cultural Heritage Award to be presented on the first Sunday after May Day at the Workers' Memorial in Port Adelaide. The inaugural award was presented by Michelle Hogan and Pat Netschitowsky to Emma Webb, representing Vitalstatistix Theatre Company and the performance of "Rockin' The Boat".

Jamie Newlyn (May Day Committee), Michelle Hogan and Pat Netschitowsky (both from Port of Adelaide National Trust) at the award presentation



The New National Federal Coalition Ministry

Prime Minister: Malcolm Turnbull
Leader of the Government in the Senate: George Brandis
Leader of the House: Christopher Pyne
Treasurer: Scott Morrison
Minister for Foreign Affairs: Julie Bishop
Attorney-General: George Brandis
Minister for Women: Michaelia Cash
Minister for Indigenous Affairs: Nigel Scullion
Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development and Deputy Prime Minister: Warren Truss
Minister for Resources, Energy and Northern Australia (Minister for Territories, Local Government and Major Projects): Josh Frydenberg
Minister for Trade and Investment: Andrew Robb
Minister for International Development and the Pacific: Steven Ciobo
Minister for Tourism and International Education: Richard Colbeck
Minister for Justice: Michael Keenan
Minister for Small Business: Kelly O'Dwyer
Minister for Finance: Mathias Cormann
Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources: Barnaby Joyce
Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science: Christopher Pyne
Minister for Immigration and Border Protection: Peter Dutton
Minister for the Environment: Greg Hunt
Minister for Health and Sport: Susan Ley

Minister for Rural Health: Fiona Nash
Minister for Defence: Marise Payne
Minister for Veterans' Affairs: Stuart Robert
Minister for Defence Materiel and Science: Mal Brough
Minister for Communications: Mitch Fifield
Minister for the Arts: Mitch Fifield
Minister for Employment: Michaelia Cash
Minister for Social Services: Christian Porter
Minister for Human Services: Stuart Robert
Minister for Education and Training: Simon Birmingham
Minister for Vocational Education and Skills: Luke Hartsuyker
Cabinet Secretary: Arthur Sinodinos
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service: Michaelia Cash
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Digital Government: Mitch Fifield
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Counter Terrorism: Michael Keenan
Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister: Alan Tudge
Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister: James McGrath
Assistant Minister for Productivity: Peter Hendy
Assistant Cabinet Secretary: Scott Ryan
Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs: Concetta Fierravanti-Wells



Source: Facebook: "Michael Leunig Appreciation Page"

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

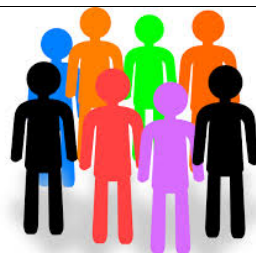
2014-2015

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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, Marlene Fenwick on 041 880 4124 or by email to nonning@bigpond.net.au



Photos of local events by Allison Murchie

Please join us for
the AGM of the
Labour History Society

The brief meeting will be followed by an entertaining address by
guest speaker, Will Sergeant, on

**BERT EDWARDS, KING OF THE WEST
END**

Albert (Bert) Edwards was born in the West End of Adelaide and became a champion of working people, the unemployed, prisoners and persecuted groups. A member of the Australian Workers Union, Bert served as a Labor parliamentarian and City Councillor. Gaoled with hard labour because of his sexuality, Bert retained the support of his community. He continued to fight for them for the rest of his life.



Will Sergeant is the Chair/Convenor of the Organising Committee for Australia's 15th Homosexual Histories Conference being held in Adelaide this November. An activist for over 40 years, Will marched in Adelaide's first Pride March in 1973 and Sydney's famed 1978 parade, precursor to Mardi Gras. He's creator of Dr Gertrude Glossop PhD (Formal Drapery) Curtain University, who has led the Queer History Walk in South Australia's Feast and History Festivals.

**2.00 pm, Sunday 18 October 2015
at The Box Factory, 59 Regent Street South,
Adelaide**

Afternoon tea provided

❖ All welcome ❖

Enquiries to 041 880 4124