

LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

Labour History Society (South Australia) Incorporated

Summer 2017-18



SLSA, B 706254/4 Savings Bank of SA float 1951

Included in this Issue

ASU, Aboriginal workers in the SA opal industry, 1936 Banking Royal Commission, Tom Sheridan scholarship, Vale Eleanor Ramsay, OH&S, GMH closure, Labour History National Conference, ICAN and the Nobel Peace Prize, Seeds of Affinity, APHEDA on Immigration.

Making History

The exploration of history is not only about the distant past. It is a continuum, extending in Australia from Aboriginal occupation some 60,000 years ago (at last count) into the making of history today. Labour History Society SA newsletters include reflections and reports on both past events and more recent activities by organisations, groups and individuals. Connecting them all is a concern to acknowledge and improve the lives of working people, their communities and recent arrivals.

In this issue Mike Harding provides overdue recognition of the contribution of Aboriginal people to the South Australian opal industry. David Faber reports on the recent 15th Biennial national Labour History Conference, held in Brisbane, with its theme of 'Workers of the World'. Steve Acton examines the recent attempt by the South Australian Labour Government to introduce a bank tax and calls for a national Banking Royal Commission in the context of the 1936 Royal Commission inquiring into Monetary and Banking Systems. The closure of the GMH Elizabeth plant is recorded in an extract from *In Daily*.

Articles relating to organised labour include Greg Stevens' outline of the recent history of the Australian Services Union SA Branch. The Branch is welcomed as a new organisation member of the Labour History Society. Jim Ward, National Occupational Health & Safety Director of the Australian Workers Union analyses sobering trends in occupational health & safety. Jim questions government policy in the states and emphasises organised worker responses.

'Ordinary' people, inspired by commitments to justice and equality, are also honoured in this edition. The Society commemorates the life and work of Eleanor Ramsay, who died suddenly in October 2017. The vision and power of individuals coming together is celebrated in two articles on ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) and its winning of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. Allison Murchie reports on Seeds of Affinity, a grass roots organisation supporting women and children transitioning from prison back into the community. She includes sobering data on prison populations. APHEDA tackles some of the misunderstandings about refugees and migrants in '5 things (+1) you need to know about migration'; an extract from their recent newsletter. APHEDA is the overseas aid arm of the Australian trade union movement.

Please note and publicise the 2018 Tom Sheridan Labour History Scholarship, which is advertised in this newsletter. The scholarship supports new research on aspects of South Australian labour and social history by an honours or PhD student at a South Australian-based university. It is named after Tom Sheridan, a founding member of the SA Branch, and provides the successful applicant \$500 research support and Branch membership.

Jude Elton

A brief history of the Australian Services Union

We recently welcomed the SA-NT Branch of the Australian Services Union as an organisation member of Labour History in SA.

On 1st July 1993 a series of amalgamations of existing Unions resulted in the emergence of the Australian Services Union as we know it today. These Unions included the Federated Clerks Union, the Municipal Officers Association, the Municipal Employees Union, the Australian Social Welfare Union and some other smaller Unions. Some of these Unions had been in existence for a very long time e.g. the Federated Clerks Union (the FCU) was first established in SA in 1905. Our own Ralph Clarke, who had been National President of the FCU from 1991, became one of three Joint National Presidents upon amalgamation.

South Australia initially ran as two branches, and then became a single Branch. John Gazzola had taken over from Ralph, and then when Theo Marks left in 1994, the two branches merged with John as Branch Secretary. By then they had moved into their own premises in Rundle St, Kent Town. There were about 16,500 members all told. The Branch administers a wide range of both State and Federal Awards, as well as a very large number of Enterprise Bargaining Agreements.

Today it operates from rented premises on Fullarton Rd pending a move into their own property again. The current Branch Secretary Joseph Scales (pictured) has held



the position for four and a half years. He is ably supported by Assistant Secretary, Abbie Spencer. Joseph states that although Local Government employees constitute the largest cohort of members in SA, the fastest growing area of membership works in Social and Community services; they are now the second largest. Other important areas of membership are in the airline, energy and credit union industries.

The branch has also been recruiting members from administrative and clerical staff in private hospitals, health services and aged care facilities. They recently negotiated a first Enterprise Bargaining Agreement with the Adelaide Community Healthcare Alliance (the ACHA). The current longest serving branch employee is Gail Dean. Other long serving former staff include Fay Donaghy and the late Darryl Payne. Former branch secretaries who have made their mark on the political scene are Anne McEwen, Andrew Dennard and Katrine Hildyard.

We in Labour History look forward to an active association with the ASU, its officers, employees and members.

Greg Stevens

On a personal note, I was first enrolled into membership of the SA Branch of the FCU in 1956 by the legendary Branch Secretary of the day, the late Harry Krantz.

Aboriginal engagement in the northern South Australian opal industry c.1940-1980



The two major opal mining centres of Andamooka and Coober Pedy in northern South Australia account for a significant percentage of the world's total commercial production of this gemstone. However, little is known about the history of Aboriginal participation in this process, which was far more extensive and significant than has generally been acknowledged. Aboriginal people were active agents, participating in a variety of meaningful employment activities in the industry which provided a reasonable income and a considerable degree of workplace autonomy, while also maintaining many of their customary economic, social and cultural practices.

Aboriginal people began moving into the opal industry by the 1940s and their engagement remained significant until the mid to late 1970s. The opal industry appealed to Aboriginal people for many of the reasons it appealed to Europeans, particularly its autonomous nature, and their contribution soon became apparent. The discovery of opal at the Coober Pedy Eight Mile field by an Aboriginal woman in 1945, for example, was a significant turning point in the industry's fortune there. Aboriginal people were also involved in helping find opal in other locations around Coober Pedy, and several fields they discovered are named after them, for example, Larkins Folly, Brown's Folly and Lennon. By the 1950s and 1960s there were regular estimates of large numbers of Aboriginal people on the opal fields, and while there

was a degree of mobility among them, their numbers often exceeded those of Europeans.

Noodling is the practice of sifting through mullock heaps for small opal pieces inadvertently discarded or missed by miners. Many Aboriginal people were noodlers, but this was not an insignificant or marginal activity, and required a considerable degree of patience and skill in harsh and dusty extremes. Women were highly regarded for their noodling abilities, and children often assisted on the fields as well in an industry that was very family-friendly. Some Aboriginal people actually had their own mining claims, and a number of them were also involved in successful partnership arrangements with European miners.

Aboriginal people were also engaged in specialised tasks. Some were hired as checkers by miners to work behind bulldozers, while a small core group in Coober Pedy were also engaged as skilled heavy machinery operators who were highly valued and sought after by other miners. Aboriginal people generally presented their opal for sale to a high standard and several became opal buyers, assisting others to negotiate fair prices with dealers. Two Aboriginal men made sufficient money from opal to establish their own businesses.

While participating in the mainstream economy, Aboriginal people maintained a high degree of cultural continuity on the opal fields that was not possible in many other parts of Australia. The unique nature of the opal industry and its flexibility accommodated this and, in doing so, closely resembled Aboriginal participation in the northern pastoral industry. One major point of difference, however, is that Aboriginal opal miners had more workplace autonomy than pastoral workers. As self-employed individuals, Aboriginal opal miners were effectively their own bosses, earning independent incomes and entering into partnerships if it suited them.

Participating in a 'hybrid economy' that emerged around the opal fields ensured that Aboriginal people continually exploited their traditional hunting and foraging resource base, enabling them to utilise a broad range of natural food resources which were often used to complement European foods. Aboriginal people also maintained their customary social practices while engaging with the opal industry: its informal and family-friendly nature readily permitted this. Traditional attitudes centred on the importance of kinship, and its rules governing sharing and reciprocity were continually reinforced, and influenced how opal was shared among Aboriginal people when it was found. A rich ceremonial life was also readily accommodated by the opal industry. Numerous important Aboriginal mythological stories traverse the opal-field regions and ceremonial practices regularly occurred in these areas.

The decline of Aboriginal involvement in the opal industry began by the late 1960s and can be attributed to a number of interrelated developments. For instance, declining levels of opal production around this time caused many people to leave the

fields, particularly Andamooka, although Aboriginal people in Coober Pedy actively continued their involvement in the industry for another decade. However, by the mid to late 1970s, increased fuel prices and operating costs led to technological change, notably the introduction of automated noodling machines, which seriously undermined the ability of Aboriginal people to noodle unimpeded. Changes in government policy around this time saw the introduction of unemployment benefits to Aboriginal people in remote areas, which was also a factor in some leaving the industry. Despite the expansion of opal fields at Mintabie from the 1970s and Lambina in the 1980s, Aboriginal engagement in the industry there was not as significant or sustained compared to Coober Pedy and Andamooka. Aboriginal participation in opal mining today is now mainly casual and recreational.

Dr Mike Harding
University of Adelaide

From University of Adelaide profile: I am interested in the historical agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the history of their engagement in the labour market and the mining industry, in particular, the northern and central Australia regions. My PhD examined Aboriginal engagement in the northern South Australian Opal Industry c. 1940 -1980. Other research interests include Aboriginal people and government policy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the history of northern and central Australia, and South Australia generally.

Image title: Noodlers at work on a rich dump at Flat Hill, 1960. Source: Jenny Davidson and Judy Underwood (compilers), *Images of Coober Pedy 1915-2015*, Coober Pedy: Coober Pedy Historical Society, 2015, p.47. Image courtesy of the Coober Pedy Historical Society.

Banking and the Labour Movement

Introduction

A key aspect of Labor's economic policy is the call for a Royal Commission into the Banks.

This has been given more prominence by recent events such as the failure at State level to gain legislative approval for a modest tax on the Banks in South Australia as well as the various controversies surrounding the Commonwealth Bank. I argue that the labour movement has a long tradition of extending public control of the banking system and that the current call for a Royal Commission should be seen in that context

Discussion

In 1936 the Lyons United Australia Party Government instituted a Royal Commission on Monetary and Banking Systems. It came during the aftermath of the Great Depression and was fiercely opposed by all the banks; even the Commonwealth who were not happy to be part of the Inquiry. Critically, it was not the product of a mass mobilisation but as a consequence of parliamentary pressure.



Ben Chifley, one of the Royal Commissioners
Photo: National Archives of Australia

Two Depressions in 40 years created hardship and poverty on an unprecedented scale. The inquiry made a number of modest recommendations, some of which were far sighted and are still relevant today. These include strengthening the Commonwealth Bank (this was many years before the Reserve Bank was established), preventing bank failure (given the experience of the of 1890's Depression) and regulating bank profits (although this was not specified how this was to be achieved). The inquiry also did not favour nationalisation but a stronger role for Commonwealth Bank in regulating the system. The inquiry also recommended a "decimal system of coinage." Some of the Inquiries' recommendations were adopted notably those dealing with the Commonwealth Bank. The significance of the Inquiry cannot be divorced from the broader political

environment. I would argue that it was a tentative step to a much more ambitious plan, that of public ownership or nationalisation of the entire banking system.

Bank Nationalisation

E W Campbell in *People versus Banks (Facts the dailies dare not publish)* published in 1948, made a forthright case for public ownership of banking. He railed against the “Money Barons,” the handful of rich men (no women) who controlled the private banks. He argued that public ownership would enable Government to have more control over the economy and thus prevent crises like the Great Depression. Nationalisation was essential to Australia’s political independence by avoiding the influence of the U.S dollar, Campbell also maintained that public ownership would help prevent the rise of fascism. He detailed the control Hitler had over the German banking system and, by analogy, he equated private ownership of the banks in Australia with fascism in Australia. Compared to Campbell, the Chifley Labour Government did not make a convincing case to bring the Banks under public ownership, beyond a brief statement after a Cabinet meeting that announced the decision. It failed to organise a mass campaign and did not fully anticipate the conservative reaction and the power of private capital. It was ultimately defeated in the High Court and lost the subsequent Federal election.

Summary

Both cases illustrate that campaigns such as making modest changes through the 1936 Royal Commission or public ownership via bank nationalisation to achieve greater social objectives, will fail unless they are accompanied by public support and are thoroughly explained. Seeking that banks at a state level pay a modest tax only failed by one vote in the Upper House. Change is possible if the lessons from history are drawn.

Steve Acton

Australia Day

At this time every year the topic of discussion is, “Should Australia Day be changed from the 26th January?” Some call it Invasion Day. Others say it should be held on 1st January when we became a Federation. What do you think? Email your comments to us and we will include a selection of your feedback in our next newsletter. Address your email to murchie52@hotmail.com and include “Australia Day” in the subject line. If you wish to remain anonymous but are happy for your comments to be used please let us know.

Tom Sheridan Labour History Society Scholarship 2018

The South Australian Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History invites honours and postgraduate students to apply for a \$500 grant to support and encourage original research and work relevant to the fields of South Australian labour and social history.

One grant will be awarded in 2018, for a lump sum of \$500, to assist with research and living expenses, plus a year's membership of the Society. Furthermore, where possible the Branch Executive will provide guidance and assistance to the recipient regarding the availability and use of sources and material relevant to labour history in South Australia.

'Labour and social history' is intended to be a broad category. It might include, for example, research that is relevant to the histories of the political and industrial wings of the labour movement, work and working lives, gender and social histories, class and class relations, race and race relations, or social movements and protest movements.

Students need not be working within the discipline of history. Depending on the proposed thesis, students of politics, international relations, gender and social analysis, sociology, Aboriginal and Australian studies, economics, industrial relations, management, cultural studies, museum studies, visual arts and other disciplines may also be eligible.

To be eligible a student must:

1. Be enrolled in an honours or postgraduate degree at a SA-based university, in which one requirement is the production of a research thesis of at least 10,000 words (or equivalent).
2. Intend to write a thesis that will contribute to the fields of labour and social history of South Australia.
3. Supply a written application with references from their intended academic supervisor, and one other academic with personal knowledge of the student. These references must, inter alia, attest to the nature of the proposed research program and the ability of the student to complete the proposed thesis to a high standard and on time.

The criteria for the grant will be:

1. The project is relevant to the fields of South Australian labour and social history.
2. The project engages with critical thinking and discussion on aspects of labour and social history in South Australia.
3. The student is capable of undertaking the project (as reflected in academic references and other evidence supplied).
4. The degree to which the grant may assist the student to conduct their research.

Preference is given to proposals with strong potential for conversion to publication / exhibition.

Applications

Applications should be by email addressing the above criteria, along with copies of all relevant documentary evidence. Applications close on Friday 30 March 2018.

The decision will be made by a panel appointed by the South Australian Branch of the Society. The panel reserves the right to award or, if no application is deemed suitable, not award the grant at its absolute discretion. No correspondence will be entered into.

Acknowledgement

The successful applicant is requested to acknowledge receipt of the grant in their thesis, and to provide a copy of the thesis to the South Australian Branch of the Society.

The successful applicant will also be asked to write a short article for the Branch newsletter about their research, after the submission of the thesis. The applicant may also be invited to give a presentation on the topic at a future meeting of members.

Applications should be addressed to:

Subject heading: Scholarship Application

Jude.elton@internode.on.net

Further information, please contact:

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Source: 2107 political cartoons Democracy Museum (Old Parliament House)

Vale Eleanor Ramsay

12/6/1949 – 9/10/2017

Expressions of great sadness flew across the country on the sudden death of Professor Eleanor Ramsay in October 2017. The loss of this feminist activist, committed to equity and justice for women and girls in particular, is deeply felt by many.

I had the privilege of working with Eleanor Ramsay on the Women's Standing Committee of the United Trades & Labor Council (UTLC, now SA Unions). At the time, Eleanor was the Women's Officer of the South Australian Institute of Teachers (now Australian Education Union). She was fearless and articulate, with a sharp wit. She worked hard for women in education, in unions and in the workforce generally. Eleanor was an active member of the South Australian Coalition Against Sexual Harassment and a foundation member of Emily's list. In 1984, she wrote the chapter on 'Working Women and the Council' in *To Unite More Closely*, the centenary history of the UTLC.



Eleanor Ramsay went on to work for nearly two decades at the University of South Australia (UniSA). She continued to pursue justice for women as Pro-Vice Chancellor for Equity and as Adjunct Professor with the Hawke Research Institute.

Eleanor was a perceptive researcher, consultant and policy analyst. She later held senior public policy positions and contributed to policy debates nationally and internationally. Her contributions included the development and improvement of strategies to support women and leadership in New Zealand and China.

Shifting to Tasmania, Eleanor maintained her commitment to improve educational access for women and socio-disadvantaged young people. She was made an Honorary Professor of the University of Tasmania. In 2013 her article 'Putting Gender Back On The Agenda' (Griffith Review 39 *Tasmania the Tipping Point?*) reasserted the fight for gender equity.

In 2002 Eleanor Ramsay was awarded an honorary doctorate by UniSA for her national and international contribution to educational equity. She was later awarded the Centenary Medal by the Australian Government for her contributions to education.

Throughout her life Eleanor Ramsay saw education as a means to counter poverty and disadvantage. She maintained a strong commitment to justice, especially for women and girls. An Eleanor Mary Ramsay Scholarship to enhance opportunities for young Tasmanian women in their final year of secondary school has been established in her memory.

Jude Elton

Occupational Health and Safety

These are the notes from Jim Ward of a speech he gave at the annual Australian Workers Union (AWU) Members dinner in 2017. Jim is the National OH&S Director for the AWU.

Australia-wide, serious injury statistics for workers indicate that for every 1000 working people 12 will suffer a serious injury during the year. Serious injury or illness is loosely defined as an injury that causes you to be away from work for 6 weeks or more.

Seventeen percent of all workers with serious injuries never return to work. If you are a young casual worker aged from 15 to 24 and you suffer a serious injury, statistics show that there is a 70% chance that you will never return to full-time work. In 2013, serious injury and illness from work cost the Australian economy \$62 billion. This is just under 5% of GDP. Ninety five percent of that cost was borne by individuals and society. Workers paid 77% whilst the community chipped in 18%. Employers paid 5%.

What about fatalities? Fatalities average about 200 workers every year. Fatality statistics do not capture most work-related diseases diagnosed in later life, such as mesothelioma or lung cancer from exposure to asbestos whilst working, silicosis from dust exposure, lead poisoning from soldering and cancers from chemicals. Six hundred people die each year from mesothelioma. The statistics do not capture work-related suicide. This is the manifestation of a poor psycho-social working environment. They do not capture things like death from breast cancer. Women shift-workers are over represented in breast cancer data. The statistical data does not capture those sole traders or individual sub-contractors using ABNs. So that number of fatalities, 200, is in my view a bit light on. In fact all of the data, the statistics are questionable.

So I can't help but wonder how accurate that number of \$62 billion is. What is the true cost to the economy and how did it get to be so much? Let's talk about public perception. Since the year 2000, 17 people have been killed by sharks in Western Australia (WA). Let's cull sharks. In the same state in the same period of time 310 workers were killed. No one called for a cull of bosses. Still in WA, a few months ago a company director was fined \$20k and jailed for 3 years for misappropriating investors funds. The judge was outraged as were the investors. Perhaps he should have negligently caused the manslaughter of one of his employees instead, he can't be jailed for that. Community places a higher standard of indignation on financial loss than human suffering.

What have governments done about this? Well I'll tell you what they've done. They've "punished" business by reducing workers comp premiums by an average of 9% since 2010. Workers compensation schemes, the investments of the collected premiums are very profitable. So profitable that one government in 2013, the Victorian coalition government took a \$500 million surplus and put it into general revenue. It chose not to spend the money on its intended purpose of looking after injured and ill workers. Whilst regulator interventions have flat-lined, in South Australia (SA), workplace interventions have declined by 2000 a year since 2010.

Premiums in SA are the second lowest behind Queensland. Injury rates have ticked up. What do we do about it? Here's another statistic. European research proved that unionised workplaces are 30% safer than non-unionised workplaces.

In Australia the top four industries for injury, illness and fatalities are:

- Agriculture
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Transport

The SA Branch leadership has invited me here tonight to convey to you that worker health and safety is core union business. We have a plan, a strategy to take up the fight to employers that have owned safety and not respected your welfare. We will no longer tolerate the mismanagement of your bodies and minds at work. We will train you, equip you, support you, argue for you and we will claim back what is rightfully ours, respect and dignity in the workplace.

Jim Ward

Manus Island

This is part of a letter written by Anne Sgro to the Attorney General George Brandis on behalf of the Union of Australian Women (UAW):

"How much worse can it get for the men on Manus? What are the implications for asylum seekers both here and on Nauru? Wendy Squires summed up the situation in Saturday's Age (25.11.17): the UNHCR has described Manus as a "damning indictment of policy meant to avoid Australia's international obligations." It is an international disgrace, a cruel and criminal act which has to stop – NOW – before we all have more blood on our hands here in the so-called Lucky Country, the country these men thought would be their sanctuary and saviour but ended up being their merciless enslave. The situation is unconscionable and becoming increasingly untenable. Hit the phones!

Source: Union of Australian Women (Vic.) Newsletter, December 2017

The end of an era – Holdens closes

Extracts from In Daily on 20th October 2017.

“South Australians who have devoted much of their lives to GMH came to say goodbye this morning, thankful for the homes, families and friendships its Elizabeth factory had given them, and fearful for the future.”



Holden workers gather for a final day send off. Photo: James Knowler / Supplied by GMH

“Hundreds of Holden enthusiasts came with their flags, their branded shirts and their beloved vehicles – some very old and some very new – to farewell Australia’s last carmaker today. For some, the factory has meant everything.”

“ ‘Everyone somewhere along the line has had something to do with Holden – family or the kids or whoever – it’s brought them houses, it’s brought them holidays, it’s brought them cars and friendships,’ says former supervisor Justin Wright. ‘I have one kid with a woman that I met here, so for me everything I’ve got pretty much is from this place. The skills and capabilities of Holden workers have literally built our state’. Wright, 42, had worked for Holden for almost half his life, climbing up the ladder. ‘I’d worked on general assembly from the VR Commodore in 1995 through till the VF commodore 2015,’ he says. ‘I was a work group leader; worked in nearly every single plant here over the years, made it to supervisor. And then, of course, we had the terrible news.’ “(Holden) gave me everything that I’ve got today pretty much.’ ‘We’ve just come down to say goodbye.’ ”

“Kelly Checker worked as a spot-welder at Holden for a decade but left when she became pregnant with her daughter Skyler, worried about the fumes. ‘A lot of my family are Holden. It’s very sad for all of us,’ she says. ‘I made a lot of friends here; some have left, some made it to the last day. My area was very heavy (with) fumes and... I was very unsure if it was toxic for pregnant girls to breathe in.’ ‘She’s nearly two – when I left I was already pregnant with her.’ Checker came down today to show her daughter what it looks like ‘before anything changes’ at the factory where she earned the money to buy a house and a car. She finished up at Holden in 2015. ‘They gave me the choice to leave on my own terms so I decided that was probably

the best thing,' she tells *InDaily*. 'At the moment I'm a stay-at-home mum, and when she (Skyler) is old enough to go to kindy I'll go try and look for work.' ”

“Tony Olivastri’s father came to Adelaide from Italy more than 60 years ago. ‘He was a press operator – he came here with nothing, no English, no nothing, and did very well,’ he says. ‘He came here with nothing, ended up saving enough to buy three houses.’ ‘He gave us one each, to us kids, as a start in life.’ ‘To me this is the death of a history, an era of cars.’ Escaping war and a lack of opportunity in Europe, Olivastri’s father left to spend a quarter of a century at the Elizabeth plant. ‘If you want to work hard you’ll find work here (in Australia)’ It was a safe bet in his father’s day, he says. ‘Things are changing now’. ‘Manufacturing, as you can see, is dead... that’s a very sad thing for Australia’. ‘You can see the quality of the old cars – the Torana there and the Statesman here ... FCs over there.’ He loves his cars – especially his golden-hued Monaro, which has never seen a car wash, and which he keeps in mint condition. ‘As a young kid, probably 15, (I bought) my first car and started dismantling bits and see how they worked,’ Olivestri recalls. ‘I wouldn’t go to a mechanic, I’d do it myself.’ ‘Now I think I’ve got my son hooked as well – he loves my Monaro down there. I said (to him) ‘one day maybe it’s yours, see how generous I am’ ... I could probably turn around tomorrow and sell it for \$150,000 no problem.’ ”

“Most of the workers who left their jobs at Holden’s Elizabeth plant have now found new work elsewhere, the company has revealed, as the era of Australian car-making ends with the factory’s official closure today. As of last month, about 550 (or 75 per cent) of the workers who lost their jobs at the factory since Holden announced it would close its doors in late 2013 have found new work elsewhere, according to the company. But almost one in 10 are still looking for work. A further 8 per cent of the factory’s December 2013 workforce has moved into retirement, while 2 per cent have begun full-time study and one per cent have started volunteering. But more than 900 of their former co-workers will join them all in post-Holden life today, as the plant closed its doors.”

“Holden communications director Sean Poppitt said the company wanted to use today’s closure to celebrate the work of the plant’s employees over the decades. ‘Today is about the people... a very proud day for Holden; sad, yes – emotional,’ he said. ‘But this is all about recognising the people in the plant behind us who’ve literally build the Holden legend over the years.’ ‘There’s an enormous amount of pride and passion for the Holden brand... 25,000 people lined the streets of Elizabeth last weekend, which was just fantastic.’ ”



Photo supplied to In Daily by GMH

Workers of the world

The 15th Biennial Labour History Conference, Brisbane September 2017

The call for papers for the Conference invited a wide range of contributions on broad themes, with a focus on the migrant nature of the Australian working class. Australian workers, always creatures of an international division of labour, have historically been drawn from a global mix of linguistically and ethnically diverse cultures. Globalisation has now seen this immigrant working class develop an expatriate dimension, not without historic precedents. In the centenary of the Great Russian Revolution, attention was drawn to its impact in terms of worker traditions of politicised internationalism.

The Conference opened with an historical tribute by Worimi man Professor John Maynard to his grandfather, Aboriginal patriot Fred Maynard, prime mover behind the establishment of the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association in Sydney in 1927. The tribute emphasised the hard yards done by the elder Maynard in the teeth of official repression, as detailed in John's biography of Fred, *Fight for Liberty & Freedom*. Like many Aboriginal workers employed on the Sydney wharfs and in the city railway yards, veritable universities of industrial activism and civic ideals, Maynard rose to prominence in his community and the labour movement through wide reading and application to duty.

The other keynote address was given by visiting American activist scholar Ruth Milkman, which was generally well received. Entitled "Populism, precarity & xenophobia in the Trump era," Milkman's address challenged the shibboleth that immigrant workers are taking American jobs, emphasising the minor role played by immigration in the restructuring of an American workforce primarily suffering from business strategies promoting deregulation, deindustrialisation and de-unionisation.

Only a sample can be given here of the range of papers presented.

Labour movement veteran and Melbourne University professorial fellow Brian Howe contributed a paper regarding the British socialist pioneer William Morris, focusing on the contemporary relevance of his analysis of work to Australians in an era of globalisation.

Another paper given was a case study of ruling class politics at the intersection of race and the labour market in late colonial Queensland. Phil Griffiths of the University of Southern Queensland focussed on the defeat of conservatives promoting the separation of North Queensland based on coloured coolie labour by Samuel Griffith's liberals in the 1883 Queensland general election. Employing class analysis, Phil demonstrated its utility for making sense of elite politics and the influence thereon of British and American anti-slavery politics.

One of the high points of the Conference was the profile of younger contributors. Rhianne Grieve, with a background in arts/law and political philosophy from UTS and Cambridge, presented a paper on proto-socialist English radical Thomas Spence and his 1796 pamphlet *The Rights of Infants*, which denounced the 18th century elite in the name of natural rights and direct political participation, particularly by women

as natural advocates of human rights.

Another outstanding younger contributor, who took his doctorate at Oxford in 2016, addressed the question of the internationalism and characteristic exceptionalism or uniqueness of the Australian labour movement. Duncan Money entitled his paper "Ain't I a bastard, well I received my training in Aussie": The life of Frank Maybank, an Australian trade unionist on the Central African copper-belt. Money traced Maybank's career from his UK origins across 5 countries as a proletarian of all work and union official. Formative experiences in Depression era Australia and the Soviet Union implanted in him a radical yet highly racialised white man's class consciousness in a segregated international labour market. It was an ethos he bore before him like a shield throughout his life, in Africa as in Australia.

Another case of an Australian labour internationalist was discussed by Labour History stalwarts Phillip Deery and Julie Kimber, namely the case of the first or 1939 attempt to deport the President of the International Longshoremen & Warehousemen's Union Harry Bridges from the United States as a communist menace under the 1918 Alien Act. Reactionary politicians inside and outside governmental circles including private vested interests conspired against Bridges on this occasion, the first of four attempts to deport him between 1938 and 1955.

Representing the South Australian Branch, yours truly profiled the Italian origins and Australian labours and tragic death at the hands of a Fascist push in South Australia's Loveday Internment Group Camp 14A on 16 November 1942 of the Anarchist activist Francesco Giovanni Fantin. His sage too was one of internationalism, not only in terms of political philosophy, but also in terms of advocacy and fundraising for the Republican cause in Spain in the Queensland canefields.

The Conference took place against a background of savage cuts to Commonwealth funding of universities, dressed up as an 'efficiency dividend', accelerating the neoliberal trend to institutional corporatisation. Discussion of the implications of this scenario for the discipline of labour history ranged from notes of pessimism about the future of the humanities generally to a prevailing optimism based on the fact that labour history continues to be taught in a wide range of institutional settings. The Conference closed with this hopeful consensus, reinforced by the participation of a number of younger scholars representing the future.

David Faber

ICAN awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize



The *World Beyond War* organisation has recently put on its website the Nobel Lecture given by the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, *The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)*, delivered by Beatrice Fihn and Setsuko Thurlow, in Oslo on 10 December 2017. (See the website details below.)

ICAN was founded in the inner Melbourne suburb of Carlton in 2006 and was launched in the Victorian Parliament House in 2007. The 2017 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to this Australian born organisation in recognition of the magnificent role it played in getting 122 nations to sign the *Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons*. This historic agreement, adopted on 7 July 2017 offers a powerful, much-needed alternative to a world in which threats of nuclear mass destruction are allowed to prevail and are actually escalating – especially given the brinkmanship being played out by the leaders of North Korea and the USA. ICAN's achievement was due to the fact that it drew on the support of people world-wide – especially the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, people adversely affected by nuclear weapons tests (including Pacific Islanders, Micronesians and Australian Aborigines) and a number of former Nobel Peace Prize Laureates to encourage governments to sign the Treaty.

Sadly Australia is not one of those nations nor has the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull made a statement to congratulate this Australian organisation on its great achievements – getting 122 nations to support the Treaty and winning the Nobel Peace Prize. This is presumably because he does not want to alienate Donald Trump. We know that if it had been an Australian sports team winning an international medal our government would have been fulsome in its praise. All Australians who want a more peaceful and a safer world should call on our government to acknowledge the great achievement of ICAN in its work for world peace and to get it to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that 122 nations have already done. Please go to the *World Beyond War* site and make a comment.

Paz Forgione

Heartiest Congratulations to ICAN on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017. And a big thank you for the work that you and other peace and environmental groups have done to spread the message of peace and care for the environment and the people who live in it.

We have to ensure that the super greedy and the warmongers on earth don't destroy our planet, making human and other forms of life impossible. This is so important when we have leaders like Donald Trump and Kim Jong-in shooting their dangerous rhetoric at each other.

How the US, the only nation that has even used nuclear weapons against civilian populations and has thousands of weapons can carry on about North Korea with less than ten is total hypocrisy. And please don't think that I want North Korea to have nuclear weapons. I want every nation with such weapons to dismantle them as quickly as possible.

Earlier this year, my wife and I were in Oslo and visited both the Town Hall where the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize was presented and the Nobel Peace Centre. Little did we realise that ICAN, an organisation founded in our country, Australia, would be the winners. We are very proud, but we need to heed the words of Beatrice Fihn and Setsuko Thurlow when they accepted the prize.

Voters all around the world have to elect leaders who are totally devoted to ridding us of nuclear weapons and those with similar effects, world peace, international social justice, equality, human rights, fairness between nations and effective care for the environment.

Andrew (Andy) Alcock

References

The World Beyond War 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Lecture:

http://worldbeyondwar.org/nobel-peace-prize-2017-lecture-international-campaign-abolish-nuclear-weapons-ican/?link_id=0&can_id=485bd5d291848c2ea635a6aabd794677&source=email-christmas-truces&email_referrer=email_276750&email_subject=christmas-truces

An overview if the Treaty:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_on_the_Prohibition_of_Nuclear_Weapons#Concept

Other reports about ICAN, the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize & the Treaty:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-10/nobel-peace-prize-australian-government-accused-of-shame-job/9244194>

<http://www.icanw.org/action/nobel-peace-prize-2017-2/>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/nobel-peace-prize-winner-ican-urges-australia-to-sign-treaty-and-avoid-nuclear-disaster>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-07/ican-and-a-personal-battle-against-nuclear-weapons/9026846>

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/australia-apos-snub-nobel-peace-092153431.html>

Seeds of Affinity

I recently attending a workshop about Seeds of Affinity at the Anti-poverty Conference. I was very impressed with the work they are doing and highly recommend that you support their organisation and buy some of their products and support their functions. Their book "Captive Minds: Truth behind bars, realities of women's Imprisonment in SA" (Edited by Suzi Quixley, 2014) is only \$10 and shares many of the women's experiences. The following information comes from their website.

Allison Murchie



“At Seeds of Affinity, we support women and their children during the difficult transition of leaving prison and re-entering the community. We support Indigenous and non-Indigenous women by providing them with the opportunity to participate in group activities twice a week. We make beauty products, gourmet treats and textiles, share a meal together and discuss ways to contribute meaningfully in the community by gaining skills, accessing support services and participating in the workforce. Seeds of Affinity began in 2006 by a group of South Australian women with lived prison experience who were inspired to work together to challenge the ongoing stigmatisation faced by women leaving prison and their children, and to build a community where women felt a sense of belonging, solidarity and self-worth. We enjoy the sense of togetherness in the group. We remind ourselves and each other that we are unique and valuable human beings. The group helps us to find pathways to be free, through hearing new ideas and exploring different perspectives. Any criminalised woman is welcome at Seeds of Affinity. Different women have different needs. We each want to participate at different levels and in different ways. We aim to provide credible support to all women, regardless of their needs. We want to help both ourselves and each other with our inner (emotional) development and our outer (practical) development. We all have great potential to succeed in life. To realise our potential, we need practical support and opportunities to learn and grow.

Seeds of Affinity meet every Tuesday 11-3pm and Friday 12-3pm in the Uniting Church, 146 Semaphore Road, Exeter.

We offer:

- a safe, positive and non-judgemental learning environment
- a chance to build confidence by contributing
- mentoring
- work experience, volunteering and business opportunities
- educational and networking experiences
- a place to relax, have a laugh, and share a meal together”

SA Prisons Snapshot

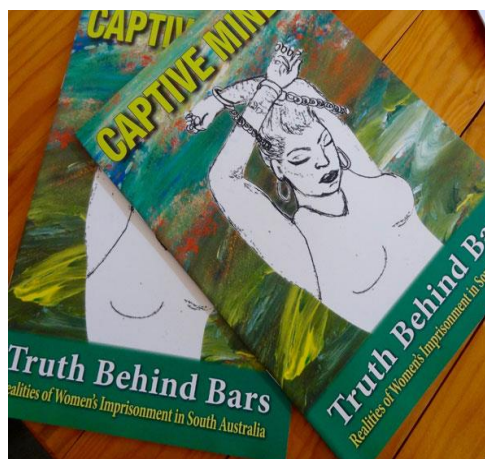
- * The number of adult prisoners in SA prisons is 2732, an increase of 10 per cent since 2014
- * Just under half (49 per cent or 1330 prisoners) of all prisoners have previously been jailed
- * The most common offence/charge are acts intended to cause injury, such as attempted murder (18 per cent or 505 prisoners)
- * Males comprise 94 per cent (2568 prisoners) of the total prisoner population. Since June 30, 2014, for every 100,000 women, 24 are behind bars
- * The median age of all adult prisoners is 35.5
- * Nationally, SA has the highest median expected time to serve for sentenced prisoners (4.5 years)
- * In 2011-2012, 34 per cent of women in jails were Aboriginal
- * At least 40 per cent of women jailed have been jailed previously

Source: ABS figures at June 2015 and Seeds of Affinity book *Captive Minds: Truth Behind Bars*

“Radio Seeds! By Dr Heather Anderson. Seeds of Affinity has an exciting new project – our own radio show called “Radio Seeds”. It features many of our women as presenters and aims to support both women in prison and those who have recently left. We hope it also reaches the wider community with its stories about the issues faced by women with a criminalised history and their ways of rebuilding their lives. “Radio Seeds” broadcasts on the first Friday of every month on WOW-FM 100.5FM from 3 - 4pm (Adelaide time).”

Allison Murchie

All information taken from their website.



5 things (+1) you need to know about migration

Source: APHEDA Solidarity newsletter November 2107.

1. A decision to leave is rarely made “freely” A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of violence, war or persecution (UNHCR). Under International Law, a migrant is someone who freely makes a decision to leave their country for reasons of “personal convenience”. The problem with the law is that there are many reasons for migration that don’t fit with the notion of free movement or personal convenience. For those who are unable to remain on their land because of climate change impacts such as rising sea levels or salination, toxic poisoning of soil or water ways that are not due to the local community, they are excluded from the definition of refugee.

2. Poverty drives most migration There are many reasons why people migrate either within their own countries or across borders. Migration has been happening for as long as people have existed. In modern terms, people migrate for a reason. For some, they have no job and no land that can support them so they move to a new area where they can survive. Poverty is a huge driver of migration for the vast majority of people. They might have suffered continual crop failure, been the victim of land grabbing by more powerful people, corporations or their government, been displaced because of the impacts of climate change, trying to escape from domestic violence, or due to alcohol or drug addictions within their family, because of their sexuality, lack of local employment, political or racist tensions, environmental catastrophes, because they have been sent away from their family in order to send remittances home or because their Government promotes migration as the means of increasing their national income.

3. Poor countries of the world host the majority of migrants and refugees Being a migrant is rarely a single journey process. A person who has been displaced from a poor or war-torn country often finds themselves in a transit country which cannot cope with the number of refugees. We are experiencing larger flows of migration than ever before due to the number of crises (OECD). 87% of refugees are hosted in low and middle-income countries which lack the resources and infrastructure to deal with the influx of population. Turkey, Pakistan and Lebanon host the largest number of refugees. A fraction of these people will make it to a high-income country like Australia as migrants. Highly skilled and educated people tend to be able to afford to migrate through formal channels whilst those with no or little education, the poorest, tend to struggle to find a path that provides them with security.

4. Women from poor countries are less likely to migrate According to OECD figures, the gender breakdown of migrants is about half men and half women. There are stark differences though in the migration flows from certain countries and to receiving countries. In the Philippines the majority of migrants who seek work in other countries are women and they are an important source of foreign currency for their government. One factor that determines capacity to migrate is based on the availability of education. Women tend to emigrate more from high income countries rather than men. However, men tend to emigrate from developing countries to developed countries rather than women who tend to emigrate to other developing countries which have higher growth economies. Largely the choice about which country is selected relates to the availability of work. We see practical examples of

this amongst those short term labour migrants who come to Australia as part of the Seasonal Workers Program from the Pacific. The participation of women has been as low as 12% for the entire programme.

5. Inequality and racism are barriers for migrants There is a clear difference in the treatment of migrants relating to their wealth, education and skill capacity. Those who have wealth, education and skills find it much easier to migrate as they are generally able to fill the skill gaps in other countries. However poor people find it a struggle to migrate and are more likely to remain poor. There are some occupations that have qualifications that are not recognised in the receiving country and for this reason while a migrant might be welcomed as a migrant they may not be able to pursue employment in the same field. It is rather more the case that policy influences the selection of migrants and the employment market determines the type of job they will be able to obtain. Many receiving countries levy education costs on students and these are not affordable for the elders of a family unit as they need to work to be able to establish their family in a new country.

Racism is common around the world and it is a common struggle for migrants. The majority of migrants are of working age and the workplace globally is a place where discrimination and bullying is common and those who are most different are more likely to be the targets. This tends to encourage national groups to work together and be isolated and also in some cases to be treated unlawfully by others in the community. Most nations do not have comprehensive labour rights for all workers and so those who work in the informal economy are most likely to be exploited.

It is common for the perception of communities and policy makers to be skewed and to overestimate the size of the migrant population in their country. They also misunderstand the effects of migration generally and believe that the costs of migration are far higher than reality and discount the economic inputs and outcomes gained from migration. Another widespread misconception is the cost that is associated with migration, such as the fiscal and non-fiscal costs of leaving as well as leaving behind other family members.

+1. A win for migrant workers in Qatar! In early November 2017, the Qatari Government announced its intention to pass legislation to protect migrant workers working on the building of the stadium for the FIFA World Cup. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) had mounted a comprehensive campaign against the Qatari Government for the maltreatment of migrant workers including lodging complaints to the International Labour Organization (ILO). These complaints have now been dismissed pending the new laws.

There are an estimated two million migrant workers in Qatar. The majority hail from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The population of Qatar is 2.6 million people. With migrant workers being counted in the total population of Qatar and with men making up the majority of migrants, only about 25% of the population is women. Although the promised legislation has yet to be enacted, it is to end the “Kafala” system which tied workers to an employer, removed their freedom to change jobs and leave the country. Greater freedom of movement, a minimum wage and a process for complaints will be provided under labour laws that will mean a huge improvement in the conditions of work.

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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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,

