

LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

Labour History Society (South Australia) Incorporated

Autumn 2018



State Library of SA, PRG 280/1/11/102, Australia Day at Glenelg (formerly Foundation Day) 1910

Included in this Issue

Joe Szakacs 2018 State election, David Faber Tasmanian election, Peter McCusker on unfair dismissal laws, Masque of Anarchy and Peterloo Massacre, Bank nationalisation, Munitions in SA in WWII, Victoria Fielding new scholarship winner, Australia Day comments, Change the Rules, May Day March, The Last Earth book review, Working Women's Centre Timor Leste, I'm appalled Anne Sgro, Remember When.

Full Steam Ahead!

This issue of the Labour History Society SA newsletter takes up past and present challenges by working people and their communities to dominant political and industrial arrangements. There is real encouragement in the reports of current campaigns and recent elections. Articles on past campaigns offer hope and inspiration. Emerging researchers indicate new energy and interest in the labour movement.

We are delighted to include a report by Joe Szakacs, Secretary SA Unions, on the recent South Australian election. Joe highlights the crucial role unions play in election campaigns. David Faber provides an analysis of elections in his state of origin, Tasmania. He tackles the thorny issue of Labor and Greens Party relations. The Change the Rules campaign kicked off in South Australia with the traditional May Day march. This campaign marks a union shift from accommodation under neoliberalism to an unapologetic assertion of the rights and needs of labour. Campaign demands and photos from the march are included in this newsletter.

Ralph Clarke reports on the inspirational talk to the Society by recently retired President of the South Australian Employment Tribunal, Peter McCusker. Peter explored the development of unfair dismissal law and the impact of the Ted Gnatenko case. He emphasised the importance of union principle, boldness and persistence in the winning of previously unthinkable unfair dismissal rights. Peter referred to the Peterloo massacre, where communities around Manchester, England were attacked by yeomanry as they rallied for basic democratic rights. This event and its aftermath are elaborated in an accompanying article.

Steve Acton reflects on Labor's attempt at bank nationalisation in 1947. He considers the negative effects of the absence of a media campaign and the failure to engage both the labour movement and the broader community in this attempt.

The winner of the 2018 Labour History Society SA Tom Sheridan scholarship is announced in this issue. Victoria Fielding is investigating union media strategies in large historical industrial disputes and political events in her PhD research at the University of South Australia. We are delighted to be supporting Victoria in her work. Last year's scholarship recipient, Rachel Harris, gave a stimulating and very well received presentation on her research into munitions production in South Australia during World War Two at the February open meeting of the Society. In this issue, Rachel summarises her talk. She explores the wages and conditions of female munitions workers and why improvements were not maintained after the war.

We are also delighted to include responses from newsletter readers to our call for comment on the celebration of Australia Day. Loine Sweeney, Peter Duncan, David Faber and Andy Alcock all raise important considerations, including the shameful failure to respect the views and genuinely acknowledge the experience of Aboriginal Peoples in the setting of the date and framing of the event.

David Faber's eloquent review of *The Last Earth: A Palestinian story* by Ramzy Baroud, also reminds us of the continuing denial of Palestinian rights to land and self-determination. In 'I'm Appalled', Anne Sgro, of the Union of Australian Women, comments on two other festering issues of concern – the detention of asylum seekers and militarism.

Thanks as always to Allison Murchie for generating content and putting together the newsletter. Thanks also go to the increasing number of contributors. We extend particular thanks to Steph Key for her past support of the newsletter's production and to Steve Georganas for taking up this support on Steph's retirement.♦

Jude Elton

The 2018 South Australian election – a strong union campaign, a swing to the ALP, but a loss of Government

The South Australian union movement's campaign for the 2018 State election began in earnest six months before the poll.

SA Unions Executive was involved in extensive discussions about the policy positions we would campaign on and lobby for because, despite the fact that the ALP had been in power for sixteen years, there was, in our collective view, much more to be done for working South Australians and their families.

After those discussions, our Election Agenda – *Fairer Workplaces and Stronger Communities* – was formulated and released in November 2017. Its aim was to:

- prosecute that agreed agenda
- effect an electoral outcome in the interests of working South Australians
- expose the policy positions of the major parties and key independents on Jobs Industry and Workplaces, Fair and Just Communities, Public Sector and Services, A Fair Future for All
- develop and deliver a campaign frame and narrative to assist affiliates with on-going organising growth and campaigning in the lead up to the State Election
- and enhance the brand of SA Unions and the peak voice of working South Australians, its community standing and presence independent of any electoral outcome



We successfully lobbied the ALP and received commitments for positive action on our claims to introduce wage theft as a criminal offence; for ten days paid domestic and family violence leave; child labour laws; industrial manslaughter; shop trading hours and portable long service leave for workers.

The Liberals and the Xenophon Party did not respond to our policies in any meaningful way.

This was not an election like any other. Any 2PP preference interpretation was redundant

with the decision by Nick Xenophon to quite the Senate and return to South Australia to both run for the State seat of Hartley, and to lead a team of more than thirty candidates with the aim of not only upsetting the established two-party status quo, but to potentially have the numbers on the floor of the House of Assembly to form government and assume the Premiership.

This forced the union movement to not only promote our policy agenda around jobs, work, community and a fair future, but to turn our attention to exposing Xenophon's voting record on issues of importance to working people.

Our campaign's aim had to turn to exposing his past support for cutting penalty rates; for voting against workers' rights by standing side-by-side with Turnbull's Liberals on the ABCC and the so-called Ensuring Integrity Bills, which were solely aimed at curbing the rights of workers and their representative organisations.

We believed it was imperative that South Australian voters were made aware of how much his actions and voting record in Canberra contradicted his public image of sticking up for the battler, the little guy, those who'd been left behind or forgotten by the major parties.

So the union movement campaigned about his backflip on the Gonski education funding reforms and his support for Turnbull's cuts to South Australian schools; and that he had voted to cut pension entitlements for some South Australians.

And voters responded. In the seat of Hartley, Xenophon ran third after preferences were distributed. Despite wild predictions before the campaign proper that Xenophon was sitting on 32%, his party's vote slowly collapsed as his policy positions were exposed, and other third party campaigns cranked up. His party did not win one seat in the House of Assembly, but has two spots in the Legislative Council. That 32% primary vote more than halved on election night to 14.1%.

As for our campaign to improve conditions for working people, and our agenda, the work on a State level continues, but we're looking to the bigger picture too, as we accelerate the *Change the Rules* campaign being led by the ACTU and rolled out around the country.

The system is broken. Big business has too much power and despite profits booming in this country, inequality is at a 70-year high. Four million Australians are in insecure work and wage growth is at record lows.

There is much work to do. ♦

Joe Szakacs Secretary SA Unions

Photo of Joe Szakacs with Sally McManus provided by Joe Szakacs

Southpaw Backhander

The return of the Liberal Party government in Tasmania with a bare, reduced majority was not an unalloyed catastrophe for the progressive forces in the island State. Labor was returned with an increased minority on an issue of principle; pokies reform. This confirms the strong leadership of Rebecca White, who is arguably well poised to regain government at the next election, circumstances permitting. The Green vote was alarmingly static, not to say worse.

There is the consolation that losing with a sound policy at least leaves a legacy to build on. But it is nonetheless a setback for progressive forces in Tasmania and nationally. It once again shows that excessive tension between Labor and the Greens only benefits the Tories, in keeping with the maxim that disunity is death. It is unhealthy that the Hodgeman dynasty administration has been returned to office, with its plans to log wilderness extensively and restrict the democratic right to protest to appease capital. Despite Hodgeman's denials that the election was bought, there is no doubt that the massive advertising campaign by the gambling lobby, led by the Federal Group which owns the island's two casinos, was a powerful factor.

Labor and the Greens can now only govern together. Labor's primary vote has fallen to historic lows, while Bob Brown's ambitions to 'replace the bastards' are illusory. Labor and the Greens are as doomed to serve the public together as the Liberals and Nationals are condemned to loot the public purse on behalf of vested interests as Coalition partners in crime. As a Tasmanian expat I have been arguing this case like Cassandra since my teenage years in Tasmania during the rise of the Greens in the 1970s.

These basic political principles have national implications. As the 2018 Tasmanian General Election shows, they are ignored at the peril of the interested parties and the public, not to mention the environment. And it's not as if they prevent creative competition and mature political agreements to disagree, so nothing should be allowed to stand in the way on either side. As it is, the Tasmanian electorate has held its nose and marginally voted Liberal after pronouncing a pox on both progressive houses, seeing them as unstable, divided and divisive.

Why have Labor and the Greens defied common sense for so long, destabilizing one another by devouring each other's vote? Competition from diverse class, philosophical and cultural bases is certainly part of the problem. A certain wilfulness too is a common fault; Labor sees the Greens reductively as middle-class, while Green smugness about 'old parties', which must irritate half the electorate over 30, begs the question about the positive value of certain traditions. Both parties must grow out of these bad habits. The progressive cause and the environment itself demand no less.♦

Dr David Faber

The Development of unfair dismissal law in South Australia.

The Labour History Society was privileged to hear a talk given to our April 2018 meeting by Peter McCusker, former President of the SA Employment Tribunal on the major issue of a worker's rights to seek redress if unfairly dismissed.



Peter, prior to his appointment to the SA Industrial Court as a Judge in 1988, was a partner in the well-known labour law firm of Johnston Withers, McCusker & Co, headed by well-known and respected QC and later SA Supreme Court Judge, Elliott Johnston QC. Peter spoke on the evolution of labour law in SA with respect to workers having rights to challenge unfair dismissals and the impact on workers covered by Federal awards by the Gnatenko case, which went to the High Court of Australia. In his introduction Peter referred to a poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley written in the aftermath of the Peterloo massacre in August 1819 of workers

and their supporters demonstrating in Manchester - UK seeking the extension of the electoral franchise. Quoting in part Shelley's last verse from "Masque of Anarchy",

*"Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you.
Ye are many - they are few".*

Peter outlined the historical development of unfair dismissal laws in South Australia and for workers bound by Federal awards. Workers in Australia covered by Federal awards had no legal rights to challenge an unfair dismissal. This had to do with the Federal Constitution, which only allowed the former Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to settle industrial disputes if it was acting to prevent or settle an industrial dispute extending beyond the borders of a single State (s 51 (35)). As a dismissal of a worker in one State had little if any connection with a dismissal or industrial dispute in another State, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission had no legal authority to deal with the alleged unfair dismissal.

In the United Kingdom, the Donovan Royal Commission on Trade Union and Employer Associations 1965 – 68, noted that the impact on workers of being dismissed unfairly:

"In reality people build much of their lives around their jobs. Their income and prospects for the future are inevitably founded in the expectation that their job will continue. For workers in many situations dismissal is a disaster. For some workers it may make it inevitable the breakup of a community and the uprooting of homes and families. Others, and particularly older workers, may be faced with the greatest difficulty in getting work at all".

Those words are as valid in Australia today as they were when written in 1968. The result of the Donovan Royal Commission was the concept of unfair dismissal being introduced into UK law by the Industrial Relations Act 1971 and recognition of a person's property interest in his or her job.

In South Australia the Dunstan Labor Government passed the then Industrial Code of 1967. This Act applied only to employees covered by State Awards or agreements. It gave the SA Industrial Commission power to order re-employment of the worker if the dismissal was harsh, unjust or

unreasonable. However, there were limitations, the most important being that the re-employment of the worker was prospective, not retrospective in operation. Hence any order for re-employment did not allow for the payment of lost wages during the period of unemployment. Also, the worker had to be a member of a union to apply for an order as it was only the worker's registered union that had the authority to make the claim on their behalf.

Passing the SA Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1972 allowed the Industrial Relations Court of SA to hear and determine any question as to a dismissal was harsh, unjust or unreasonable and to order the dismissed worker to be re-employed on terms that were no less favourable than if he/she had not been unfairly dismissed. The Court was also given the power to award the dismissed worker the wages he/she had lost during the interim. However, these legislative improvements had no application to workers then covered by Federal Awards, which was more than 1/3rd of the SA's workforce at the time. Workers under Federal Awards were caught by s109 of the Federal Constitution in that Federal Awards were in effect like a law of the Federal Parliament and where there was an inconsistency between a State law and a Federal law the Federal law overrode the State law to the extent of the inconsistency.

All Federal Awards had a standard termination of employment clause, which governed the terms of the employer dismissing an employee or a worker resigning from their employment. It was therefore accepted by the authorities that Federal Awards, evinced an intention to 'cover the field' relating to the terms and conditions of employment of Federal Award employees. Hence these employees had no right to go to a State tribunal seeking relief on the grounds of an unfair dismissal.

The Gnatenko Case!

The Gnatenko case was ground breaking for workers covered by Federal Awards. Ted Gnatenko was a migrant from Bulgaria who spoke several languages fluently. He was a member of the Australian Engineering Union. (Following a number of amalgamations with other unions over the last 40 years it changed its name on several occasions, the most recent being to the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, AMWU – for convenience I will use the term AMWU or union throughout).

Gnatenko was first employed by General Motors Holden in 1954 as a tool maker and became the AMWU's shop steward at their plant in Elizabeth in 1965 and from 1970 their senior shop steward. There was never a complaint about the quality or the work performance of Gnatenko by GMH during all his years of service with them.

In October 1974 GMH advised the unions that some of their manufacturing work was to be 'off shored'. The combined unions at GMH called a mass meeting of unionists to discuss this move by GMH. Their award provided certain formal steps the unions had to take before being able to call such a meeting. In the past mass meetings had been called by the unions without GMH taking any retaliatory action against the unions or any of the members who participated. Gnatenko had not been at the meeting of the combined shop stewards which called the mass meeting on 31st October 1974 owing to other commitments.

On the 18th November 1974 GMH told Gnatenko that the mass meeting was not authorised under the award. He was formally warned that GMH regarded the planned meeting as a breach of the award and ordered him to call it off. Gnatenko advised management that he did not have the power to stop the meeting but that he would advise the Chair Brian Mowbray to advise the membership of management's views and of their threat to him and leave it to the membership to decide. The unionists resolved to proceed with their mass meeting. The Company then summarily dismissed Gnatenko for misconduct, even though all other union stewards had supported the stoppage with the support of their respective membership.

Gnatenko and AMWU go to Court

On the 24th November 1974 Gnatenko, through the union, took his claim of an unfair dismissal to the SA Industrial Court utilising s 15 (1) (e) of the State Act. GMH sought and was granted an injunction from the SA Supreme Court on the 27th March 1975 on the grounds of s109 of Australia's Constitution, i.e. where there is an inconsistency between a State and Federal Law the Federal law prevails to the extent of the inconsistency.

By chance the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Dr John Bray QC, one of the Full Court members hearing this matter, made a reference of utmost importance to Gnatenko's case, that was if the GMH Award had a provision in it which incorporated, in effect the terms of s 15 (i) (e) of the State Act, such a term would be permissible. The union filed with the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) a claim seeking a retrospective order varying the GMH Award to do just that!

Commissioner Clarkson of the AIRC heard the parties and varied the award as sought by the union. GMH then sought to circumvent the Clarkson decision by applying to the High Court of Australia seeking to have the decision overturned on the legal technicality that the Union log of claims creating the GMH Award was not sufficiently wide enough in scope to allow for the Clarkson decision.

By a majority the High Court on the 12th March 1976 dismissed GMH application with the then Chief Justice Sir Garfield Barwick - the long-time friend in the High Court of tax minimisation and avoidance schemes for the rich and powerful, being the sole dissenter!

Gnatenko's unfair dismissal case was finally heard by the SA Industrial Court and on the 26th November 1976 Judge Stanley found his dismissal was unfair. GMH was ordered to re-employ Gnatenko to his former position as a toolmaker on terms no less favourable and payment of any lost wages he had suffered in the interim. Gnatenko returned to his work bench and after a short period went to work for the SA branch office of his union. He stayed gainfully employed there for a number of years before his retirement. Ted passed away on 9th February 2016.

Peter McCusker paid tribute to many of those union officials and staff who stood by Gnatenko and won the victories that eventually led to the spread of unfair dismissal laws to all employees whether covered by Federal or State Awards. In particular, Peter mentioned John O'Neill, Brian Mowbray, John Scott and Mick Tumbers of the SA Branch of the AMWU and Laurie Carmichael from the union's National Office. In addition, Peter praised the work and skill of his colleagues from his legal firm at the time, Robyn Layton and Elliott Johnston QC.

Peter went on to say, *'Unfair dismissal has been an extraordinary advancement in employment rights. It is difficult for people to appreciate the time when it did not exist. When no matter how outrageous the dismissal, there wasn't a remedy to be had. The employee just had to cop it'*. He then reminded us of the attempts to water down or eliminate this right by successive conservative governments, most spectacularly the Howard Government's Work Choices legislation in March 2006 and the ultimate defeat of that government in 2007, due in no small part to that legislation.

Peter ended his talk with the following words, *'That this is about the fight for justice and the dedication of those who fought for the establishment of these rights. It was by intelligence and commitment that the champions of this reform achieved such great change, a victory over great wealth and great greed. There is surely a lesson in that'*. ♦

Ralph Clark

Photo of Peter McCusker with Ralph Clarke by Allison Murchie

The Masque of Anarchy & the Peterloo Massacre

At his talk to the Labour History Society on 15 April, Peter McCusker quoted the powerful concluding verse from the poem *The Masque of Anarchy* by English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley:

*Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number--
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you--
Ye are many -- they are few.*

Shelley wrote the long *Masque of Anarchy* on hearing of a massacre of pro-democracy campaigners in Manchester, England in 1819. It is a cry of outrage, solidarity and defiance. It also points an accusing finger at the rich and powerful of the time: the judiciary, landowners, parliamentarians and the Prince Regent. Shelley attempted to have the poem printed in *The Examiner* but restrictions on the press prevented its publication until 1832, ten years after his death at just 30 years of age.

The events of 16 August 1819 became known as the Peterloo Massacre; an ironic reference to the 1815 Battle of Waterloo. Participants in the ill-fated assembly in St Peter's Fields in Manchester included some who had fought in that battle. At least one fatality was a veteran. The period following the Napoleonic Wars was hard for working people. Unemployment and hunger were rife. The passing of the Corn Laws from 1815 exacerbated their poverty. The Corn Laws imposed tariffs on imported grain to enable British producers to dominate the market and keep prices high. They also led to increases in the cost of food.

By 1819, economic pressures, combined with a lack of suffrage, generated support for radical reform. Organisations such as the Manchester Patriotic Union formed 'to consider the propriety of adopting the most LEGAL and EFFECTUAL means of obtaining a reform in the Common House of Parliament'. The Union called for a 'great assembly' of people from the Manchester area and beyond to press for change. The rally was to be addressed by Henry Hunt, an early supporter of working-class radicalism and an important influence on the later Chartist movement. Hunt called for parliamentary reform and the repeal of the Corn Laws.

The mass assembly of 16 August was well organised, with local committees co-ordinating participation. The Union prohibited 'all weapons of offence or defence' and instructed that 'Cleanliness, Sobriety, Order and Peace' were to be observed throughout the demonstration. The estimated number attending the peaceful gathering in St Peter's Fields varied from 60,000-80,000—approximately half the population of the immediate area around Manchester. Whole families marched to the meeting place in their Sunday best, with music and banners. Women from the Manchester Female Reform Society, dressed in white, accompanied Hunt to the platform.

Those in power were alarmed at the nature and size of the assembly. They feared a riot or even rebellion and so despatched military forces to the area. Shortly after the meeting

began local magistrates called on the military authorities to arrest Hunt and several others and to disperse the crowd. A voluntary force of Manchester Yeomanry was sent in to do the job. Out of control, they attacked unarmed men, women and children with sabres wielded from horseback. Surrounded by troops, those assembled could not escape. Between 10-20 men, women and children were killed and hundreds injured.

There was a great deal of public sympathy, including from figures such as Shelley, for those participating in the Manchester rally and for their cause. However, subsequent Government legislation further restricted freedom of speech and assembly. Journalists present at the rally were arrested and others reporting the massacre were subsequently jailed. The *Manchester Observer*, from which members of the Manchester Patriotic Union had largely come, was forced to close in 1820. Hunt and eight others were charged with sedition. After a two week trial, five defendants were found guilty. Hunt was sentenced to 30 months imprisonment.

Yet calls for reform could not be silenced. The closure of the *Manchester Observer* led directly to the foundation of *The Manchester Guardian*, now *The Guardian*. The Peterloo Massacre enraged many and reinforced, rather than undermined, the determination of working people for change.

The final line of the poem, *Ye are many -- they are few*, is a familiar one. It has been taken up by the labour movement as an encouraging reminder of the combined strength of working people. The leader of British Labor Jeremy Corbyn, quoted these words from what he said was his favourite poem, following the UK elections in June 2017: *Rise like lions. We are many. They are few.* ♦

Jude Elton

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Photo: Public Domain



Charge of the Manchester Yeomanry in St. Peter's Field 1819

Bank Nationalisation 1947

Introduction

In 1947 the Chifley Labor Government decided to take full control of the private banking system. All banks would be regulated through the Commonwealth Bank and private banks were to be nationalised. These major initiatives were announced by press release, which simply told of the decision of Cabinet. A forty three word statement was all that was issued about a momentous economic decision and a role for Government unprecedented in our economic history. If successful, bank nationalisation would have shaped the Australian economy for decades to come. I will argue that by not preparing an effective campaign to begin with in favour of the proposal, bank nationalisation was doomed to fail.

Discussion

After enduring the hardships of the Great Depression and the Second World War it is arguable that Australians could have been persuaded of the case for banking reform. The banks by their own actions were not popular, then as now. An earlier Banking Royal Commission, of which Prime Minister Chifley had been a member, convinced him that Government control of the credit system was essential to achieving national economic goals. However, to achieve a long held Labor belief required a mobilisation of public opinion and of the labour movement, neither of which was done.

By contrast, the Liberal Party joined forces with the banks in opposing the banking legislation. Robert Menzies thundered a few days later that it was 'fascism' and a 'coming dictatorship in Australia'. Capital and its representatives were on the attack. The banks were able to organise an army of volunteers who forcefully argued the No case. There was no such group arguing the Labour view.

Writers such as Crawshaw, a journalist who reported on the campaign, argued that the banks put aside traditional rivalries and financed an elaborate public relations strategy, which had never been seen in before in Australia. By contrast, delegates at an Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) meeting discussing the nationalisation of the coal and steel industries, defeated an amendment that would have enabled the ACTU to campaign in support of bank nationalisation. A valuable ally therefore played no role in the public debate over a major financial reform.

The assault unleashed by the banks on the Labor Government was unparalleled. It was perhaps only rivalled in the modern era when the Gillard government tried to introduce a tax on the profits of miners. The Chifley Government response was ineffective in that it did virtually nothing to explain its case publicly. Consequently, it was in a weak position when the inevitable High Court challenge occurred. Not only did it lose that case but a subsequent appeal to the Privy Council in London was also dismissed.

Summary

The lesson from this episode suggests that before a controversial public policy is introduced a great deal of political work needs to be done before the proposed legislation is announced. This was not lost on a subsequent Labor Government. In addition, the Cold War atmosphere on the time was ruthlessly exploited by Menzies. At the 1949 election Labor lost. A Conservative Government reigned until 1972. The failed Bank nationalisation story was part of that saga.♦

Steve Acton

Fuse Caps and Femininity: Munitions Production in World War II South Australia



During World War II, South Australia became a major centre of munitions production. This meant that for the first time, women were given an opportunity to enter the industrial workforce en masse. At the height of wartime production in mid-1943, there were approximately 5,400 women employed across the state's five major munitions plants – Hendon Small Arms Ammunition Factory, Salisbury Explosives Factory, Finsbury

Ammunition Factory, General Motors Holden, and Islington Railway Workshops.

Women in munitions undertook a variety of tasks. Those at Hendon assembled cartridges for field and machine guns and filled explosives. Salisbury women worked with higher explosives, filling large shells, and building detonators, mortar bombs, and fuses, while Holden and Islington workers manufactured aircraft parts and fabricated military haversacks, tents and marquees. From January 1943, after a ruling by the Women's Employment Board, some received 90 per cent of a man's wage for this work.

However, the masculine nature of munitions production generated anxiety about the war's effect on traditional notions of femininity and women's place in South Australian society. A narrative of domesticity therefore pervaded discussion about female munitions workers. For example, an article appearing in Adelaide's daily paper *The News* in December 1940 described the liquid in the acid wash section as looking like "fairy floss at a carnival sweets stall, or the soapsuds of wash troughs that are a homelier and more familiar setting for femininity".

Feminine expectations also informed employment policies. When in late 1942 extra women were needed for engagement at Salisbury Explosives Factory, the preservation of traditional gender roles was reflected in the resistance of South Australian manpower authorities to draw on Adelaide's 19,000 married women without children as an official source of labour. For those married women who voluntarily entered munitions employment, their employment records indicate that domesticity and industrial work was often incompatible, with many at Islington eventually resigning citing either pregnancy or inability to juggle home duties and shift work as the most common reasons.

The 'glamorous' portrayal of munitions work by the South Australian press also concealed its dangers both to the public and prospective female employees. Oral histories of female munitions workers reveal that factories often overworked women to the point of exhaustion. Long hours, combined with the tediousness of the tasks they were prescribed and the health risks associated with handling toxic chemicals, counteracted benefits from a

temporary increase in pay. Recollections abound on the injuries that women both experienced and witnessed – hair caught in drills, hand and arm lacerations, and loss of eyesight were just some of the more serious afflictions, while the death of a female worker in an explosion was well-remembered by those employed at Salisbury. Aside from health issues, female absenteeism was also caused by the inflexibility of the long hours and the night shifts that characterised industrial work, which meant that women found little time for shopping, housework, or for caring for sick relatives.

Despite Adelaide's post-war manufacturing boom, the majority of women did not continue in factory work. Women were expected to vacate non-traditional roles to make way for returned servicemen, as stipulated in South Australia's *War Service Preference in Employment Act 1943*. But regardless, women's unpleasant experiences of munitions work would have arguably made post-war factory employment less enticing, not least because the pay on offer to them after the cessation of the Women's Employment Board was substantially lower than the 90 per cent they had received between 1943-45. Many also wished to return to the home, and indeed, by 1947 South Australian women constituted just 21 per cent of the state's workforce. Ultimately, a discourse of domesticity, dangerous working conditions, and reluctance of employers to acknowledge the needs of female workers meant the involvement of women in South Australia's munitions industry had minimal long-term impact on the gendered expectations that shaped their lives. ♦

Rachel Harris



Rachel with Jude Elton after her presentation at the Box Factory

Photos: SLSA B 7798/412 and Allison Murchie

Rachel is the 2017 Labour History Society SA Tom Sheridan Scholarship recipient. The above is a summary of her talk to the Society, 18 February 2018.

2018 Scholarship Winner

In 2017 the Labour History Society (SA) established the Tom Sheridan Scholarship to support and encourage original research and work relevant to the fields of South Australian labour and social history. The scholarship of \$500, plus a year's membership of the Society, is open to applicants 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).

'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 industrial and political 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.



We are delighted to announce that the scholarship winner for 2018 is Victoria Fielding, PhD candidate in the field of political communication and media at the University of South Australia. Victoria is undertaking an historical analysis of trade union political narratives in five major disputes and political events. In her own words:

The purpose of my research is to better understand how political narratives used in the trade union movement influence media reporting of industrial disputes. [It] aims to inform the development of more effective strategic political communication in the labour movement...My research is therefore investigating the historical cultural framing of union disputes through content analysis of historical newspaper

reports of five diverse and influential Australian industrial disputes and political events in the labour movement. The five cases include the Shearer's Strike (1891), the Pig Iron Strike (1938), Prime Minister Hawke's Union Accord (1983), the Waterfront Dispute (1998) and Prime Minister Howard's WorkChoices policy (2005).

Victoria plans to use her research results to publish a broadly accessible book about strategic trade union communication. She is also keen to present the results to interested groups, including the Labour History Society.

Congratulations Victoria! We look forward to hearing about your research findings. ♦

Jude Elton

Photo by Fletcher O'Leary shows David Faber & Jude Elton with Victoria Fielding

Australia Day

In our last newsletter we asked for your ideas on what you thought about Australia Day being held on 26th January. Thank you to those who replied and here are some of the comments provided:

“Well we certainly can’t think that concern over the fraught date in Australia’s history - January 26 - being celebrated as Australia Day is a relatively recent phenomenon I was moved to learn this morning from ABC-TV Breakfast about the courageous ‘Day of Mourning’ Aboriginal protest that took place in 1938. As the account tells, it was triggered by ignorant and brutal behaviour by white organizers of the Sesquicentenary celebrations, being held that year, as they forced Aboriginal participation in farcical re-enactments. I look forward to the day we change the date of Australia Day to one we can all celebrate.

Loine Sweeney

“There has been a deal of commentary recently on the appropriateness or otherwise of January 26th as Australia Day. There is little doubt that the majority of Australians are happy with the existing arrangements and wonder what all the fuss is all about. On the other hand most Aboriginal Australians and their supporters see January 26th historically as a day which brought on a war the outcome of which for Aboriginal people was similar to the Holocaust. Australia Day should be a day which unites all Australians rather than one which divides us. In light of that I support moving the day to another date at some time in the future. However those supporting a move to another date should be careful of pushing too hard for an early decision. My fear is that the conservative forces will see an opportunity to entrench 26th January as Australia Day by a public vote. Those in support of a move are not yet consolidated on an alternative date. This situation is dangerous to the project of successfully moving to an alternate date. Some are advocating January 1st the date the federation commenced [already a public holiday and in a period of the year with ample public holidays], others advocate Anzac Day April 25th [please no] still others are advocating the date of the High Court decision in the Mabo case 23rd June. None of these are ideal to put it mildly.

Rather than attempting to force this issue at the present time I think it would be better to delay any decision and pressure to make such a decision until Queen Elizabeth dies. That should then give a referendum for a Republic and a directly elected head of state a real chance of successfully passing with a majority of votes in a majority of states. A sensible Australian Government could then arrange to introduce the Republic on a date in the second half of the year when there is a dearth of public holidays. Either immediately or subsequently that date could become Australia Day. Even if it didn’t happen concurrently with the introduction of a Republic, having a Republic date could provide a date around which all those in favour of change could unite.”

Peter Duncan

“From an historical and social perspective, the date of Australia Day must be moved. January 26, Invasion Day, is the only truly provocative day on the calendar (although Anzac Day would also be inappropriate). Almost any day would do, especially if it was in the cricket

and barbecue season as per popular custom. Personally I'd suggest January 25th, the last day historically when Australia was truly independent."

David Faber

"I am one of those Australians who believe that the 26th January, also known as Australia Day/Invasion or Survival Day, is not a good date to celebrate our national day. Such a day should be one that brings us all together despite our diversity. It should also be one that is acceptable to the people whose land it really is – the Aboriginal people who have been here for 60,000 years and looked after this country much better than the European occupiers have during the past 200 years. We badly need reconciliation to address the past crimes committed against Australia's Aboriginal people and the policies that have excluded them. The refusal by the Turnbull Government to accede to the request of Aboriginal elders in the 2017 Uluru Statement from the heart is the most recent example.

The Aboriginal ownership of this land should be recognised on our flag as well. The Union Jack, which represents British imperial wars over its near neighbours, should be replaced with an Aboriginal symbol. We also need to ensure that the 339 recommendations of the 1991 Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, headed by progressive South Australian judge Elliott Johnston are adopted by all Australian governments to ensure that no Aboriginal people unnecessarily die in prison. Progressive Australians in the union and other social movements need to be promoting the Reconciliation movement and the above changes to demonstrate their solidarity with Australia's indigenous people. ♦

Andy Alcock

Photos: Public Domain

It's Time!

There are only 28 private rentals Australia-wide that are affordable for an unemployed person, according to a 2017 Anglicare study.

And with only 1 job vacancy for every 10 job-seekers, it is getting harder to find work. People are spending longer unemployed – and longer in poverty.

Imagine losing your job and surviving on \$273 per week – would you cope? That is what it is like on Newstart. This payment is \$160 below the poverty line: this has not been raised in real terms since 1994.

Tell the Labor Party, It's time to Raise Newstart!!

Labor Party leader Bill Shorten: bill.shorten@aph.gov.au and (03) 9326 0611

Labor Party Social Services spokesperson Jenny Macklin: jmacklin.mp@aph.gov.au (03) 9459 1411.

This information is provided by the **Anti-Poverty Network, South Australia**. Phone: 0411 587 663 or at www.antipovertynetworksa.org or antipovertynetwork.sa@gmail.com

Change the Rules ACTU Campaign

This year's May Day March supported the ACTU Change the Rules campaign. Below are extracts from their Campaign Kit:

Join the movement for change

Time and time again generations of Australian workers have come together, stood up against injustice, inequality and greed. This Federal Government – and many in big business – will do everything they can to stop us, to demonise us, or to make this task as hard as possible. Because they fear the power of working people banding together. Because when Australians work together, they are mighty and unbreakable. Be mighty. Be unbreakable. Join your union.

Our story – big business has too much power

Thirty years of experimenting with trickle-down economics has failed to provide secure jobs, or fair pay rises. Even though profits are booming, a third of big business still didn't pay any tax. And many are engaged in a race to the bottom on wages and job security. The rules are working for big business. Business had massive profits. Executive bonuses are at all-time highs.



But for working people, the rules are broken. Wage rises have flat lined. Too many people are in casualised and insecure work, and inequality is at a 70-year high. The gap between the very rich and everyone else, is at record highs. Australians can get a pay rise and secure work, but they need to join their union, so together, we can change the rules.

Changing the rules will allow working people to win more secure jobs and fair pay rises. It will give stronger effective universal rights that can be enforced. We need to change the rules so working people can win fair pay rises. We need to change the rules so workers have rights that can be enforced. And we need working people to be put before multinational corporations. It's time to change the rules. This is only possible if we build our movement. Join with us to build a strong movement that can change the rules in your workplace and in our country. ♦

Campaign t-shirt modelled by
Gus Story and Campbell Duignan

Support Sally McManus and get behind the campaign.

For further information about the campaign and what you can do to help go to:
<https://changetherules.org.au/>

Allison Murchie

Source: ACTU Campaign kit. Photo: Campbell Duignan

May Day March – “Change the Rules – National Day of Action”



Jamie Newlyn MUA



Miners from Oaky North QLD, Allison Murchie and Campbell Duignan



BWIU T-shirt of years past



Marlene and Denis Fenwick



Chris Brodsky & Allison Murchie



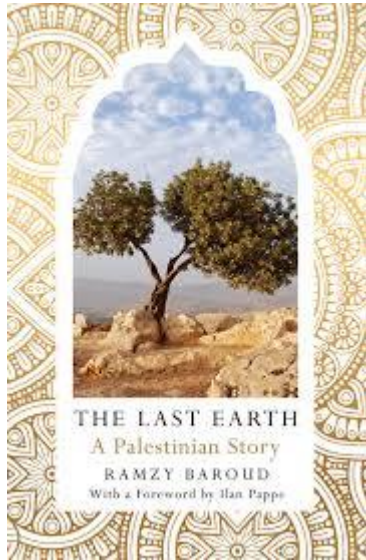
Jude Elton

Photos by Allison Murchie and Jenny Scott (photo 6)

Refer to May Day SA Facebook page for a larger selection of photos

The Last Earth: A Palestinian story, By Ramzy Baroud

Pluto Press London 2018



You can tell from the very first pages of this beautiful and timely book that the author brings to the historian's craft and discipline the background of an accomplished journalist, editor and poet. The language is limpid and expressive. Unlike some historians, Baroud does not commit the crime against history of mistaking objectivity for a coldly alienated quality. He acquaints us early with the fact that his subjects feel love, for one another and for their homeland, Palestine. He speaks to us humanely of their humanity, drawing forth our own, without which the Palestinian question and the drama of exile cannot be understood. Nor does he cowardly shy like some historians from political commitment.

Palestine is at the heart of the soul of every Palestinian, whether in Israel, the Occupied Territories or the Diaspora. It is the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of everything in the Palestinian heart. Khaled, a refugee raised in the camp of Yarmouk in Syria, knowing his heartland from books and tattered maps, nevertheless identifies intrinsically with his homeland, saying 'I am from the village of so and so in Palestine.' The enticingly enigmatic title reflects that Palestine and its satellite realities in the Diaspora are the first haven and the last earth of her people.

The book is prefaced by the distinguished Israeli dissident Ilan Pappé, under whom Dr Baroud served his historical apprenticeship at the University of Exeter's European Centre for Palestinian Studies. The Foreword places the book in historical and historiographical context. Historical perspective generates profound political insights. Pappé cites the early 20th century Italian political philosopher and practitioner Antonio Gramsci, an advocate of cultural revolution for socioeconomic change, to the effect that 'cultural resistance is either the rehearsal for political resistance or the means employed when political resistance is not possible. I think both possibilities apply to the Palestinian resistance.'

The function of historical memory is to unify the Palestinian resistance as it survives and grows under oppression. Baroud's practice of 'history from below' gives voice to the utterances of 'ordinary' working class and dispossessed Palestinians, fusing collective memory into an effective tool of cultural resistance, narrating the past and mapping present ambitions. Given that Israeli oppression has fractured Palestinian political elites and leadership, 'resistance...unfolds as individual acts enhanced by a strong solidarity of the collective. The oppression is daily and the time miniscule, and so is the resistance. Small gestures, daily heroism, and survival accumulate into a story of *Sumud*, steadfastness.' Ultimately, resistance is hope: 'Zionism is not a settler colonial project that is going to end with the elimination of the natives. They are here to stay.' ♦

Dr David Faber

Significant Wins for Domestic Workers in Timor Leste



The Working Women's Centre of Timor Leste (WWCTL) enjoyed an eventful 12 months throughout 2017 and the team is looking forward to consolidating some of their achievements in significant legislative change for

Domestic Workers across Timor Leste in 2018.

Established in 2011 with seed funding from the Working Women's Centres of South Australia and the Northern Territory, WWCTL set out to support the largely undocumented informal sector of Domestic Workers in Timor Leste. Ongoing fundraising through APHEDA, including this year's successful National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) Bluestocking Week events, have ensured that the WWCTL is able to continue its great work.

Through door-to-door organising, the small team at WWCTL were able to encourage hundreds of domestic workers to connect with WWCTL and participate in skills training. The training aims to assist them in their work inside homes of Timorese and expat families primarily located in the capital of Dili.

The investigation into the experiences and challenges of domestic workers was enhanced with support from the New Zealand Embassy in Dili in 2017, allowing the WWCTL team to undertake qualitative and quantitative research into the wages, conditions, and districts of origin of domestic workers in Dili, Suai and Oecusse. This research indicated disproportionate numbers of domestic workers came from the district of Ermera which is also considered to be one of the poorer regions of the country. In addition, levels of education were considerably lower for women engaged from this area often meaning young workers have been open to greater exploitation.

At the same time WWCTL was undertaking key research, surveying hundreds of domestic workers and running focus group meetings, members in Dili were getting more active about their employment rights. WWCTL eagerly participated in the 2017 May Day celebrations followed by the first celebration of International Day of Domestic Workers in Timor Leste on June 16' 2017.

On this day the campaign reached its first milestone when a representative from the Ministry of Labour (SEFOPE) presented the first draft of new legislation to recognise Timorese Domestic workers in labour law. This was well received by the enthusiastic crowd

of domestic workers and their supporters – a huge win but only the first step towards implementation.

WWCTL established a consultative committee of NGOs, union representatives, legal centres and labour hire organisation to draft a joint submission to parliament on the proposed legislation to bring it in to line with existing labour law in Timor Leste. The committee involves numerous women's NGOs in Dili who presented their submission with substantial changes to the proposed draft, in a public consultation with the ministry in November 2017. They argued for amendments to almost every clause and the Secretary of State agreed to each one.

This means wins on:

- Paid overtime
- The right to refuse overtime
- The application of the general minimum wage
- No undercutting of wages for board and lodging
- Maximum of six hours work before a one-hour break.

The current political hiatus in Timor Leste following last year's unsuccessful minority government and the President's recent decision to dissolve parliament and force a new election in 2018, means there will be a gap before the agreed clauses are passed into law this year.

In the interim more training and campaign activities are being planned by domestic workers including ongoing discussions with the consultative group to further strengthen domestic workers' rights at a local and national level.♦

Source: APHEDA website 31.1.2018

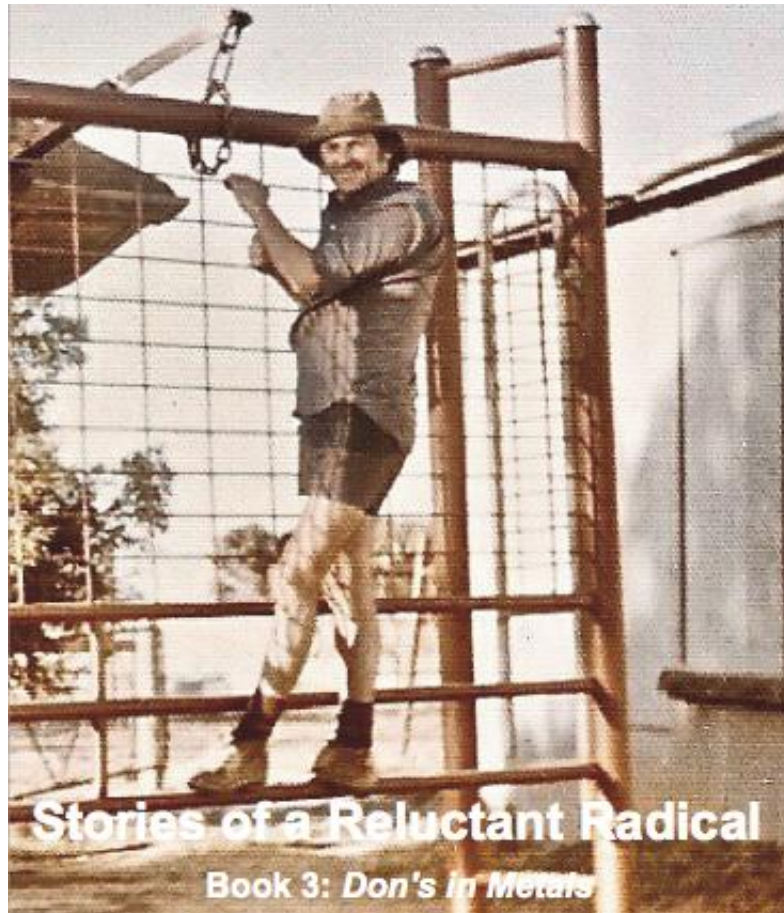
Note: The 2018 May Day Award of \$1000 was awarded to the Working Women's Centre in Timor Leste at its annual dinner on 1.5.18 and the award was accepted by Sandra Dann, Director of the Adelaide Working Women's Centre. Sandra is currently in Timor Leste for the up-coming elections. She is seen here with some of the staff at the WWCTL. They were delighted with the news and sent their thanks to the SA May Day Collective.

Photo by Sandra



Dann

Book three on Memoirs of Reluctant Radical



Stories of a Reluctant Radical: Book 3 ***Don's in Metals***

Born in 1936, Don Kevin Jarrett was raised in a Communist family environment in Port Augusta. He felt the impact of anticommunism during childhood and also in his early career in the Post Office, Elder Smiths and the metal industry. Later, as a CPA organiser, skilled metalworker and high school teacher he developed a strong commitment to the importance of democratic processes in all organisations. Now retired, Don remains actively involved in progressive social and industrial groups.

This third volume of Don's memoirs is about his years in the metal trades (1962-1972), interrupted by a study trip to Russia and a stint as an organiser in the Communist Party. Throughout this time he advances his technical and negotiating skills while pursuing part-time study, culminating in a year at Adult Matriculation College followed by a BA and Dip Ed at Adelaide University.

Books can be purchased for \$20 from:

Ken Bridge at kbridge38@gmail.com or Don Jarrett at donjarett@internode.on.net

I'm Appalled

Finally the Barnaby Joyce spectacle is over. More than enough has been written and said about the saga. But I was rather taken aback at the moral outrage expressed by the Prime Minister in his unsuccessful attempt to encourage Joyce to resign. Turnbull was "appalled" at Joyce's behaviour. Rather an over-reach of outrage I would have thought. Milder language would have more than sufficed.

I have been appalled by a number of other issues, for example, the continuing cruelty towards asylum seekers on Nauru and Manus. Human rights lawyers had to take the government to the Federal Court to allow a critically ill child to be brought to Australia for medical treatment unavailable to her on Nauru. This was a not-yet 13 year old child, into her 5th year of detention, who was suicidal. Not many politicians seemed to be appalled by that.

I am appalled at the willingness with which Australia's leaders follow others into war. The Greens have called for an independent, comprehensive enquiry into John Howard's decision to invade Iraq. I support that call. It was a decision to go to war based on the lie of weapons of mass destruction and, as we wrote to the PM in 2015, there was no legitimacy for the action, no focus for the future and it triggered chaos and instability, death and destruction. I also think that any future decision to go to war should only be made after a full debate in parliament. Australia needs an independent, peaceful foreign policy.

I am appalled that we are being drawn into US confrontation with China, as Trump's top military commander "is planning the ramp up of US Marines at a key base..." – Darwin. And I am appalled that our PM is jubilant about the use of \$3.8 billion dollars of taxpayer funds to subsidise and promote growth of the Australian armaments industry in the hope of us being in the top ten of those countries that peddle death and destruction. What have we become?♦

Anne Sgro

Union of Australian Women (Vic) Newsletter. March 2017

Union of Australian Women

Remember when

This is a new feature of occasional photos from the collection of the State Library of South Australia, kindly provided with their permission. In this issue we celebrate Don Dunstan, Premier of South Australia from 1.6.67 to 17.4.68 and 2.6.70 to 15.2.79. These photos were taken by Vic Grimmett and show Don in his home at Norwood.



SLSA. PRG 1662/5/31 with wife Gretel and children Bronwen, Andrew and Paul



With sons Andrew and Paul