

## Labour History Society (SA) Inc: President's Report 2017-18

2017-18 was a very busy and successful year for the South Australian Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History.

### Membership

Branch membership at the end of the financial year was a very healthy 71; comprising 4 Life Members; 12 trade unions; and 55 individual members.

### Tom Sheridan Scholarship

A Tom Sheridan Scholarship was awarded again this year. The successful applicant was Victoria Fielding, a PhD candidate in the field of political communication and media at the University of South Australia. She is undertaking an historical analysis of trade union narratives in five major Australian industrial disputes and political events: the Shearer's Strike (1891), the Pig Iron Strike (1938), The Accord (1983), the Waterfront Dispute (1998) and WorkChoices (2005).

Victoria plans to use the research results to publish a book about strategic trade union communication. It would be in an accessible format so that the labour movement can use the insights to communicate more effectively and to better influence positive media coverage of trade unions. She is also keen to present the results to interested groups, including the Labour History Society.

### General meetings & Events

Five well attended general meetings/public seminars and the AGM were held this year. Speakers covered a range of topics, including historical reflections on current issues:-

- 20 August 2017, AGM and speaker Margaret Allen, *Alien Workers in 19th and early 20th century (South) Australia*. Amendments to the Branch Constitution were also made at the AGM and subsequently registered under the Associations Incorporation Act (SA). The updated Constitution can be viewed on the Branch website.
- 15 October 2017, Mark Dean, *Industrialisation & deindustrialisation in South Australia*
- 18 February 2018, Rachel Harris (2017 Scholarship winner), *Fuse Caps & Femininity: Munitions Production In World War II South Australia*
- 15 April 2018, Peter McCusker, *The development of unfair dismissal law in South Australia*
- 17 June 2018, Tom Buchanan & Tom Mackay, *A Company's Country: BHP and Australian Culture during the 'Golden Age' of Capitalism*

The event held on 13 May 2018 as part of this year's History Festival attracted a large audience that filled the Box Factory venue. There was keen interest in the topic, *Work, Unemployment & Welfare- Then & Now*, explored by historian and political economist Ray M Broomhill, and executive officer of SACOSS Ross Womersley. Festival publicity produced by the History Trust enabled the society to reach a broad audience.

### Newsletter

Allison Murchie continued her invaluable role as newsletter co-ordinator during the year. I thank her for all her hard work, and all those who contributed content. Thanks also to Greg Stevens who supported production and assisted with distribution. Special thanks go to Steph Key and Steve Geoganas, and their electorate office staff for their assistance with the printing of newsletters.

Four seasonal issues of the Newsletter were produced during 2017-18: Winter 2017; Spring 2017; Summer 2017-18; Autumn 2018. They included articles; book reviews; articles; reports from events; and special features.

Newsletters are now largely sent via an email link. However, provision is made for members without an email service to continue to receive newsletters by post. Copies of newsletters are also posted on the website.

### **Executive Activity**

The executive has worked hard over the year. Tasks are shared and the contribution of all committee members is vital for the running of the range of Branch activity. I thank everyone for their contribution and support.

The Executive meets bi-monthly on Thursdays from 5.30-7pm at the Box Factory. Members are welcome to attend and contribute to discussion, but may not vote.

Six Executive meetings were held during the year, plus a number of working group sessions on matters relating to events, the website and scholarship.

20 July 2017

14 September 2017

16 November 2017

18 January 2018

16 March 2018

17 May 2018

### **Federal Matters**

The federal office of the Society is working to overcome financial shortfalls arising out of university cutbacks. Regular national hook-ups of the federal executive, spread across Australia, keep Branches informed of developments. In spite of funding constraints, the federal office and journal editor continue to produce the quality journal *Labour History* and successfully run federal affairs. I encourage members to subscribe to the journal and raise the issue of backing for the federal society with their union. We thank Federal Secretary Julie Kimber, Administrative Officer Carl Power and journal editor Diane Kirkby in particular for their support and work on the Society's behalf.

This year the South Australian branch declined an invitation to organise the 2019 national labour history conference. However, we are committed to building branch capacity, for example by strengthening links with South Australian universities, to enable hosting of the conference in 2021.

### **South Australian President**

This is my final report as President. I will not be renominating for the position at the 2017-18 AGM. It has been an honour to have served the labour movement through the Labour History Society over the past four years. It has also been a joy to be with you all at the Society's regular events and to witness the growing readiness to critique and explore progressive alternatives to neoliberal approaches to industrial, economic and social policy that have dominated debate for so long. My thanks to all for your attendance, contributions and support. I look forward to seeing you at later events. I wish the incoming officers and executive all the best. May the Society continue to grow and inspire through the exploration of labour history.

Dr Jude Elton

Presented AGM 19 August 2018