

# LABOUR HISTORY NEWS

Labour History Society (South Australia) Incorporated

Summer 2019



Armistice Day in front of Parliament House. On the right is the balcony of the South Australian Hotel.  
State Library of SA B 4633

## Included in this Issue

Rank and File in the AWU, Vale Luke Heffernan and Laurie Carmichael, Welcome Ken Bridge, Kym Mayes and the FCU, Songs of Struggle, Book review by Jude Elton

## **Presidents Report Summer 2019**

Welcome to the 2019 S. A. Summer Labour History Society Newsletter a year which, the Executive see as an exciting year and of course there will be the Federal election and the NSW State Election to add to the excitement.

We kick off the year with an executive meeting on 17 January and the first general meeting February 20<sup>th</sup> with guest speaker Michael Wohltmann author of the book on the life of the very understated South Australia labour activist Tom Garland. (See Jude Elton's review of his book in this edition of Labour History News)

Other general meeting subjects are still under discussion, but thought is being given to have a couple of panel discussions rather than a single guest speaker. The Executive is interested in any suggestions from the membership on their ideas for guest speakers or panel discussions throughout the year.

In October the Perth Branch of the Labour History Society will be hosting the 2019 National Conference, which hopefully, S.A. Executive member Dr David Faber will be presenting a paper.

This Branch has established a working party under the direction of Dr Faber to gauge if this Branch is in a position to host the 2021 National Conference. There will be regular updates to the membership on developments of the working party.

In November 2018 I attended, on behalf of the S.A. Branch, the LHS National Executive Board meeting and the National AGM.

The main outcomes of the meetings for the S.A. Branch were:

- There is a call for more book reviewers from S.A. for the Labour History Journal. If you are interested please contact me and I will pass on the details to the Journal editor;
- The Journal is to be open to articles relating to workplace experiences, be it as a union organizer, a job delegate or union educator;
- The National Executive is impressed that we have established a working party re the 2021 National Conference and have offered their assistance to the working party.

**Doug Melvin**

**President S.A. Branch LHS**

## The voice of the rank and file in the AWU



This paper traces some significant developments in the affairs of the Australian Workers Union, (the AWU), and, in particular the South Australian Branch in the 1950s and 1960s. <sup>(1)</sup> At the time, the AWU was probably Australia's biggest union (170,000 members) and its South Australian Branch was also possibly the biggest in the state. There had been a long running dispute between Tom Dougherty, the Union's General Secretary, and Clyde Cameron, a former State Branch Secretary, and from 1949, the Federal Member for the seat of Hindmarsh. The dispute apparently arose when Cameron failed to support Dougherty over a number of issues. Dougherty attempted unsuccessfully to develop grounds to expel Cameron from the union. In a speech to the House of Representatives in 1958, Cameron criticised the then Menzies Government legislation for its failure to protect elected union officials from suspension or dismissal by a union's national executive, including an entire state branch executive. He did not mention the name of the union!

In 1959 the AWU's Executive Council charged Cameron under the Misconduct rule. He was found guilty and expelled from membership of the union. He challenged his dismissal, and 18 of the union's rules in the Commonwealth Industrial Court. Nine of the 18 rules were found to be invalid. Cameron was later reinstated as a member of the AWU. Cameron then set up a body called the Council for Membership Control (the CMC) within the membership of the union, in Adelaide, to fight the union's leadership on a broader front. The specific objectives of the CMC were these:

1. Clean elections
2. Protection for elected officials from dismissal
3. Rank and file agreement of all Industrial Agreements and Consent Awards
4. Closer cooperation with other unions
5. Re-affiliation with the Queensland ALP
6. Affiliation with the ACTU

In 1961 the CMC began publishing a newspaper entitled "The Voice of the Rank and File." Most of the editorial content came from Cameron. The "Voice" campaigned for cleaner ballots and conformity with the standards for Unions ballot in S.133 of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. It was published bi-monthly.

When Dougherty won a court controlled ballot for the position of General Secretary in 1964, the AWU paper, "The Australian Worker" gloated over the victory against the CMC preferred candidate. It described the CMC and its supporters as "the bogus CMC, its heelers and stooges" who used "innuendo, smears and every trick in the book." <sup>(2)</sup>

Long-time SA Branch Secretary, Eric O'Connor then decided to move against some of his organisers, at the instigation of Dougherty, who had informed O'Connor they were conspiring against him. In March 1964 he dismissed Jack Wright, the Northern Areas organiser. One hundred and thirty members at a meeting in Port Augusta called for O'Connor's resignation. The SA Branch Executive then reinstated Wright. Their decision was endorsed by the Federal Executive Council.

So a momentary lull in the infighting occurred, leading up to the ballot for the SA Branch officials to be held three months later.

In those elections, (held in November 1964) O'Connor was defeated by Don Cameron (brother of Clyde) for the office of State Secretary. Jack Wright became Branch President, and Metropolitan organiser.

Voting irregularities were alleged by O'Connor. After a lengthy hearing, Sir John Spicer, of the Commonwealth Industrial Court, found that only a few votes had been recorded, contrary to the rules, and the result therefore stood. <sup>(3)</sup>

In January 1965, the AWU Annual Convention carried a resolution (36 for and 4 against), which gave the Executive Council freedom to conduct an enquiry into the affairs of the Branch. By then, the CMC was in the process of establishing the framework of a national organisation. It was funding the printing and distribution of some 15,000 copies of each issue.

The CMC were also active in the Mt Isa dispute and mine lock-out in 1964/65. In April 1965 the Executive Council met in Adelaide. The Council suspended Don Cameron, Jack Wright and eight other officials. The following month, after a three day hearing, it sacked all ten officials for alleged breaches of the rules. They expelled Don Cameron, Jack Wright and Reg Groth from membership of the union. All ten officials appealed to the Commonwealth Industrial Court. On the recommendations of Don Dunstan, Clyde Cameron and others, they engaged and briefed Roma Mitchell QC (as she then was). Terry Ludeke QC (as he then was) represented the members of the Executive Council.

The Full Bench of the Court consisted of three Judges, the Chief Justice, Sir John Spicer and Justices Dunphy and Smithers. Dunphy and Smithers both wrote lengthy judgments. Spicer agreed with the reasons stated by Smithers. Thus by a two to one majority, the Bench ruled in favour of the dismissed officials. The majority found that every single charge against them could not be sustained. <sup>(4)</sup>

An analysis of Dunphy's dissenting judgment would suggest that it was full of distortion and factual error. For example, he wrote that, "Clyde Cameron founded, developed and assisted a scab organisation known as the "Committee (sic) for Membership Control, whose sole aim was the white-anting and undermining of the AWU with the object of destroying it." That was never the objective of the CMC. Its purpose was to strengthen the AWU by cleaning up the corruption. It aimed to "restore it to its former greatness."

The Smithers judgment is certainly worthy of some detailed scrutiny as is his interpretation of the relevant Rules of the Union and his findings on the conduct of the defendants and in particular the General Secretary.

1. He found that the Branch Secretary was not above the Branch Executive, and if the Executive decided that organisers Wright and Cameron had a valid reason for not obeying the Secretary's instructions in relation to their duties (which they did), then no offence had been committed.
2. He found that Mick Young's membership of the Union had not been terminated when he was elected the State ALP organiser, and therefore he had been validly appointed as a Trustee.
3. He found that the decision of the Branch Executive to dismiss Industrial Officer Collins was a matter entirely at the discretion of the Branch Executive. Indeed he could be dismissed "for any reason whatsoever."
4. He found that the charge of failing to "pull together" in the interests of the Branch and the members was worded in terms of "expressing the sincere hope that ..." and, as such was "pious" and had no practical effect.

5. He found that members of the Branch Executive had not acted in breach of the Rules with respect to a charge that organiser Reg Groth was compliant in the removal of portions of the Branch elections voting slips by persons other than the members concerned.
6. He found that members of Executive Council had believed that those charged were connected in some way to the CMC, and thus had acted out of bias and with an extraneous motive. Their decision making was therefore flawed in that they allowed their deliberations to be so influenced. <sup>(5)</sup>
7. He therefore agreed with the submission of Counsel for the appellants that Executive Council had a fundamental misconception of their functions. They saw that a pathway towards ending the CMC was available, and they used it. It was, he wrote, “a determination to convict, according to humour or desire.” He continued, “If it were in order for Mr Dougherty at Convention to launch an attack in terms which could only be said to be hostile, undermining, and much of it based on untenable grounds, it was in order for those threatened to fight.
8. Smithers was particularly critical of the role played by Dougherty in influencing the decision making by the Executive Council. Here are some examples given by him:
  - Dougherty’s speech at Convention exhibited an unreasoning partisanship inappropriate to the occasion and his responsibilities
  - Dougherty dismissed the validity of the opinion given by Counsel for the appellants, and provided to him, on his own say so.
  - Dougherty regarded the SA election results of 1964 as having given control of the Branch to interests favourable to the CMC. He was convinced for reasons which to him were irresistible that control must be terminated. This conviction communicated itself to his colleagues on the Council.
  - No member other than Wright or Cameron made any comment about the charges or the particulars. So there was no discussion on the motion other than the mover and the seconder, and by Wright and Cameron, and by Dougherty in reply. Smithers wrote about the effect of the CMC on their deliberations, “Here is an extraneous factor which could cause the members of the tribunal to look to the end to be achieved. To the exclusion of their judicial duties.” <sup>(6)</sup>
  - Smithers found that not only were the charges not made out, but all of the penalties (including expulsion) were invalid. Further, not one of the organisers had been validly dismissed. Spicer C.J. wrote that he “unreservedly agreed with the interpretation by my brother Smithers has applied to the various rules involved, and with the conclusions that on any view the conduct alleged against the claimants in a number of cases is quite incapable of involving a breach of the rule relied upon ...” <sup>(7)</sup>

To say that this decision sent shockwaves through the AWU, the union movement, and the ALP would be an understatement.

The CMC continued operating until 1974. The previous year, Clyde Cameron, as Minister of Labour in the Whitlam Government had secured a number of amendments to the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, which would have satisfied the CMC’s main concerns. By then the AWU had finally affiliated with the ACTU. The initiative had come from the SA Branch.

As for the CMC, which had only been able to operate through its seamless organisation and communication, it had been such an effective force for change that could be said to be virtually un-paralleled in Union history.

#### END NOTES

- (1) This paper has been based on a talk given by Greg at the October 2018 meeting of the SA Branch of the Society.
- (2) The Australian Worker, published on 13 January 1965
- (3) Probably the sodden bundle of ballot papers fished out of the Port River!
- (4) Cameron v Duncan 8 FLR 148
- (5) at 8 FLR 245
- (6) at 8 FLR 245
- (7) at 8 FLR 149

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following books provided information in the preparation of this talk and this article.

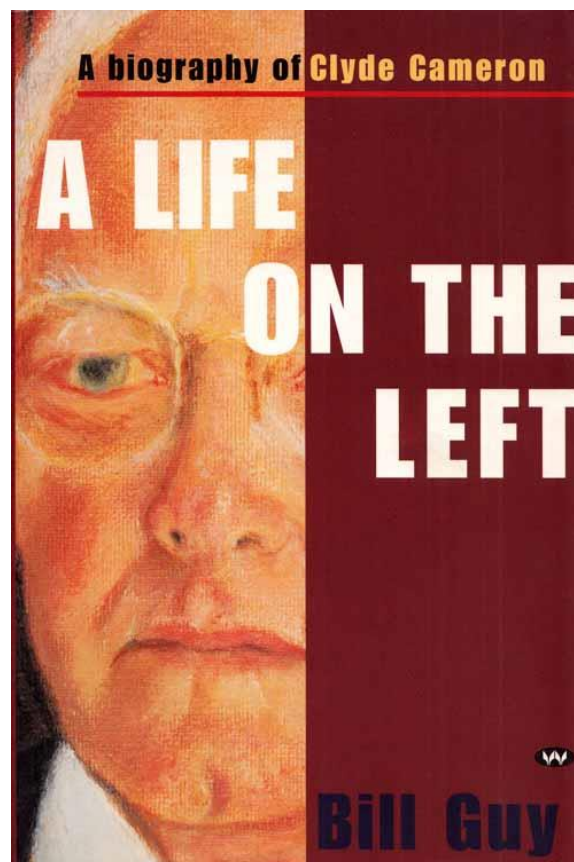
Guy, Bill, A Life on the Left, Wakefield Press, 1999

Hearn, Mark and Knowles, Harry, One Big Union, Cambridge University Press 1996

From October 1964 until his dismissal by the Executive Council in May 1965, the author was employed by the SA Branch of the AWU as its Industrial Officer.♦

#### **Greg Stevens**

Photo courtesy Greg Stevens





## Vale Luke Heffernan

18.4.1937 to 24.11.2018

Loved husband of Barbara for 58 years. Loving father and father-in-law of Martyn and Jacq Brad and Leanne. Adored Grandfather of Amanda and Joe, Kylie and TJ, Shauna and Jack, Reece and Amelia, Kiera and Matt. Loving Papa to 4 Great Grandchildren and Papa Luke to 7. Forever in our Hearts.



Photo courtesy Fernando Goncalves



Courtesy of Luke's family

Comrades,

It's with sadness that I wish to inform you of the passing of our friend and comrade, Luke Heffernan. Luke passed away at home over the weekend surrounded by his loved ones. Luke was one of our greats – a friend, leader, mentor and tireless contributor to his beloved labour movement.

Joe Szakacs Secretary SA Unions

Another greatly loved and much respected comrade, Luke Heffernan passed away at home on the 24<sup>th</sup> November. I thought it appropriate to ask a few of his friends to say a few words about their memories of him. I served on the May Day Collective with Luke for many years and marched with him on many rallies, in more recent times in the company of his oxygen tank on a little trolley. He fought to the end. My fondest memory was when we both got to the meetings early and shared stories from his long life in the struggle. He didn't hold back and told it like it was. I learned a lot from him and I will miss him dearly.

*Allison Murchie*

For me being a part the SA union movement has only been a short journey now being 10 years as an organiser, a member for five or so years before that. Sure I was a member of a union when I left school and continued mostly for my working life. My understanding of being union, contributing and making a difference really did not come till I met the old guard, the ones like Luke Heffernan who have that natural ability to remember to tell the tales of struggle, the tales of winning and the message of power. In the time I have known Luke I have realised that these stories are his history, are his mark. Many men come and go and leave little behind, Luke stands above most and truly made a difference for me and so many other hard working people every day, every week and every year and no illness would stop him. I am sure if there is a heaven Luke will be up there right now with the likes of Rex Munn organising the angels for a fairer deal from god. Comrade the struggle continues for us but for you it is now over, loved by many, gone but never forgotten. Vale Luke Heffernan!

*Glenn Blackmore*

We were very sad to hear of the recent passing of Comrade Luke Heffernan. There are many photos in my collection that include Luke - a true friend to workers. He along with many of the members of RUMA (Retired Union Members) would back up many of Labour movement and the Union campaigns and worker disputes by being there. Many of us would also associate Luke very strongly with May Day and the many other progressive campaigns. What an honour to have worked with such a wonderful comrade.

*Steph Key*

A great stalwart keeping the Retired Unionist Group (RUG) on track. Will be sadly missed especially his wisdom and insights. Rest easy comrade.

*Don Jarrett*

You are the best grandpa we could have ever asked for. I have the biggest hole in my heart and already miss you so much. I have the best memories to hold close. You were the most amazing grandpa to me and it warmed my heart to watch you be the best great grandpa to Oscar. You will forever be in my heart and thoughts. We are really going to miss the head of our Heffernan clan. RIP Short Papa. Xx

*Kylie Price*

Yesterday I lost a father in law. The man who stepped in when my dad passed away. The man who adored his children, more so his grandchildren and even more his great grandchildren Mr have a chat, walked the dog, put our bins out. We miss you already.

*Jacqueline Heffernan*

Our comrade Luke Heffernan has sadly passed. May I say your wisdom knowledge and passion for the people is profound. Thank you kind comrade.

*Matt Blowes*

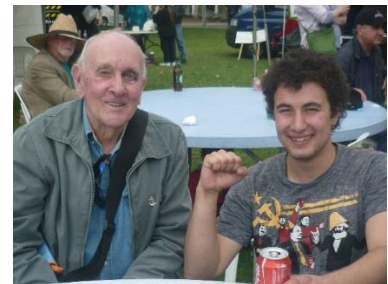
Luke was union through and through, I will miss him more than I can say. I feel incredibly privileged to have shared time with Luke on his visits to SA Unions, and to have been able to learn and be inspired by his stories, and to have been able to enter into joyful banter. So many wise words and kind deeds live on.

*Jane Clarke*

Very sad that Luke has left us, he was a champion of the struggle always there to help and teach others.

*John Adley*





Photos courtesy of Steph Key, Luke's family and Allison Murchie

## Ken Bridge

We welcomed Ken to the Executive Committee at our last AGM and here is a teaser into the life of this very interesting man.

Apart from helping out in my parents' grocery shop (packing biscuits, sugar and chook-wheat and delivering orders on my bike) I suppose I've only ever been a teacher. I trained at Adelaide University and Adelaide Teachers College in the late 1950s, then spent five years as a young high school teacher of everything (English, Latin, Mathematics and Science) mostly at Mt Gambier High, followed by almost three decades in a number of South Australian teachers colleges (Western Teachers College, Bedford Park Teachers' College/Sturt College of Advanced Education) but taking three years off in the late 1960s to teach English at Marangu Teachers College on the slopes of Mt Kilimanjaro, where I became an interested participant in post-colonial Tanzanian socialism under President Julius Nyerere.

In the 1970s I was active in a couple of progressive union activist organisations – the Education Action Alliance and the *Red Ed* magazine collective. During the 1980s I taught part-time in the new Labour Studies Diploma study program around work, unions and the economy at Adelaide College of Advanced Education, joining fulltime when it became part of Adelaide Uni in 1991 - and when the University and I parted company in 1996 I remained as an adjunct research associate for the next decade. The Labour Studies program explored in part the history of work and management practices, and I became fascinated by the spread of Taylorism in industrial production from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the impact of new electronic technologies on the printing industry several decades later. I also taught union history, covering the classic dramas of the Australian labour movement such as the Eight Hour day, the Great Strikes of the 1890s, the Basic Wage Case, and the 1949 Coal Strike, and I bring this passion for Labour History into my role as a new member of the Executive Committee.♦



***Work fascinates me – I can sit  
and look at it for hours (Jerome  
K Jerome)***

**Ken Bridge**

## Tom Garland & the Common Cause Movement

Michael Wohltmann, Digital Print Australia, 2018

Local historian Michael Wohltmann is a passionate believer in the capacity of historical knowledge 'to inspire, and create thoughts and ideas about the future'. Inspiration can come not just from major events and figures, but also from 'small moments.' In *Tom Garland & the Common Cause Movement*, Wohltmann describes how an individual, Tom Garland, and collective organisation in the form of the Common Cause Movement, contributed to the labour movement and public debate on progressive issues in South Australia between 1928 and 1949.

The small, easy to read book of 130pp is divided into two parts: The first part focuses on the life of Scottish immigrant Thomas (Tom) Garland (1893-1952). The second outlines Garland's involvement in the genesis and achievements of the Common Cause Movement 1942-1949. Copies of historical documents: photos; newspaper clippings; security file cards; meeting notices; bulletins; and pamphlets form a significant portion of the book.

Tom Garland was born in Glasgow and began work at an early age in Clydeside engineering shops. His union activism and political engagement commenced then and continued for the rest of his life. Invalided out from the Royal Navy after service during the First World War, Garland immigrated to Victoria in 1921. At Yallourn he joined the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) as a fitter, only to be dismissed, with others, for attempting to establish a combined unions committee.

Garland and his wife Edith shifted to Adelaide in 1928 at the start of the Great Depression. It didn't take long for Garland to become involved in trade union and labour politics. He was soon elected President of the Adelaide District Committee of the AEU and delegate to the United Trades and Labor Council (UTLC).

In 1930 Garland played an important role in the Port Adelaide waterside workers strike and the following year, as Secretary of the Unemployed Prisoners Relief Committee, assisted those arrested following the Beef Riot. He went on to serve as President of the UTLC between 1936-37 and 1944-45, and as UTLC Secretary 1946-49.

Garland was a founding member of the Marx-Engels Club and gave its inaugural lecture in 1928. In 1929 the Club disbanded and reformed as a Division of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). Garland was an active and committed member of the CPA. In 1937, he became the first member of the CPA in South Australia to be elected to the position of union Secretary (of the Gas Employees Union). During the Second World War he adhered to the Comintern position of opposition to the war and conscription, until Germany invaded the Soviet Union. He resigned from the party in 1945, apparently over tactical disagreements. Garland stood as a communist, socialist and independent candidate at State and Federal elections in 1933, 1934, 1940 and 1941.

Tom Garland was a great debater, speaking at Botanic Park and University events as well as on radio and at factory gate meetings. He published his ideas on economic and social issues in pamphlets, including *The Slums of Adelaide*. His determination that working people should have better opportunities and healthier, easier lives led him to be a founding member of the Common Cause Movement.

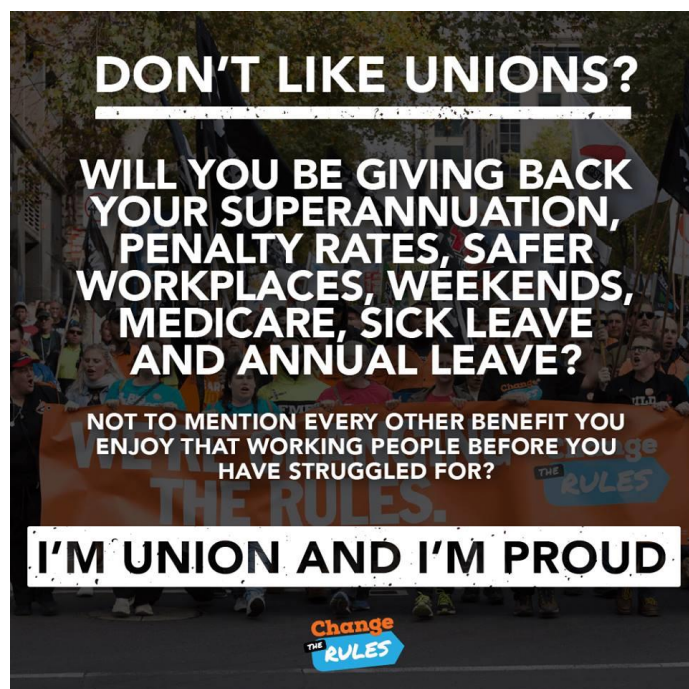


Established in 1943, Common Cause was a non-political, non-sectarian movement that aimed to support the war effort and importantly work for peace 'in a post war world free of poverty, unemployment, bad housing, malnutrition and inequality'. Other founding members included Ministers of Religion, professionals, public servants, academics and union officials. At its height, Common Cause had six active study districts in Adelaide and eight country branches. It ran educational and research programs and encouraged public debate on post-war reconstruction; housing; industrial development; public health; education; prison reform; and atomic power. Common Cause principles were taken up in community facilities and construction in the town of Nuriootpa. President, Dr Duguid, organised opposition to weapons testing on Aboriginal Lands, in conjunction with the Aborigines Advancement League. Key member, Alex Ramsay later became General Manager of the South Australian Housing Trust.

Wohltmann finds encouragement in Tom Garland's union and political activism and pursuit of social justice through Common Cause. He encourages readers to consider the continuing need for these forms of organisation and aims for a just society. Garland died in 1952, by then a delegate for the Clerks Union. Secretary Harry Kranze noted at his funeral, 'This fruitful life has passed, but the causes it nurtured and espoused are daily growing and will succeed'.

There are many stories of South Australian labour history yet to be researched and publicised. Michael Wohltmann shows that with passion and diligence such histories can be written outside of major institutions and big budgets. This publication has been digitally printed: a way of producing small scale publications at minimal cost. A copy can be purchased from the author via [mikewohltmann@gmail.com](mailto:mikewohltmann@gmail.com). ♦

**Reviewed by Jude Elton**



## My time with FCU (Federated Clerks Union)

I applied for the AWU (Australian Workers Union) Industrial Officer position in 1972. I've no idea why I thought I could snag such a job; it was a shot in the dark as I was keen to discover more about the Union movement. I'd graduated in Economics (Gretel Dunstan was my tutor for Economics 1 and 2 and Hugh Hudson had been one of my lecturers in Economics 1). I later enrolled in a Masters in Law and Graduate degree in Town Planning. I had joined the University Labor Club and the ALP in 1972, the Campaign for Peace in Vietnam and later the Public Service Association as I had worked at the Engineering and Water Supply as a computer programmer and at the South Australian Housing Trust (SAHT) as Special Projects Officer Aboriginal Housing. Les Wright won the AWU position. Jimmy Dunford passed on my name to Harry Krantz and he called me in late 1972 and asked me if I was interested in working for the FCU SA Branch. I said, "Yes please." I went to Alec Ramsay, General Manager of SAHT, and he cautioned me about taking the FCU job. He offered me a pay rise and a new position as Far North and Far West regional manager! I had about 3 houses under my management plus Indulkana, Amata and Coober Pedy.



I accepted the FCU position at half the pay rate and worked enormous hours. I had a fantastic time at the Clerks Union. Harry Krantz asked me to do all the S.A. Awards and the Federal Electricity Award with the Municipal Officers Association. He also sent me recruiting – this involved broken down pubs and regional bus rides through the night in Tasmania and Queensland. This was for the Insurance Staff Association and the Wool Brokers Staff Association, which was set up by Harry Krantz and Joe Riordan (NSW FCU Secretary). This was to counter the Groupers Maynes and Granville. I had some wonderful experiences. In May 1974 the Whitlam Government called on the election to win the Senate and undermine the Democratic Labor Party. The FCU Federal Office (Maynes and Grenville) called a strike of Airline Clerks to stop the Federal Members of Parliament flying home after Parliament was prorogued. Krantz was on leave and as the Airline clerks were my responsibility, Jack O'Grady (President) and Les Haseldine instructed me to call a meeting of the Airline clerks to vote against the Maynes tactic. I had recently had a big walk off at the Adelaide Airport over the baggage handling and got into considerable strife with Krantz for not getting Executive approval before pulling out the Clerks. On this occasion I met with the shop delegates, led by a wonderful bloke called George Egerton. We voted to NOT go on strike and so we thwarted Maynes plan to embarrass Whitlam. NSW also voted NO. So the airlines could fly from Adelaide and Sydney and not worry about Melbourne. The Melbourne polities drove home and the strike was withdrawn within a few hours.

I fell out with Harry over living in sin with Carolyn, the recently divorced Secretary at the Firefighters Union. We have been together 44 years this year. Harry didn't approve, but I think he wanted to get rid of me as I was getting too big for my boots! He didn't sack me; he sat me in a corner without any work and I watched John Lesses, Ralph Clarke and Steve Acton do all my work. This was in May 1975. Greg Stevens and Dominic Foreman offered me jobs. I took the job at the Public Service Association. At FCU I was involved in the interview of Ralph Clarke and Steve Acton for the organiser positions. Harry Krantz asked me to decide between Ralph Clarke and Len Hatch. I voted for Ralph. Len got the position at the Vehicle Builders Union

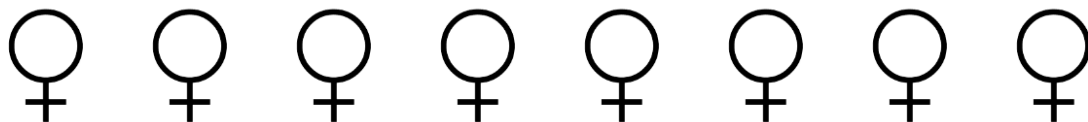
The rest is history!♦

## **Kym Mayes**

Photo courtesy Kym Mayes

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### Suffrage 2109



2019 is the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's suffrage in South Australia. The anniversary celebrates changes in law in 1894 where women won the right to vote and to stand for Parliament. New Zealand women had already won the right to vote in 1893 but South Australia was the first place in the world to also win the right to stand for Parliament.

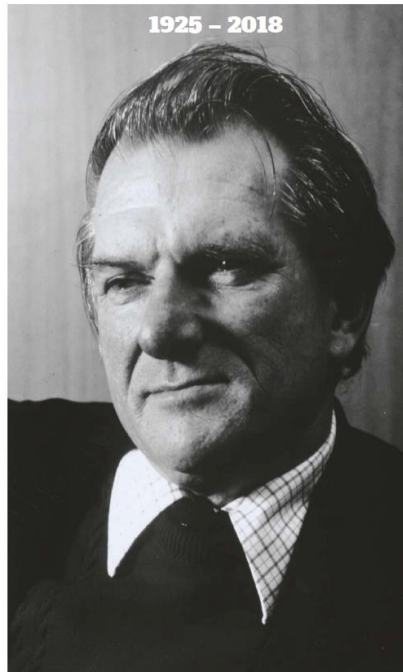
There will be many community events as well as government celebrations during the year.

If you are interested in applying for a community grant of up to \$5,000 your application must be lodged by 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Further information can be found at:

[www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/SAsuffrage125](http://www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/SAsuffrage125). This is a good resource on the history of suffrage in South Australia.

We will inform you of events as they are announced.

## **Laurie Carmichael (1925 – 2018)**



On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2018 the labour movement lost one of its great post war activists Laurie Carmichael.

He was born in Coburg and joined the union Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) after completing his apprenticeship as fitter and became a shop steward at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard.

Laurie was an active member of the Communist Party of Australia from the age of 16. He was elected Secretary of the AEU in 1958 and became National Assistant Secretary in 1972 and in 1987 was elected Assistant Secretary of the ACTU.

Throughout the years of union activity he used his great organising and oratory skills to lead many campaigns to improve working conditions for his members that had flow on effects to all workers.

Vale Laurie Carmichael a great labour and peace activist.♦

## **Doug Melvin**

Photo: Public Domain



## Songs of Struggle

Ah summer, lazing away enjoying a beer or two, but throughout the world the struggles of workers, indigenous peoples, environmentalists and believers in social justice continue.

Three different Songs of Struggle are reviewed in this edition of the Newsletter.

**'Songs of the Spanish Civil War'** is often played at a small ceremony in Canberra on December 8<sup>th</sup> each year to remember those Australians who fought on the side of freedom and justice in the Spanish Civil. Released in 2014 the two volumes of Songs of the Spanish Civil War (released as one cd) on the Smithsonian label Folkways has 5 parts.

Part 1 opens with 'Songs of the Lincoln Brigade' (of the USA) featuring the musicians, Pete Seeger, Tom Glazer, Baldwin Hawes and Bess Hawes. The tracks include, I believe, one that was sung widely in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Quartermasters Stores and an adaption of the classic Spanish folk song Viva La Quince Brigada translated to (Long Live the 15<sup>th</sup> Brigade). I advise listen to that track and if it does not get a tear flowing then who are you?

Part 2 'Six Songs for Democracy', which were originally recorded in Spain during an air raid on Barcelona, led by the great German working-class tenor Ernst Busch backed by a chorus of members of the Thaelmann Battalion (11<sup>th</sup> I.B). It opens with Los Cuatro Generales (the four generals). It was originally by the poet Federico Garcia Lorca who was murdered by the forces of evil very early in civil war. The song is a condemnation of Franco and the 3 other generals who lead the fascist rebellion against the leftist elected government. Other selections in this part include Songs of the International Brigade, Song of the United Front, and The Peat Bog Soldiers, all by the way sung in German.

Part 3 is a collection of songs compiled and recorded for members of the International Brigade who attended the commemoration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war, in Berlin in 1961. It includes Woody Guthrie's version of the Battle of Jarama which was one of the longest battles of the war.

Part 4 'Songs We Remember', whilst this part reflects the feelings of American members of the International Brigade towards Spain and its people, I expect that it too would reflect our own members of the International Brigade feelings. The songs are all performed by people from where much of the slaughter by the fascists took place; Catalonia, Seville and Asturias.

Part 5 'From behind the Barbed Wire', this title is a translation of the German song 'Wie Hinterm Draht' which refers to the concentration camps in France where the French, Spanish, German and Italian anti-fascists were held. All songs are sung by Bart van der Schelling and the exiles Chorus. Bart was a musician but also a freedom fighter He was badly wounded three time and eventually was unable to physically fight the good fight. The final song is Au Devant De La Vie (Toward a New Life). Here's hoping!

(Please note that the outline above are taken from the liner note).

*Album can be downloaded on Spotify*

### Medicine Songs by Buffy Sainte Marie

Many readers will remember the Native Indian Canadian folk singer Buffy Sainte Marie from the 1960s and 70s, well as the saying goes old folkies do not just fade away and it is so true for Buffy. In 2017 she released an album 'Medicine Songs'. Rather than interrupting her thoughts here is Buffy's own words about the album:

"This is a collection of front line songs about unity and resistance – some brand new and some classics. These are songs I've been writing for over fifty years, and what troubles people today are

still the same damn issues that from 30 – 40 years ago, war, oppression inequity, violence, rankism (pecking order), bullying, racism, racketeering, and systematic greed. Some of these songs come from the other side of that positively, common sense, romance, equity and enthusiasm for life. I really want this collection of songs to be like medicine, to be of some help or encouragement, to maybe do some good.”

(Direct quotes from the Artists Statement)

So, whilst it is not a struggle for workers’ rights or advancing the socialist cause, it does reflect the struggles of the Native peoples of North America especially against the environmental vandals of the mining and oil industries and many of the struggles they face are not dissimilar to those of other native peoples throughout the world including our own first nation peoples are facing. She has also included some of her anti-war songs including a re-working of her 1961 classic Universal Soldier (probably Donovan’s hit version is better known to Poms and Aussies).

Some of the standout tracks are a stirring version of “Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee” “Power in the Blood” and a re-worked version of “Soldier Blue”.

*Album can be downloaded on Spotify*

### **Songs of Resistance 1942 – 2018**

One fine morning I woke up early  
Bella ciao, bella ciao, goodbye beautiful  
One fine morning I woke up early  
To find a fascist at my door  
(Bella Ciao traditional Italian anti-fascist folk song).

In November 2018 Marc Ribot release an album Songs of Resistance 1942 – 2018. The album is about the modern day struggles in Trump’s USA. It covers all those conditions that are under attack by Trump, environment, global warming, racism, gay rights, anti-immigrants leading to violence against them.

Again I use Marc’s own words:

“The underlying politics of this recording is that of the Popular Front: the idea that those of us with democratic values need to put aside our differences long enough to defeat those who threaten them.”

(a direct quote from Marc Ribot)

Highlights of the album include the gravel voiced Tom Waits almost whispering the anti-fascist classic Bella Ciao, Steve Earle’s song about the shooting of American born Srinivas Kuchibhotta because someone thought he was a Muslim as the song states “a madman pulled the trigger (Donald Trump loaded the gun). Meshell Ndegeocello (I must admit she is one of my favourite artists) chimes in with the Militant Ecologist.

*Album can be downloaded on Spotify*

I hope that the three reviews brings together the fact that there are many different struggles in the world and thank goodness many activists fighting for justice through their songs and action.♦

### **Doug Melvin**

### **Meeting dates for 2019**

January 17	Executive meeting	5.30 - 7.00 p.m.
February 17	General meeting	2.00 - 4.00 p.m.
March 21.	Executive meeting	5.30 - 7.00 p.m.
April 21	General meeting	2.00 - 4.00 p.m.
May 16.	Executive meeting	5.30 - 7.00 p.m.
June 23	General meeting	2.00 - 4.00 p.m.
July 18.	Executive meeting	5.30 - 7.00 p.m.
August 18.	General meeting	2.00 - 4.00 p.m.
September 19	Executive meeting	5.30 - 7.00 p.m.
October 20.	General meeting	2.00 - 4.00 p.m.
November 21	Executive meeting	5.30 - 7.00 p.m.

# Remember when

## *Scenes around Adelaide*

From the collection of the State Library of South Australia, kindly provided with their permission.

From the glass slides collection of William Charles Brooker, taken in SA in 1920.



## Aims and Objectives

The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History was founded in 1961 to study “the working class situation ... and social history in the fullest sense.” The Society aims not only to encourage teaching and research in labour history but also the preservation of the records of working people and the labour movement. It desires to make history a vital part of popular consciousness, a matter for reflection and debate, at a time when it is under attack from prominent conservative intellectuals.

### Executive Committee

#### 2018-2019

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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 South Australian 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 President

