Labour History Project

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COVER: Pro-choice activists protest in Wellington, May 1977. *Socialist Action*.

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FROM THE SHOP FLOOR

Introduction from guest Editor Alison McCulloch

If a work site goes on strike and the commercial news media don't report it, did it really happen? That question is only partly facetious. Unionists have always struggled to get fair media coverage—indeed, to get any coverage at all—often measuring success by how many column inches make the next day's paper. And for all the changes the new media revolution has ushered in, it seems to have done little to change that. If anything, getting serious news about working people and their lives past the waves of celebrity schlock, personality-driven drivel and shock-horror crime coverage has only gotten more difficult. But there is one thing that has changed for the better, and that's the ability of unions to quickly and easily reach their own members and supporters.

James Keating's article in this issue, on labour and the press in 1890, shows 19th century unionists were well aware of how important it was to control their own message—and how hard it was to pull off. Not so today. Visit the Web site of any union or progressive group and you'll discover a treasure trove of news and information there for the taking, though it's not the kind of news and information to be found in your local daily or on the 6 o'clock TV news.

Union Web sites, electronic newsletters, blogs and Facebook pages are all part of a progressive media landscape that's rich and varied, but still disappointingly dispersed and weak. Readers of the *LHP Newsletter* know all too well what a poor job the mainstream press has done at recording labour's history. That job is left to researchers like Sandra Coney, who recounts in this issue the 13 years' work she's put in uncovering the stories of 49 sawmill workers from Piha who went off to fight in World War I; or artist Raewyn Martyn, who tells of the struggle to honour the bequest of unionist Lewis Glover and build an inner city park in Wellington. In researching my own piece for the *Newsletter*, about the Working Women's Charter and abortion rights, I found myself shocked though not surprised to discover what a hash the mainstream media made of chronicling the rise of the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement in New Zealand. Again, it was newsletters and alternative media like *Broadsheet* magazine, along with the historians and researchers who came later, that provide a more faithful picture.

I've been on both sides of this media divide—as a journalist in New Zealand and the United States, and as an activist. I used to have some sympathy with those lamenting the decline of the commercial mainstream media—the well-meaning people who wonder whether anyone will step in and do the heavy investigative lifting when the last Fairfax or APN paper dies off, or who fear no one will be there to provide the information necessary for democracy to thrive. I no longer share those concerns, partly because the mass media stopped doing a good job at those things quite some time ago, but also because I think those fears are really fear of change. Serious challenges to mass media hegemony can't come fast enough for my liking.

Which leads to a question I continue to chew on—and more so after reading the stories that make up this and past issues of the *LHP Newsletter*. Why haven't unions and other progressives been able to put more of a dent in the agenda-setting power of the commercial news media? Why, when we've made great strides at using new media as an organising tool, do we continue to bang our heads so hard against the old media door begging to be let in, trying all those old attention-grabbing tricks—plus a few new ones—in an effort to get that still-coveted column inch on p.2 or those precious 10 seconds on TV?

Perhaps, along with the myriad other tasks on its plate, the labour movement can help usher in Part II of the media revolution.

Dr. Alison McCulloch is a writer and editor.

Mark Derby's Chair's report

One of the more crowded, enthusiastic and rewarding events I've attended in the past year was a two-day exhibition last March at a little art gallery in Wellington's Cuba St. People were sitting on the staircase outside, unable to make it through the door for the throng, as the historian Tony Simpson, author of *The Sugarbag Years* and other crucial studies of the 1930s Depression, talked about the factual basis behind the works on show.

The exhibition, by Wellington artist Bob Kerr, was called 'The Three Wise Men of Kurow' (mentioned in the issue before last of this newsletter—no. 50, Nov. 2010). As Bob and Tony explained, before and during the Depression the small Otago town of Kurow was the base for building the Waitaki hydro project. As unemployment worsened, a squalid squatters' camp arose on the riverbank nearby. Three pillars of the community, the Presbyterian minister Arnold Nordmeyer, GP Girvan McMillan and schoolmaster Andrew Davidson, were determined to relieve the poverty they saw around them, and after long nights around a kitchen table they produced New Zealand's first comprehensive social security programme. Labour adopted the programme after it came to power in 1935, and Nordmeyer became a Cabinet minister.

This and other exhibitions by Bob have drawn on our labour history for their imagery and ideas. The results have been revelatory, and Bob spoke about them at the Labour History Project's AGM in early July.

As this issue of our newsletter shows, the LHP has been working in concert with a string of other groups and individuals whose objectives coincide or overlap with our own. Following an LHP seminar and publication on New Zealand's contribution to the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish Embassy produced a commemorative plaque on the Wellington waterfront. We are planning centenary events for the 1912 Waihi strike and the 1913 founding of the PSA as joint projects with various other organisations. The next biannual Rona Bailey memorial lecture, planned for Tuesday 7 November, was proposed and organised by a group of women mostly from outside our ranks. Like the three wise men around the Kurow kitchen table, we like to work as initiators, partners and compañeros, pooling our energies with others of a like mind.

Forthcoming events

Remains to be Seen Book Launch

Tuesday 23 August 2011, 6.15pm
Trades Hall, 126 Vivian Street, Wellington.
Speakers: Jared Davidson (author), and Mark Derby (LHP).
Featuring labour songs performed by the Brass Razoo, drinks, and nibbles.
For more information on the book see the review on p. 44.
Contact: *info@rebelpress.org.nz*

Twelfth Biennial Labour History Conference

5 - 17 September 2011
Manning Clark Centre, Australian National University, Canberra
Conference convenor - Professor Melanie Nolan, Director National Centre of Biography, General Editor Australian Dictionary of Biography, executive member Labour History Project
Contact: *melanie.nolan@anu.edu.au*
Ph. +61 2 6125 4146

Biennial Rona Bailey Memorial Lecture

5.30pm for 6pm start
Tuesday 22 November 2011
Rona Bailey Room, Te Whaea: National Dance & Drama Centre
11 Hutchison Road, Newtown, Wellington
Contact: *hazel.armstrong@gmail.com*

The next Rona Bailey memorial lecture will be a very special and memorable event. Guest speaker Marianne Schultz, a tutor in the history of the performing arts at Auckland University, will talk about the New Dance Group, a controversial contemporary group formed in Wellington in 1945 by former students of the teacher's college, including Rona Bailey herself. Marianne will also screen excerpts of *Dance of the Instant*, a 2008 documentary about the group directed by Shirley Horrocks. Students of the New Zealand School of Dance will perform a specially choreographed piece inspired by the Group's work. You don't want to miss this.

Waihi strike centenary seminar

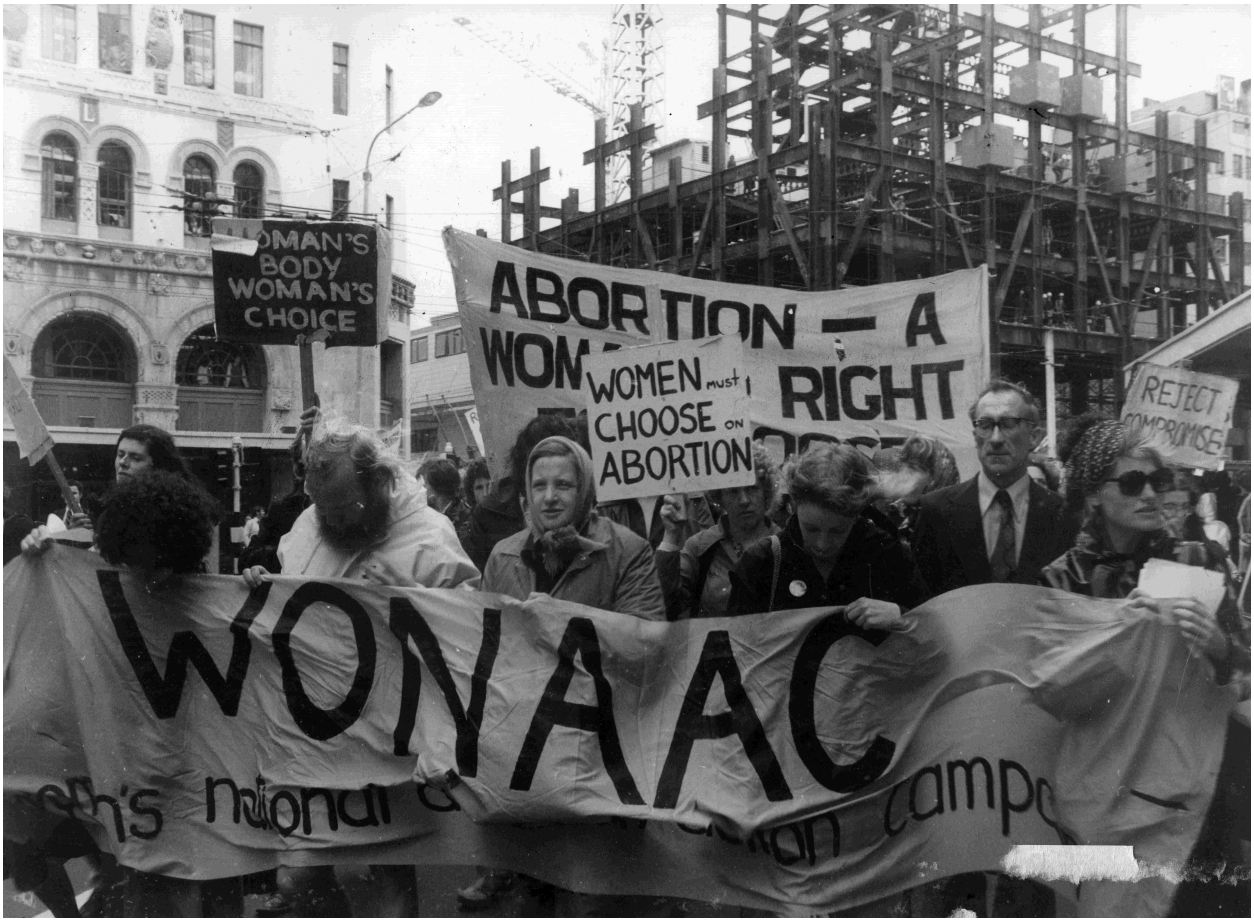
Saturday 10 November 2012
Waihi Community Hall
Seddon St., Waihi
Contact: *chair@lhp.org.nz*

Next year is the centenary of the long, fatal and epochal strike at the Waihi goldmine. To mark this turning point in the country's history, the Labour History Project is organising a seminar in collaboration with the Australasian Mining History Association. The organising committee includes Peter Clayworth, Hazel Armstrong, Maryan Street, Joce Jesson, Karl Andersen, Dean Parker and Collette Spalding. A Call for Papers will be distributed in the next few weeks. Related activities will take place in Waihi at the same time, such as an exhibition of paintings about the strike by Wellington artist Bob Kerr in the Waihi art gallery.

FEATURE ARTICLES

Body Politics: Abortion Rights and the Working Women's Charter

Alison McCulloch



PRO-CHOICE ACTIVISTS PROTEST IN WELLINGTON, MAY 1977. *SOCIALIST ACTION.*

The labour movement has long had a troubled relationship with the struggle for reproductive rights. Unionists whose commitment came in part from their working-class Catholic roots often drew upon those same roots in their opposition to contraception and abortion. And just as the fight for those rights has been waged in Parliament, on the streets, in churches and political parties, so too has it played out inside the trade union movement.

The campaign that introduced abortion to unions as never before—nor arguably since—took place more than 30 years ago when unionist women and their allies began the drive for what its most committed proponent, Sonja Davies, described as a "bill of rights for working women": the 16-clause Working Women's Charter.

While this article focuses on the struggle over the Charter's controversial Clause 15, covering reproductive rights and abortion, that was certainly not its primary focus. "For women of the left," Prof. Margaret Wilson said in a 2009 speech about the Charter, "economic issues were most immediate and, not surprisingly, our energy was directed to them." The same was not true, however, for the

Charter's opponents, and the battle that erupted over Clause 15 was a bitter and divisive one that tore apart longtime alliances in both the labour and Women's Liberation movements.

Clause 15:

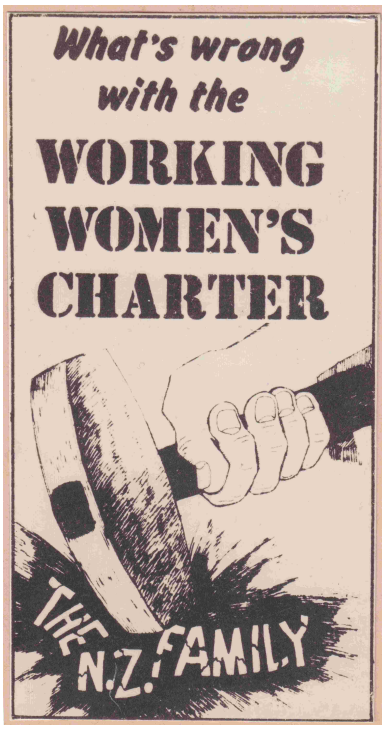
Sex education and birth control advice freely available to all people of appropriate age, and legal, financial, social and medical impediments to safe contraception, sterilization and abortion to be removed so as to allow the individual concerned to make their own decision.

OPPOSITION FROM WITHIN

One of the most prominent trade unionists to join the fight against abortion rights was Connie Purdue, feminist, campaigner for equal pay and a co-founder of the National Organisation for Women (NOW). Purdue and other anti-abortion women played a crucial role in both Women's Liberation and the Labour Party in the early 1970s, pressing to keep traditionally progressive groups from adopting pro-choice platforms. According to an invaluable 1977 research thesis by Raewyn Stone, Purdue and her allies, through their representation on both the Labour Women's Council and the party's National Executive, "effectively prevented any debate on abortion by the LWC, prevented it from having a policy on abortion and from making representations to the Parliamentary Labour Party on the abortion issue". As one LWC member told Stone, "fear of division tended to override the feelings of those [who felt] abortion was important"—there was much the council wanted to do that required a unified membership.

Similar troubles bedeviled NOW itself. In October 1973, *Broadsheet* magazine published an open letter to Purdue from NOW's Deirdre Milne, who explained why she had supported Purdue in 1972 when the question of NOW's involvement in the abortion question was put before the executive. "At that time I voted against our taking a stand on abortion," Milne wrote, "largely because I felt NOW could not afford to lose your years of experience and commitment to the cause of women, and you had said you would resign if NOW came out in favour of abortion." Purdue and about 20 other members of Auckland NOW did finally quit the organisation in 1974, and went on to form Feminists for Life, (later Women for Life). Their departure in turn freed NOW to adopt a pro-choice policy on abortion, which it did in 1975.

The abortion issue also disrupted the first United Women's Convention, in 1973, when anti-abortion activists tried to stack the abortion-related workshops in an effort to keep pro-choice resolutions from reaching the floor. Though they ultimately failed, and the gathering backed a woman's right to choose, a walkout by Purdue and 24 other women became the focus of the mainstream media's convention coverage, much to the chagrin of its organisers. "True, we merited a small mention on the news," they wrote later, "but more time was devoted to the walkout of women following the vote on the resolutions put forward by the Abortion workshop than anything else."



SOCIALIST ACTION.

A BRAVE CAMPAIGN

In light of such bruising battles, which culminated in 1977 in the passage of New Zealand's current abortion law, the Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion Act, the campaign in the late 1970s by Davies and other members of the Working Women's Council for a pro-choice Charter was a brave one, and was not without cost for Davies herself.

In her 1984 autobiography *Bread and Roses*, Davies wrote that she had been "ambivalent on the question of abortion", adding that although she did not believe she could have had one herself, "I realised I had no right to decide for anyone else." In her book, Davies recounts the battle over the Charter, during which SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) and its allies claimed, among other things, that the Charter was "a Communist document introduced into New Zealand by the Socialist Action Party [sic], that it recommended the dumping of children in child care for 24 hours a day like 'battery hens' and that abortion would escalate and family life be destroyed." Late at night, Davies wrote, she "received abusive telephone calls from men and women who accused me of all sorts of sins. One man rang at midnight and screamed that he had just discovered that, without his knowledge, his wife had had an abortion a year previously and that it was all my fault. He said he was going to shoot me."

For conservative groups like SPUC, the Concerned Parents' Association, Women for Life and the Family Rights Association, the Charter was a primary target during those years with the CPA headlining its December 1980 Newsletter: "Working Women's Charter—Threat to the Family." It identified Clause 15 as the "most significant." Its opponents engaged in a variety of tactics to try to derail the Charter, including a moderately successful dirty tricks campaign. In 1980, anti-abortion activists took over a meeting on the Charter in Dunedin, and subsequently gained control of the name "Working Women's Council" by registering it as an incorporated society. (Documents for incorporation of the real council had spent seven months lost in the mail, according to Davies.) Instead of promoting workers' and women's rights, the faux WWC's goals were "supporting the traditional family unit and working for, among other things, a New Zealand Workers' and Family Charter."

Besides trying to build broad "pro-family", anti-feminist momentum, anti-Charter activists also focused on union members, urging them to appeal to "conscientious objection" grounds in order to opt out of unions that endorsed the Charter. Though their efforts arguably helped delay the Charter's adoption, this was a battle moral conservatives ultimately lost: The Working Women's Charter, complete with the pro-choice clause, was finally adopted in 1980 by both the Federation of Labour (FOL) and the Labour Party. "The passage of the WWC was to bring jubilant cheers to the Labour Party Conference," the Abortion Law Reform Association of New Zealand (ALRANZ) reported in its newsletter. Other pro-choice advocates were a little more cautious. "It is clear," the Women's National Abortion Action Campaign wrote, "that adopting the Charter does not mean much as far as the abortion issue goes and that women working within the Labour Party are going to have to fight especially hard for Clause 15." As Margaret Wilson pointed out in 2009, "the Labour Party at its 1980 Conference adopted the Charter but the the next day passed a resolution that if Labour was elected it would hold a referendum on the issue of abortion." Hardly a commitment to abortion rights.

THE CHARTER TODAY

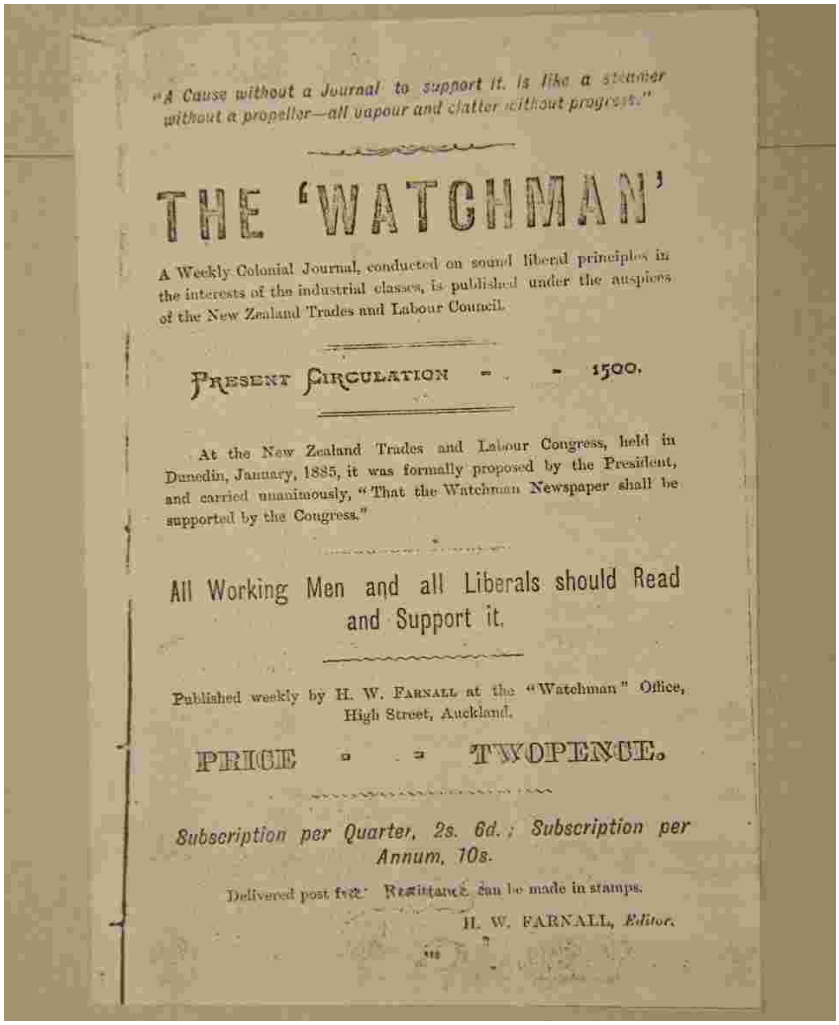
As well as looking back to the Charter's beginnings, Margaret Wilson took the opportunity, during her 2009 address, to assess its progress. On most issues, she reported, headway had been made, albeit with ongoing setbacks in the wake of the neo-liberal economic reforms of the 1980s. She also reported progress on Clause 15, noting that abortion was "back on the policy agenda with the current case before the court." In terms of access to abortion, Wilson's assessment was certainly correct. Despite the bad statute on the books, abortion services have improved immeasurably since 1980. But whether or not abortion really was back on the policy agenda (and there's been little indication of that from Parliament), there has been no progress toward easing New Zealand's cumbersome and conservative law. As for the court case referred to by Wilson, the long-running Right to Life v Abortion Supervisory Committee, a positive ruling for women was handed down in June, when the Court of Appeal rejected anti-abortionists' efforts to clamp down on abortion access, effectively ensuring the status quo would remain in effect. Any relief, however, was short-lived. A few weeks later, Right to Life announced it planned to try to appeal the ruling in the Supreme Court, meaning the case is unlikely to go away anytime soon.

The campaign for the Charter came at the tail end of a decade of sustained political activism over abortion—activism that was crucial to pushing abortion rights onto the agenda of the traditionally male-dominated union movement. But as the Women's Liberation Movement "ran out of steam", so too did abortion rights activism. The FOL, which had adopted the Charter, disappeared in 1987, replaced by the Council of Trade Unions (CTU), which took the Charter as its own. But even with Clause 15 on the books, union activism on reproductive rights seems unlikely. The union movement, also much weakened since those heady days, has a full plate. "I'd have to say abortion does not rise to the surface these days in the union movement as an issue," longtime unionist and women's rights activist Lyndy McIntyre said. Gay Simpkin, a senior research fellow at AUT's Work and Labour Market Institute, and an organiser of Auckland's 2009 Charter seminar, agreed "I can't imagine a situation where abortion would become a focus for action about the rights of women in the workplace," she said. Which is not to say the Charter isn't still a platform around which pro-choice union women could organise, Simpkin added. "It is certainly a policy plank where the CTU would be bound to follow policy in adopting a position over abortion."

Dr. Alison McCulloch is a freelance writer and editor. Parts of this article are derived from a book in progress titled Fighting to Choose: The Abortion Rights Struggle in New Zealand.

"All Vapour and No Progress"? Labour and the New Zealand Press in 1890

James Keating



"A Cause without a Journal to support it, is like a steamer without a propellor—all vapour and clatter without progress."

THE 'WATCHMAN'

A Weekly Colonial Journal, conducted on sound liberal principles in the interests of the industrial classes, is published under the auspices of the New Zealand Trades and Labour Council.

PRESENT CIRCULATION - - - 1500.

At the New Zealand Trades and Labour Congress, held in Dunedin, January, 1885, it was formally proposed by the President, and carried unanimously, "That the Watchman Newspaper shall be supported by the Congress."

All Working Men and all Liberals should Read and Support it.

Published weekly by H. W. FARNALL at the "Watchman" Office, High Street, Auckland.

PRICE - - TWOPENCE.

Subscription per Quarter, 2s. 6d.; Subscription per Annum, 10s.

Delivered post free. Remittance can be made in stamps.

H. W. FARNALL, *Editor.*

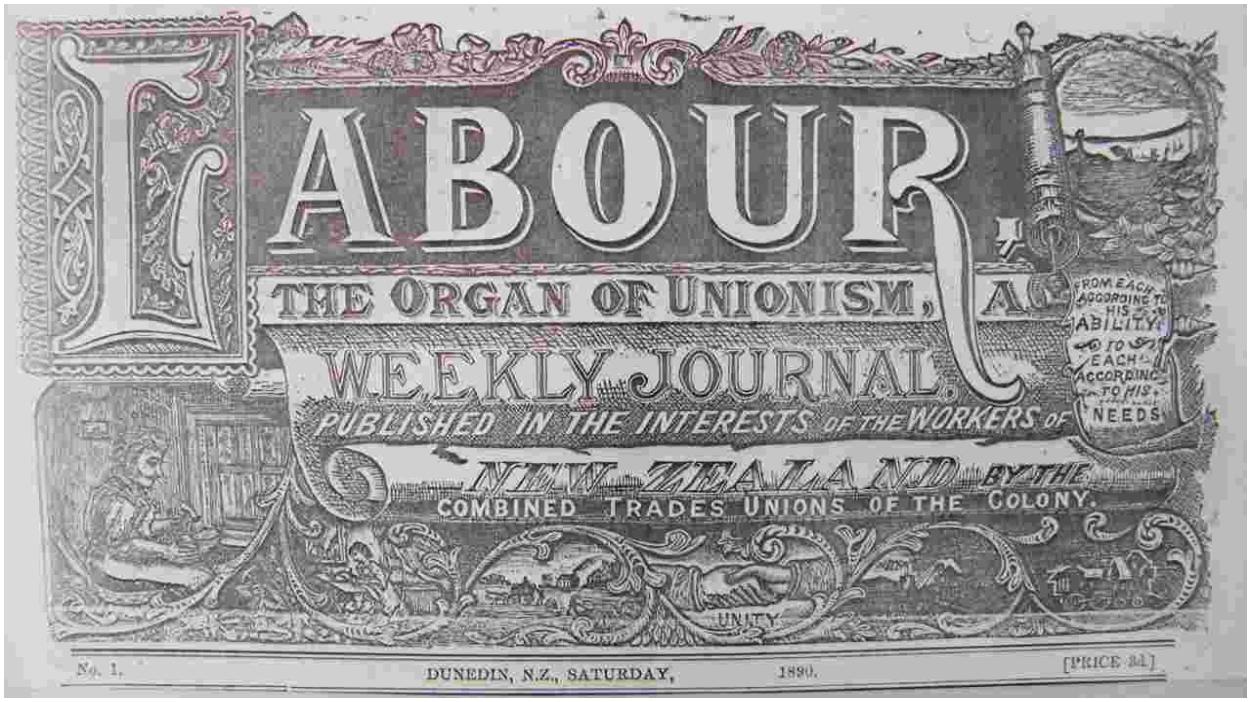
THE WATCHMAN.

By the late 19th century, trade unionists, both in New Zealand and across the world, clearly understood the centrality of a workers' press in fostering and sustaining a labour movement. In an era before the advent of audio and visual mass communication, the press monopolised the public transmission of information. For working-class activists, newspapers provided a channel for disseminating news, opinions, and policy directives; organising and publicising meetings and events; and stimulating rank-and-file engagement with the wider movement.[1]

In Britain, the conviction that newspapers influenced society was widespread —between 1800 and 1914, the labour movement published over 2,000 periodicals.[2] New Zealanders shared these convictions. In 1885, Harry Farnell, editor of the short-lived labour weekly, the *Watchman*, counselled readers that "a cause without a journal to support it is like a steamer without a propeller – all vapour and no progress".[3] Yet, of the 122 periodicals published in New

Zealand in 1890, few, if any could be considered "labour newspapers".[4] Those exceptions were either regional concerns (like the *Otago Workman*) or the narrowly focussed organs of craft organisations (like *Typo*). Starved of local alternatives, New Zealand unions subscribed to foreign publications such as the *Worker* (Brisbane), *Tocsin*, *Bulletin* (Melbourne), and the *Commonweal* (London).

Alongside the nascent Trades and Labour Councils, the *Watchman* collapsed in 1886 amid the prevailing economic gloom of the long depression. However, unlike the flagging labour movement, the newspaper's fortunes never revived. Between 1888 and 1890, trade unionism in New Zealand underwent an extraordinary revival, with total membership soaring from under 2,500 to almost 20,000 in just two years. Organised along new principles that favoured the mass organisation of semi- and unskilled workers and assertive industrial action, many of these "new" unions were federated under the aegis of the Maritime Labour Council of New Zealand in October 1889.



MASTHEAD OF *LABOUR*.

Envisioned by John Millar, the charismatic secretary of the Seamen's Union, the Maritime Council was created to foster labour solidarity—a quality he considered lacking in the advances of the previous year. Recognising that the inability to communicate with the newly mobilised community of trade unionists obstructed the progress of industrial reform and the development of class-consciousness, Millar's plan included the proposed publication of a weekly tabloid, *Labour*. Yet, the journal never reached publication—vetoed by cautious committee members who sought assurances of its financial viability.

A casual observer in late 1889 might have considered the absence of a national labour periodical incidental, rather than disastrous for the labour cause. During the London Dock Strike of August and September, a wage dispute that encompassed over 150,000 workers and transfixed the British Empire, domestic newspaper coverage was decidedly pro-labour. While New Zealand newspapers

eschewed the organisational role their Australian counterparts assumed in the collection of strike relief funds, they undoubtedly sympathised with the dockers' plight. Earnest editorials contrasted British social problems with New Zealand's class harmony, acts of self-congratulation coloured with a hint of warning. On 30 August 1889, the *Evening Post* cautioned New Zealanders to "guard against the development of weak features in the social development of the Mother Country," while the *Otago Daily Times* reminded readers that the future demands of workingmen "may not always be just".[5]

FATEFUL DELAY

The decision to postpone the launch of *Labour* proved fateful. As industrial tensions heightened in the early months of 1890, the liberal sentiments newspapers expressed during the London Dock Strike gave way to a harder rhetoric that valued order and suppressed dissent. Pride in the colony's egalitarianism was tempered by a wariness of the power accumulated by federated labour. Earlier remarks on the importance of trade unions were tempered with warnings against the influence of "professional agitators"—insidious schemers that turned workers against their employers to guarantee a monthly stipend.[6] When fresh disputes arose, newspapers admonished employers' excesses, but their hollow rhetoric of moderation offered little solace to struggling rank-and-file workers.

The press paid lip-service to the necessity of trade unionism, but refused to condone industrial action, instead instructing workers to rely on public opinion to force compromises from egregious employers. At best, this invocation of an idealised public, indignant at injustice and eager to maintain an equitable society, was a convenient myth that allowed newspapers to promote the principles of labour organisation while condemning their practice. Time and again (notably in the July Whitcombe and Tombs dispute) public pressure demonstrably failed to secure concessions from employers, yet the press continued to propagate the image of a self-regulating society.

While the hostility of the conservative press was unsurprising, the feeble support trade unions received in the liberal press emphasised the necessity of establishing an independent workers' press. Responding to the lockout of Grey Valley miners in July, Florence McCarthy, editor of the *Grey River Argus*, argued that the miners had the sympathy of "the public and Press alike," but had failed to publicise their agenda, jeopardising their chances of success.[7] While McCarthy astutely identified the miners' predicament, he failed to implicate the controllers of the mainstream press as a barrier to the transmission of ideas and information concerning organised labour. If liberal newspapers such as the *Argus* and *Lyttelton Times* did not publish material written by labour activists, they were unlikely to reach a wide audience elsewhere. On the advent of the Maritime Strike, hitherto the largest strike in New Zealand history, liberal newspapers' reticence allowed conservative newspapers to obfuscate workers' concerns behind a screen of consensus rhetoric and anti-union vitriol.

THE MARITIME STRIKE

The New Zealand Maritime Strike began on 28 August 1890, when the Maritime Council issued a general strike order to protest the Australian Steam Ship Owners' Association's (ASOA) decision to hire non-union labour during an Australian dispute. New Zealand unionists feared that the decision, enforced domestically by the Union Steam Ship Company, foreshadowed the eventual

standardisation of the "open shop". In response, the conservative press rounded on the Maritime Council, branding it the puppet of Australian labour bosses eager to crush industry on both sides of the Tasman.

Ironically, as a powerful member of the ASOA, the Union Company had far stronger Australasian ties, a fact contemporaries overlooked. While the conservative press framed the dispute as a product of inter-colonial solidarity, greed, and radical ideology, the few "allies" of labour in the press mounted a weak and incoherent defence of the strike. Within two weeks, the strike's origins were no longer publicly contested. Liberal newspapers censured employers' worst excesses, but shied away from open declarations of support for the strikers. Instead, they turned their attention toward the structure of an eventual compromise, implicitly reinforcing the notion that the strike was an unacceptably radical bargaining strategy.

Although the strike officially ended on 10 November, its final weeks slipped by largely undocumented in the press. Strident editorials describing the colony's dystopian future, stifled by "the autocratic rule of the Maritime Council", were replaced by political gossip and muck-raking as the press anticipated the 5 December General Election.[8] The emergence of a coherent political party, the Liberals, was a new development in New Zealand politics, and the press was largely split on sectional lines. Conservative newspapers (the *Press*, *New Zealand Herald*) supported the incumbent Atkinson government, while the liberal press enthusiastically backed John Ballance's coalition, which included a significant percentage of candidates endorsed by the increasingly politicised labour movement.

While Liberal and labour interests roughly coincided, both sides were uneasy with the relationship. In Christchurch, the bootmaker and labour candidate William Tanner, sourly remarked that "working men…would not be satisfied with 'working men's friends' but would insist on the genuine article".[9] Liberal candidates and newspapers were not alone in neglecting "labour issues". Perhaps fearing electoral backlash, even labour candidates shied away from campaigning on the strike; recent research from Canterbury reveals that only half of the 27 candidates from the region even *mentioned* industrial relations in their campaigns.[10]

ELECTIONS AND THE PRESS

The influence of newspapers in the 1890 election campaign cannot be underestimated. Aside from local speaking engagements and meetings, newspaper reports and published speeches provided candidates with a vital link to their electorate. Late 19th-century journalistic ethics were hazy, and editors thought nothing of prioritising their coverage of favoured candidates (both in the frequency and location of stories). The *Lyttelton Times*' (edited by Liberal candidate William Pember Reeves) policy was explicit, "candidates wishing their second or subsequent speeches reported at length must apply to the Manager".[11] In practice, this meant the paper's coverage leaned heavily toward the activities and policy positions of regional Liberals. Similarly, conservative papers displayed a bias toward the coverage of "Ministerial" candidates. Amid the struggle to appeal to a broad centre, and reliant on the goodwill of liberal newspapermen, labour candidates' manifestos frequently mirrored their Liberal counterparts'—subsuming industrial reform beneath the national obsession with land reform. Paradoxically, when on 6 December

the election result showed a clear swing against the incumbent government, conservative and liberal newspapers alike remarked on the rapid rise of the "labour party", a phenomenon both had largely ignored in the preceding two months. While candidates endorsed by labour achieved considerable success (19 of 38 candidates were elected), just five were manual workers, and most were jointly endorsed by the Liberals.[12]

CONCLUSION

These musings represent some of the strands incorporated into my MA research. It is important to recognise the limitations of content analysis—one can only infer editors' motives in the framing of news stories, whose impact on readers (whom we know little about) is difficult to determine 120 years after events transpired. Thus, it is often unclear to what degree newspapers led public opinion, reinforced social conformity, or simply catered to readers' prejudices. Nevertheless, some tentative conclusions arise. While the advances of the late 1880s occurred without a dedicated national newspaper, the challenge was to harness these new energies. Such an organ could, during periods of industrial conflict, disseminate news, boost morale, and organise financial relief, while the capability to stimulate discussion and publicise candidates' manifestos would prove crucial to their chances of political success. As the aborted publication of *Labour* testified, at least some union organisers understood this predicament, but despite the creation of vibrant organisations, they lacked the capital to create a communications infrastructure that could sustain the movement in the face of prevailing press and public hostility. Amid the frustrations of the early 20th century, new hope would arrive in the form of the *Maoriland Worker*.

James Keating has recently finished an MA in New Zealand History at Victoria University. His interests include New Zealand and US labour history and newspaper history.

ENDNOTES

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4. J.O. Wilson (ed.), *A Union Catalogue of New Zealand Newspapers, Preserved in Public Libraries, Newspaper Offices, and Local Authority Offices*, Wellington: General Assembly Library, 1938, 2nd edition, 1961, pp.1-65.
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6. *New Zealand Herald*, 20 May 1890, p.4.
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The Men of Lion Rock

Alison McCulloch

FROM LEFT, FOREMAN FRANK MOORE, HARRY ALCOCK, LEN DOWNER, JACK SHAW AND JIMMY SIMPSON AT THE BREAKDOWN SAW, PIHA MILL. ALCOCK AND DOWNER BOTH SERVED IN WW1. DOWNER'S BROTHER, BERT, ALSO A PIHA BUSHMAN, WAS KILLED IN THE WAR.

Set into the rump of Lion Rock on Piha beach, west of Auckland, is a marble Roll of Honour that contains the names of 49 men. Each ANZAC day, a sombre group of people, including a pipe band, marches along the beach to the rock for a ceremony to honour New Zealand's war veterans, including the men listed on Lion Rock who left to fight in the Great War of 1914-18.

The 49 names belong to workers from the Piha State Sawmill, part of a Kauri industry workforce that was near its end when war engulfed Europe in the Northern summer of 1914. Who were they? Where did they come from? How many made it through, and what happened to the survivors when they came back?

Those are all questions Auckland Councillor and longtime Piha resident Sandra Coney has spent the past 13 years trying to answer. "I started this research project thinking I would write half a page about each of the men and try and find a photo so that could be part of the ANZAC day ceremony," Coney said in an interview for the Labour History Project. "That was 13 years ago." In those 13 years, Coney's initial plan for a series of short biographical pieces has expanded into what she now describes as "a collective biography and investigation into the workforce of Kauri timber milling".

The industries that grew up around the Kauri forests in the 19th century and into the early 20th supported one of the major workforces in the upper North Island, but Coney has been surprised at how little attention it has received

Bill Condell: Sawmill Worker and Soldier

Sandra Coney

COURTESY SANDRA CONEY.

Bill Condell was the oldest of four brothers who went to WW1. Their parents were Irish immigrants—father William was a platelayer on the rail line, and the children went to schools in West Auckland. Both Bill and his brother Edward worked at the Piha Mill. Bill enlisted in 1915 aged 24. He was a strongly built young man and during the war was a tunneller.

All the Condell boys were wounded in the war, but they all made it home. Bill married soon after returning, and a son was born the next year. As a returning soldier, he accessed a loan to buy a house in New Lynn, but the marriage did not last. Bill was shell-shocked and "his nerves were shot". His wife walked out leaving Bill with their son who was brought up by relatives in Ruawai.

Bill had various labouring jobs, but lost his house during the Depression and ended up on Relief constructing the Scenic Drive in the Waitakeres. In the 1940s, Bill and his son moved in together and they both worked at Hellaby's, Bill working in the cannery packing tins of sheep's tongues and corned beef. He worked in the railways' yards next, then retired to the Scenic Drive where he and his son built a little house. Bill did casual jobs for the Yukichs who had a vineyard next door.

In his later years, Bill moved to the Ranfurly Home where he died in 1970. None of his three brothers or two sisters had children, so Bill's unmarried son is the sole Condell descendant.

Sandra Coney represents Waitakere and is Chair of the Parks, Recreation and Heritage Forum of the new Auckland Council. She has written a number of books on history and women's issues, and edited the feminist magazine Broadsheet *from 1972 to 1984.*

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from historians. "Most of the books tend to be by enthusiasts for technology of the industry, with a romantic approach to the industry, the heroic task of men with the most basic equipment felling gigantic trees and transporting these to far-flung ports," she said. Very little has been written about "who the people were who were doing it".

The common impression of this labour force, Coney said, was that it was made up of men who were new immigrants—socially disconnected loners, marginal characters who drank heavily and didn't have families that anchored them to

the community. Coney's research, however, is painting a different picture, revealing these men to have been profoundly socially connected, forming groups that stayed together, linked through family relationships and loyalty to a considerate employer.

"Many of the men at Piha came from timber milling in the northern Wairoa, or Puhipuhi, north of Whangarei," she said. Puhipuhi, now little more than "a join in the road", was where a number of the workers met and were hired by Robert Gibbons, a bush contractor who also did a lot of the timber milling in the Waitakere Ranges. "He had a reputation of being a good person to work with, and treated his workforce well," Coney said. "Men who worked for him tended to stay with him. When he came down to take over the Piha operation, many of the men came with him."

Coney's approach to telling the stories of the men and the Kauri workforce has meant essentially drawing up 49 in-depth genealogies. "I trace back how the family came to New Zealand, how long it had been in New Zealand and, once again, I'm finding that rather than being new immigrants a lot of them are young men from families that arrived in New Zealand sometimes two or three generations previously."

Naturally, the research has not been without surprises. One of the names on the rock is that of a P.A. Smith, but Coney has discovered that this was not his real name. "Smith" was living in the U.K. with his wife and children when, Coney found, "he just walked out the door one day" and didn't come back. The family never knew what became of "Smith", who had made his way to New Zealand and, eventually, to the Piha State Sawmill. He was one of the roughly two-thirds of the Lion Rock men who survived the war, but, like many, he did not come through it unscathed. After recuperating at a hospital in Britain, "Smith" married again and had a second family. "The first family just never knew what happened to him," Coney said, adding that his descendants took the news that "Smith" had been a bigamist quite well.

Coney was eager to speak to the Labour History Project about her work in hopes that readers might have useful leads about past or current research into the turn of the century Kauri timber milling labour force from which the Men of Lion Rock came. "I'd be really interested in hearing from anybody who's done research, or is doing research, into Kauri timber milling or forestry, or aspects of that generation of men who went to the First World War," she said. She's also interested in learning more about how men who came back from that war coped, particularly those with disabilities. The Kauri industry was dying and the Great Depression was on the doorstep. "Obviously a lot of these men were still quite young, though many suffered from war injuries and psychological trauma. They had a whole working lifetime ahead of them, and I'm interested in how they put together a new working life."

If you have information, contact Sandra Coney at: *s_coney@xtra.co.nz*

Dr. Alison McCulloch is a freelance writer and editor.

"For Spain and Humanity"

Mark Derby

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COUNCILLORS SANDRA CONEY, CATHY CASEY AND RICHARD NORTHEY WITH ARTWORK DEPICTING RENE SHADBOLT; SHADBOLT FAMILY; PLAQUE; GAYLE MARSHALL PLANTS A TOTARA. *BEST FOR THE WEST.*

The introduction to the 2009 book *Kiwi Compañeros – New Zealand and the Spanish Civil War* mentions "plans to provide a physical memorial to New Zealand's Spanish Civil War veterans ... it is hoped that the publication of this book will assist towards the fulfilment of that project". This expectation has recently been realised. Earlier this year two memorials were formally unveiled, one in Auckland to the dauntless nurse Sister Rene Shadbolt, and the other in Wellington to all the New Zealanders who took part in the civil war.

The first ceremony took place in a corner of Shadbolt Park in West Auckland, the district where Sister Shadbolt spent her last years. In 1942, the New Lynn Borough Council named the park in recognition of her service in the Spanish Civil War. However, the reason behind the name became all but forgotten in later years. In 2010, shortly before its amalgamation into the Auckland 'super city', the New Lynn Community Board decided to commission a plaque to commemorate Sister Shadbolt's courageous life and radical outlook. On a brilliantly sunny morning in early April, Councillor Sandra Coney, Rene's niece Yvonne Shadbolt, and Farrell Cleary, one of the contributors to *Kiwi Compañeros*, spoke to an audience that included several other relatives of Rene's and Spanish Honorary Consul Antonio Regueiro and his wife Jane.

Farrell told them that Rene Shadbolt had grown up in the tiny Akaroa community of Devauchelle but trained as a nurse and midwife in Auckland during the

Depression. In 1936, when the Spanish Civil War broke out, she was 33 and was head sister of the casualty ward at Auckland Hospital. She gave up this important position to head a nursing team in the civil war, with two other New Zealand nurses. In May 1937, on the day they were due to leave Auckland, the police arrested them and seized their passports. "These were members of the police special branch," said Farrell, "but even so, you would think they would know better than to try and intimidate the matron of a large public hospital. After three hours the cops gave up. They might have been influenced by a threat from the Auckland watersiders to hold up the ship until the nurses were allowed on board." Labour History Project member Len Gale recalled a torchlight procession held in Auckland in 1937 to farewell the three nurses.

Working under primitive conditions in improvised hospitals on the Republican front, Rene found time to fall in love with one of her patients, a young German anti-fascist fighter named Willi Remmel. They married in a civil ceremony in the hospital grounds. Soon afterwards, all foreign volunteers were ordered to leave Spain. Sister Shadbolt fought hard with the New Zealand authorities to enable her husband to emigrate with her, but the Labour government was not sympathetic and he was interned in a series of German concentration camps, while she returned home without him. She spent her last years in West Auckland, where she continued taking part in political protests such as anti-nuclear demonstrations until her death in 1977. She died without knowing that Willi Remmel had somehow survived the death camps and spent the postwar years in East Germany, where he died seven years before her. The memorial in the park consists of a ceramic portrait of Rene Shadbolt in her nurse's uniform, a bronze plaque, and a totara tree planted in her honour.

WELLLINGTON MAYOR CELIA WADE-BROWN AND THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR, SNR MARCOS GOMEZ, UNVEIL A PLAQUE HONOURING NEW ZEALANDERS WHO TOOK PART IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR.

The following month, at a large ceremony in the Wellington City Council chamber, another plaque was unveiled by Mayor Celia Wade-Brown and the Spanish Ambassador, Snr Marcos Gomez. This reads: In grateful memory of

all New Zealanders who contributed to the defence of freedom in Spain (1936-1939). "For Spain and Humanity" / En memoria de todos los neozelandeses que contribuyeron a la defensa de la libertad en España (1936-1939. "Por España y por la Humanidad"

The phrase "For Spain and Humanity" was the motto of the Spanish Medical Aid Committee, the largest of the relief organisations that raised funds for the victims of the civil war. It was one of the most successful fundraising efforts undertaken in New Zealand until that time, with thousands of active members around the country including many leading trade unionists. "For Spain and Humanity" is also the last verse of the Andalusian Anthem, written in 1936 during the years of the Second Spanish Republic and first performed a week before the outbreak of civil war. When democracy was restored in Spain after almost 40 years of dictatorship, the song was reinstated as the official anthem of the region.

This handsome bronze plaque has now been installed on the Wellington waterfront, a fitting location since the Wellington Waterside Workers Union was one of the strongest supporters of the Republican war effort and several New Zealanders who served in Spain worked on the wharves. One of those was Jim Hoy, a member of the British Battalion of the International Brigades who was later elected secretary of the Waterside Workers Union. Jim's widow Maureen and his two daughters Dolores and Penny attended the unveiling ceremony in Wellington.

This moving and memorable ceremony was one of the very last official appearances by Ambassador Gomez who has since been recalled to Spain by his government. In his time in New Zealand he and his family did a great deal to build and strengthen the links with Spain. Marcos wrote the foreword to *Kiwi Compañeros* and supported its publication in many other ways, while his wife Cristina translated the book into her own language. The Spanish-language edition, published in association with the University of Castilla-La Mancha, appeared very soon after the plaque was unveiled.

Accordingly, the Labour History Project presented the ambassador's family with a farewell gift, a full-sized facsimile of a 1939 poster advertising a public meeting to support Republican Spain and the New Zealanders who went to her aid. Marcos told us he was delighted with this memento of his time in New Zealand and proudly displayed it at the unveiling ceremony.

Mark Derby, a Wellington writer, edited Kiwi Compañeros: New Zealand and the Spanish Civil War *(Canterbury University Press, 2009)*.

Lewis Glover and the Dreamy City Without Green Spaces

Raewyn Martyn

"I claim to be a New Zealander now; I originally came from S.A., but went over there some 35 years ago and decided to stay. I never regretted leaving Australia for N.Z., although I appreciate coming back to see the little progress that has been made during my absence."

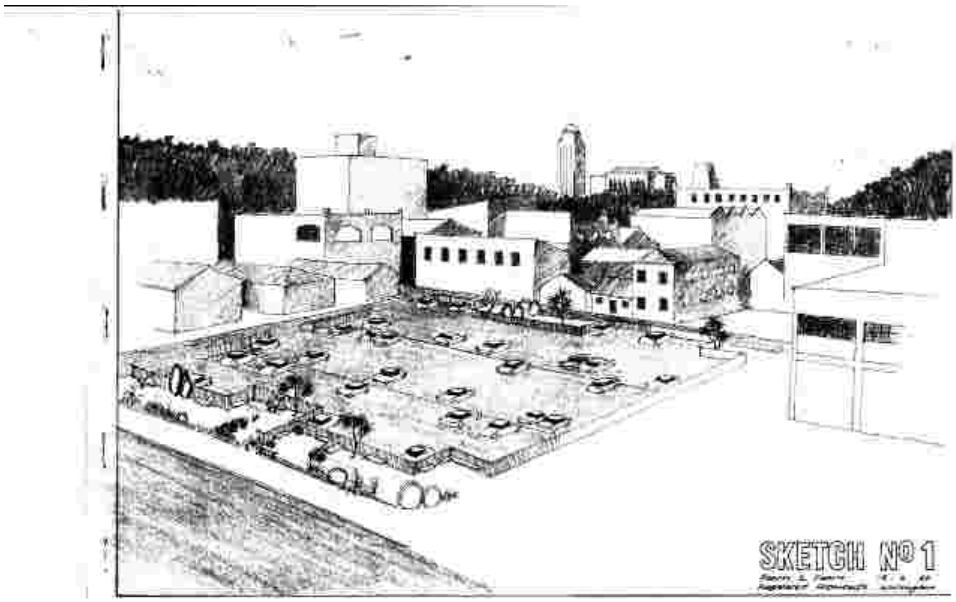
The quotation above is taken from a speech delivered by unionist Lewis Glover while on a speaking tour of Australia in 1937. He refers to the comparative "progress" made by the new Labour government in New Zealand, and goes on to list their new initiatives in social policy. The speaking tour was a venture supported by letters of introduction from almost every union organization in New Zealand to their Australian counterparts.

The young waterside worker Lewis Glover arrived in New Zealand in 1901 and by 1911 was an aspiring leader within the Wellington Waterfront Union. He went on to hold various leadership positions until a "falling out" with Waterside Workers Federation secretary Jim Roberts in 1935 (most likely over their own salaries). After the disagreement, Glover continued his involvement with the Labour Party and various unions, including periods as secretary of the Gasworkers Union and the Fire Brigade Employees' Federation.

When Lewis Glover passed away in 1964, he ensured his estate was handled in a manner consistent with his commitments and ideals. Glover left his false teeth to the Town Clerk, his bicycle to the chairman of the Council's Transportation Committee, and his money to the people of Wellington. The working man's Glover bequeathed $24,000 to the Wellington City Corporation for "a park to be established within the vicinity of the City to be used for recreation purposes". Between 1964 and 1969, the Council acquired a series of land parcels between Ghuznee and Garrett Streets, which would form the site for a place of rest and recreation within the central city. For over 60 years, Glover had lived in and around central Wellington, including Mt Cook, Manners Street, Vivian Street and Molesworth Street. As an inner-city resident, he would have observed the worst of Wellington's housing, and the need for open spaces for rest and recreation.

As time passed, Glover's public intentions for the park came under increasing threat from private interests. After Cuba Street was converted into a pedestrian-only mall, the land was used as car-parking space for several years; in mid-1969, local businessmen lobbied the council to retain the car park. They also protested plans to convert the land into a public park, and worried at the loss of such a "glorious commercial site". Mr A. Cornish, a local Wellington entrepreneur, proposed the erection of a Māori Pa, which would serve as a

"most attractive and interesting" tourist venture, with the potential for additional attractions such as a trout pool and a gas-heated geyser, and a playground and crèche which would "prove a boon to shopping mothers". Other sketches depicted more limited proposals, including the "Maori pa" combined with a car park.



A SKETCH OF GLOVER PARK CA. 1969. *WELLINGTON CITY ARCHIVES*

Worried that the capital was becoming a "concrete jungle", the Wellington Housewives' Association supported the proposal for a public park, and approached the council on the precise terms of Glover's will. In one newspaper article covering the debate, the Wellington Play Centre expressed discontent with the lack of green spaces, claiming that Wellington appeared drab in comparison to Auckland and Christchurch. This article's peculiar headline—"Dreamy City without Green Spaces"—has an accidental resonance. Presumably intended to read "Dreary City", the typographical mistake yielded a poetic result.

FINALLY, A PARK

Energetic public discussion of the park's future continued into 1970, but the general awareness of Glover's intentions allowed the council to commit to the development of a recreational park at the Ghuznee Street site. Work finally began, and Glover Park was officially opened on Arbor Day, 4 August, 1971.

The dream soon garnered a dystopian edge, with the "wrong" kind of recreation occurring in the park. In 1973, just a couple of years after the park opened, *Truth* reported that Glover Park had become known as "Alky Park", the location of "open-air 'fun'" for the "drink-and-vomit boozers". The populace of the dreamy city included homeless people, and the park was a place to sleep. This mis-recreation continued in subsequent decades, with various redevelopments aimed at dissuading such antisocial behavior. There were concerns that the public park had been "privatised" by the behavior of these so-called undesirables. In somewhat Foucauldian fashion, the most recent redevelopment attempted to resolve the problems through making the occupants of the park more visible.

It is hard to know what Glover would have thought of the current park design, or its history of dispute and disrepute, but it is interesting to consider whether

his political beliefs and philanthropic intentions are still relevant to recreation within the current social environment. Whilst Wellington in the early 21st century has a more diverse industrial base and job market than Lewis Glover's Wellington, the no-cost leisure and recreation activities have remained very similar, based on the natural resources and green spaces available within the city. Perhaps even more interesting is how Glover would have described the "progress" made in either Australia or New Zealand over the lifespan of his namesake park.

DAY BEDS MADE OF CANVASS WERE STRUNG BETWEEN BENCH-SEATS IN THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF WELLINGTON'S GLOVER PARK.

BEDS IN THE PARK

During the 2011 Enjoy Public Art Gallery summer residency, the author spent lunchtimes in Glover Park. While seeking out spots for off-site works in the Cuba Street area, the park seemed like a space suited to an outdoor canvas work. In May 2011, painted canvas day-beds were stretched and fitted between the existing bench-seats on the southwest corner of Glover Park. They were an intervention into the current furniture of the place of rest envisioned by Lewis Glover. These particular benches were constructed as a temporary gap-filler, while plans were underway for a sculptural work to be sited in that area of the park. The sculpture never occurred, and the slightly uncomfortable benches remain, underused. As an artwork, the day-bed paintings sit somewhere between public and private; between personal artistic activity and an exploration of its social value.

Raewyn Martyn is a Wellington art teacher and artist who will soon be moving to Richmond, Virginia, to begin a Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Ben Chifley: The Treasurer on a Great Treasurer

Jim McAloon

BUST OF BEN CHIFLEY BY SCULPTOR KEN PALMER LOCATED IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S AVENUE IN THE BALLARAT BOTANICAL GARDENS, IN BALLARAT, VICTORIA.

June 13 2011 was the 60th anniversary of the death of one of the more significant figures in the Australian labour movement: Ben Chifley, who was Treasurer in the Australian federal Labor government from 1941 until 1949 and Prime Minister from 1945 until 1949.

Joseph Benedict Chifley was born in 1885 in Bathurst, New South Wales, to parents of Irish heritage. Brought up a Roman Catholic in relatively poor circumstances, he nevertheless had some secondary education and after a period as a clerk he joined the Railways where he made his first career. As an engine driver, he was part of an elite within the state-owned railway service. Chifley's early experience of labour politics was in the railway unions. Industrial and political matters alike became more tense during the First World War. The New South Wales railways management was increasingly enamoured of the new doctrines of scientific management, which workers experienced as diminished autonomy on the job and an increase in the pace of work. The political context more generally was of a Labor government which had split over the question of conscription for overseas service. In July-August 1917, the railway workers struck in protest at the increasingly onerous working conditions; defeated, many were dismissed or, like Chifley, demoted.

ELECTED OFFICE AND THE DEPRESSION

In 1928, after a decade of increasingly active involvement in the Australian Labor Party, Chifley was elected to the federal Parliament for the seat of Macquarie, which included his home town of Bathurst. Chifley's election came with the victory of the Australian Labor Party. Unfortunately, the new government, led by James Scullin, was almost immediately confronted with the Great Depression. Anticipating the Keynesian approaches which would be adopted in some other countries, including New Zealand after 1935, the Labor Treasurer, E.G. Theodore, sought to stimulate economic activity by public spending. Labor, however, did not control the Senate, which with the banks and the travelling Bank of England official Otto Niemeyer, insisted on economic orthodoxy, including the paramount importance of a balanced budget. With the populist New South Wales Labor government of Jack Lang talking about defaulting on debt repayment, the Scullin government dissolved in the controversy. A group of Labor renegades around Joe Lyons formed an alliance with the conservatives in 1931, and Chifley, who had been briefly Minister of Defence, lost his seat in the ensuing election. He would not return to parliament until 1940.

Much of his time during the 1930s was taken up with resurrecting the New South Wales state organisation of the ALP. Lang's dominance of the party had become increasingly personalised, not to say erratic. Federal parliamentarians loyal to him had voted with the conservatives to destroy the Scullin government, and from 1931 Lang was running his own, separate labour party throughout the state. Rebuilding the ALP meant that Chifley was engaged in persistent conflict with Lang, and their feud would last until the end of Chifley's life.

LABOUR UNDER CURTIN

The federal election of 1940 resulted in a nearly hung parliament. The conservative United Australia Party continued in office, but lost the confidence of the House in October 1941. Labor took power, with John Curtin as Prime Minister and Chifley as Treasurer. As such, Chifley's role was second only to that of Curtin. He had to pay for the war, a war in which the north of Australia was virtually on the front lines. In wartime, finance, equity and efficiency were the watchwords, and much of what Chifley did—strict price control and extensive war loans to control inflation, along with increased taxation—reflected the new Keynesian doctrines, being applied in Britain, New Zealand and elsewhere. Chifley also gradually extended the powers of the Commonwealth Bank, so that by 1945 the government's control over the nominally government-owned institution was similar to that of the New Zealand government over the Reserve Bank. Ministerial control of the central bank and, thus, of monetary policy was seen by social democrats as essential for influencing investment, employment and the general economic welfare.

From the end of 1942, Chifley was also Minister for Postwar Reconstruction; his key official was the gifted economist, Nugget Coombs. Like social democrats the world over, Chifley was determined that the war must be followed by a more just economic and social order; the Depression should never be repeated. Extensive development of infrastructure was planned, notably in the Snowy River hydro-electric scheme, with a view to modernisation and laying the foundations for postwar abundance. Industrial development was a priority, in order to reduce dependence on the export of a narrow range of commodities to Britain. Welfare and public services would be generously expanded. In the landmark White Paper on Full Employment the federal government undertook to manage consumption and investment to that end. Chifley and his colleagues were also closely engaged in the international economic diplomacy of the mid-1940s, notably at Bretton Woods, but also in many other forums. The agenda, shared with the Labour government in New Zealand, was international economic co-operation and trade liberalisation—but a liberalisation which included agriculture. To the enduring frustration of Australasian ministers, American enthusiasm for free trade never included farm produce.

CHIFLEY MOVES UP

In July 1945, John Curtin died and Chifley easily won election by the party caucus to replace him. As Prime Minister, he continued to hold the post of Treasurer. Economic management in the early postwar years was almost as difficult as in wartime; there were global shortages of most commodities and Europe's shattered situation was grave. Most economists and officials, and not only in Australia, expected a brief boom and a severe slump before the end of the decade; restricting private consumption in the interests both of controlling inflation and of prioritizing investment in industrial development and public services was essential, but increasingly unpopular. As in New Zealand, some militant trade unions became increasingly restive and unwilling to abide by the government's policies of limited wage growth (compensated for in part by expanded social services). The low point came in the coalminers' strike in the winter of 1949, which Chifley's government broke by drafting troops onto the coalfields, outlawing solidarity funds, and imprisoning union leaders. For Chifley and the miners, solidarity had come to mean different things.

By no means had Chifley gone over to the right, however. The constitution of

Australia—little changed since 1901—was not infrequently a barrier to the government's reformist objectives. The government had to put to a referendum the question of expanded economic power for postwar reconstruction, and it lost. Although the Banking Act 1945 gave the government considerable power over monetary policy, in 1947 the High Court declared unconstitutional a requirement that all public bodies do their banking with the Commonwealth Bank. Mindful of how the banks had frustrated and ultimately helped to destroy the Scullin government, Chifley responded by introducing legislation to nationalise the banking sector. The banks themselves, and the reborn conservatives—now trading under the name of the Liberal Party—mounted campaigns of protest across the country; much of the propaganda was vituperative, indeed scurrilous. The High Court, predictably, ruled the legislation unconstitutional and the Privy Council agreed.

LIBERALS TAKE OVER

Labor had convincingly won the 1943 and 1946 federal elections, but in 1949 the Liberal Party, promising to accept much of the new order of full employment and social welfare, and with the added attractions of unbridled consumerism, convincingly defeated the Labor government. The Liberals would be in office for an unbroken 23 years. Chifley himself remained as party leader until he suffered a fatal heart attack in June 1951.

Chifley would not have claimed to be infallible, nor to have avoided mistakes. He was, also, in many ways conventional in his time. His labour movement emphasized the male breadwinner. His party was committed to a White Australia until the 1960s, an attitude which Chifley certainly shared, at least in the 1920s. On other matters, though, Chifley challenged the conventional wisdom. He was committed above all to continued reform, and to the unity of the labour movement. For the conservatives, one scholar has argued, the managed economy was as far as they were prepared to go; for Chifley it was a mere instalment of socialist progress. With more foresight than some, he anticipated the nationalist and independence movements throughout Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and sought to align Australia in sympathy. Politically wise or not, bank nationalisation was an act of political courage. As Chifley put it, in the language of the day:

> I try to think of our Labour Movement, not as putting an extra sixpence into somebody's pocket or making somebody Prime Minister or Premier, but as a Movement bringing something better to the people, better standards of living, greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have a great objective—our light on the hill—which we aim to reach by working for the betterment of mankind, not only here but anywhere we may give a helping hand. If it were not for that, the Labour Movement would not be worth fighting for.

(There is an excellent essay on Chifley in the Australian Dictionary of Biography, available at *http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A130460b.htm*. An older biography, by L.F. Crisp, who worked as a public servant with Chifley, is worth reading, and there is a more recent one by David Day.)

Jim McAloon is Treasurer of the Labour History Project.

Greymouth vs. Ron Brierley

Greymouth versus Ron Brierley: The demise of the clothing industry. *An exhibition curated by Paul Maunder and Jo Edgar at the Blackball Museum of Working Class History. Opened May Day 2011.*

MARCH THROUGH GREYMOUTH; KATHY ALLAN IN HER EARLY YEARS.

Paul Maunder and Jo Edgar were in their early stages of putting together an exhibition on the West Coast's clothing industry when they rediscovered the story of the closure in 1990 of the Lane Walker Rudkin factory in Greymouth. More than 100 people worked at the factory at the time, and the announcement led to a flurry of labour activity, including a six-week picket of the factory and marches through town. As part of their research, Maunder and Edgar made contact with Kathy Allan, a Greymouth woman who had worked in the factory for 34 years, and Paul Watson, a site organiser for the Clothing Workers Union at the time of the closure. Their account offers a window onto some of the destruction taking place at the height of New Zealand's early neo-liberal enthusiasm.

Interviews and transcript by Paul Maunder

Kathy Allan: Lane Walker Rudkin set up in Greymouth in 1947. They were fine people. They gave to the West Coast, including setting up in Hokitika, Westport and Reefton. In Greymouth, we had 120 people on the staff early on. We were reduced to 83 when the closure came. We were such a happy group of people. Such camaraderie. The factory had sports teams and ran social events.

Paul Watson: Pre-1984 there had been rural development assistance packages.Lane Walker Rudkin had taken advantage of these packages to set up in rural towns. That provided a good base for employment—the industry employed thousands of workers. There was a slow dismantling of that assistance in the 1980s.

LWR BASKETBALL TEAM

There was also tariff protection on imported garments and imported textiles and fabrics. LWR made socks, sports shorts, tops, shirts, tee shirts, for domestic and export market. It was a thriving industry. Then the Labour government, with Roger Douglas as Finance Minister gradually removed tariffs. They signed free trade agreements which provided access to NZ markets.

When Ron Brierley, one of the new breed of entrepreneurs, took over LWR in the late 1980s, he had no interest in providing employment but wanted to centralise in Christchurch prior to asset stripping. Then he flipped it off.

Kathy: LWR were a good company to work for. But once Brierley took over, it wasn't a people place anymore. He was just interested in money. Our styles went to Fiji where they were employing 12 and 13 year olds. There was a tax-free haven there as well, which they loved. Thirteen-year-old girls working in a tin shed. It made us bitter. Money was first for Brierley.

Paul: In April 1990, they tried to close the plant at short notice. This was under the Brierley regime. The workers were at a tangi.

Kathy: It was a big funeral, for a big union man. His daughter was very popular at the factory. We were all standing around outside the RSA after the funeral when we noticed a young person racing toward us. She was yelling at us. "Kathy, they've closed us down. All of you older people are here at the funeral. They came in locked the door and told us to get out." We told her, "We're coming down now." And the others at the funeral said, "We'll support you." All the unions were at the funeral.

When we finally got there we were so angry. I had given 34 years to them. We weren't even given the chance to ask why. We said, "we'll stay in here and discuss it with our union."

Paul: I got a call from the HR manager requesting a meeting at 2 p.m. He told me, "We're closing in Greymouth today." I told him to piss off and immediately phoned the delegates. I said, "Don't leave. Stay in the factory. I'll come over."

I got over about 6 p.m. It was dark and they were all inside the factory. They'd herded the managers into one office and were shouting at them. The managers were shitting themselves. I said to management, "Back off. That's the only way the workers are coming out of the place. And don't remove anything." The workers surrounded the place and set up a picket.

Kathy: The mayor, Dr. Barry Dallas walked in and looked at them and said, "How dare you." Those people standing there in their dark suits. They didn't think there'd be such white hot anger. I said to them, "Look what you've done to our town. For every person you've fired today, there are seven people behind us who are affected."

The Drivers' Union came around and put a truck across the loading bay so they couldn't take anything out. We brought in two caravans so we could have 24-hour protests. We did it for six weeks. The power board put on power for us for nothing. The police would pop in and check out that we were all right. We had marches. The townspeople got behind us. People brought their children and husbands. [Local GP] Dr. Logan's daughter had the pipes, and she escorted us.

The old spirit of the West Coast came through. The young ones were great—they did their turns on the night shift and never quibbled. There was always someone from one of the other unions supporting us at night: the miners, the railwaymen. They didn't want us alone on that street. That was really good.

Paul: But in the end the company wouldn't move. There was a stand off. The workers realised they weren't getting anywhere. But at least we got them a good redundancy agreement.

It took $1 million from the local economy with the downstream effects. A hell of an impact. Often women were not entitled to unemployment benefit because their husbands were working. Alternative employment was not readily available. It wasn't as if the government was replacing these jobs or doing retraining.

Kathy: They didn't care what happened to us as a province. Again, we were getting ripped off. Just to come over like that. I knew it was over, but we still held in there for our West Coast pride.

After the factory closed I didn't work for six months, just helped the other girls. The kids were coming to me after the closure, and saying, "Kathy, what'll I do now?" They weren't ready to go overseas, but they went to Aussie. And that's sad. We export our young.

Paul: A co-operative came out of it. A group of eight extraordinary women. They employed a machinist and they were getting less than that worker. It struggled on for a few years but they never managed to get a decent living.

When there was tariff protection on imported garments and imported textiles and fabrics, there was a thriving industry. We made socks, sports shorts, tops, shirts, tee shirts, for the domestic and the export market. In big retail chains such as Farmers it used to be that 60-70% of the garments would be NZ made. Then they removed the tariffs. Now—virtually none. The exchange rate stuffs

it up as well. When the NZ dollar goes up, it's a big problem for manufacturers.

The manufacturing sector is declining. There's no real government commitment to manufacturing. We need big changes, a regulated exchange rate. Every movement by a cent in the dollar has a big impact. Is there the political will to change this? The CTU has put up an alternative economic policy which is worthy of debate. Real analysis is missing in terms of where we've gone over the last 20 years.

Kathy: When Brierley took over, we weren't people anymore, just an object. There's always a power game at the top level, and if they can exploit you they will.

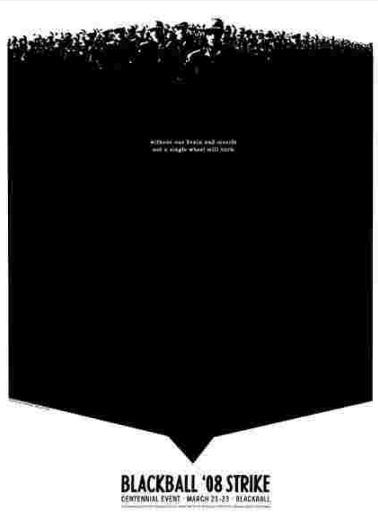
FOOTNOTE

The North American Free Trade Agreement, the treaty which embodies the extremes of neo-liberalism, was signed in 1994. In Chiapas, the poorest state in Mexico, the local people, now called the Zapatistas, took over their provincial capital and announced a revolt against this system of economic governance. They remain at war with the central government.

Paul Maunder is a writer, theatre practitioner and filmmaker who lives in Blackball, where he has been active in establishing the '08 Memorial/Resource Centre.

Schools Programme on the Coast

From the latest issue of the Blackball Museum Newsletter: www.blackballmuseum.org.nz



The Blackball Museum is preparing to pilot draft programmes, funded by Te Papa National Service, on the theme of the power of collective grass roots action. Three programmes will be on offer: The first, *Without our brain and muscle* involves Year 7 & 8 students becoming 1908 coal miners, being given work at a local coal mine (there'll be some shovelling involved), with the pay not meeting the family needs. They will then be expected to begin bargaining for better pay and conditions. The second, *Making Change*, once again for senior primary students, begins with a role play based on child labour. From there students will be encouraged to look at current issues. The theme is an ethical one: if we have something of value, do we necessarily exploit it? The third programme, *People Power*, designed for Year 9 & 10 students, role plays a work place situation in which students will be expected to discover the necessity of unionism. They will then look at work-place rights, and finally move to campaigns on topical issues such as climate change. These latter two programmes can take place either at the museum site or in school.

Convention Warfare: The International Labour Organisation and the Employment Contracts Act

David Grant

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has been the leading source of setting international labour standards since its creation in 1919. Now under the aegis of the United Nations, the ILO is unique in being the only international organization where a tripartite body of workers and employers are directly represented alongside governments. Every year, in Geneva where the organisation's headquarters is based, worker, state and employer groups from its 160 affiliated countries (often the Prime Minister or the Minister of Labour and heads of the both the national employers' federation and the Federation of Labour—and later the Council of Trade Unions, in New Zealand's case) participate in the committees at conference, which both develop new conventions and/or monitor compliance with conventions already ratified.

Over the years the ILO has adopted 171 conventions and 178 recommendations. Despite conventions only having a "binding effect" if they are ratified by a particular country, unratified conventions remain a very important influence over states as a common global standard. New Zealand has been a member of the ILO since its creation. Jim Bolger was its president in 1983 when he was Minister of Labour in the Muldoon Cabinet, to date the only New Zealander to hold that position.

Recently, the Key Government has been making unwelcome noises about removing unions' rights in negotiations over workers' wages and conditions, returning the country, in essence, to the dark days of the Employment Contracts Act (ECA) of the 1990s. Not only did that legislation attempt to remove union presence in industrial negotiation, it also ran afoul of the conventions of the ILO for what it, the ILO, believed were minimums for adequate industrial legislation internationally—conventions that were established only after agreement from at least two-thirds of its 160 member states. Bolger's National Government, despite promising it would do so, did not ratify two key conventions.

The first of these, No. 87, required governments to give all workers the freedom to associate with others, including the right to form or join organizations of their own choosing. Two barriers to ratification of 87—compulsory unionism and union monopoly bargaining rights—were removed by the Employment Contracts Act. No. 87 also required governments to take all necessary and appropriate steps to "exercise freely unions' right to organize". The ECA also contradicted two of the four main articles of the second convention that the Bolger government failed to ratify, No. 98. The first article stated that it was necessary for legislation to lay down penalties for employers who interfered in workers' organizations. The ECA, in contrast, seemed to allow such control or actually encourage it, a view sustained by Gordon Anderson, Victoria University's then senior lecturer (and now professor) of commercial law. The second article required the promotion of voluntary negotiation between employers' and workers' organizations. The abstentionist and sometimes hostile attitude that both the government and some employers took on "genuine" collective bargaining

through the ECA seemed to preclude the observance of that requirement. "International labour conventions represent the minimum levels that the international community felt was necessary to ensure observance with the principles of the ILO," maintained Anderson. "It is the measure of the extreme nature of the Employment Contracts Act that New Zealand is in a position where it seemingly cannot ratify these two most fundamental conventions."

Anderson's view was synchronous with a Department of Labour analysis even before the Employment Contracts Act was passed. That analysis included strong misgivings about whether or not parts of the proposed legislation were even permissible within ILO conventions, arguing in particular that a key tenet within the ILO was that the right to bargain collectively with employers regarding conditions of work was an essential element of freedom of association. The department also found problems with Articles 2 and 4 of Convention No. 98, the thrust of the latter being that collective bargaining via voluntary negotiation should be encouraged and promoted. "The Employment Contracts Bill gives no such encouragement or promotion," the department's paper argued. Based on this analysis, one presumes, the government abandoned attempts to satisfy the ILO over the ECA, and by doing so admitted implicitly that it could not meet the world's minimum standards of industrial law. New Zealand was the only OECD country to ride roughshod over these conventions.

In February 1993, the CTU lodged a complaint with the ILO claiming the Employment Contracts Act breached conventions on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. While the organisation could not formally discipline the government if it upheld the complaint, CTU president Ken Douglas believed taking action would mean "international public humiliation for the government, which, as already written, had not ratified Convention 87 on freedom of association or Convention 98 on the right to collective bargaining-because it could not without having to change the provisions of the Act which it was not prepared to do".

Around the same time the ECA attracted international condemnation when the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions declared in its 1993 report that "the New Zealand situation represents probably the most comprehensive legal attack on trade union freedoms in the world".

The ILO set a 15 April deadline for the New Zealand Government to respond to the complaint but it failed to do so, then or later. The ILO body dealing with the complaint, a 10-member Committee on Freedom of Association (representing state, employer and employee interests) had to adjourn its hearing as a consequence, which was a particular problem for the CTU because this committee did not meet again until November. To Ken Douglas, this dilatoriness came as no surprise. He believed that the government was trying to stop the committee dealing with the complaint until after the election.

The ILO Committee eventually ruled unanimously in favour of the CTU. It was sharply critical of the Employment Contracts Act, arguing it violated the aforementioned conventions on the freedom of association. It criticized the lack of consultation before the ECA was brought in, and stated that the law did not promote or encourage collective bargaining. It believed employers should not be allowed to bypass a worker's chosen union, nor should they be able to pressure workers into direct negotiations.

But this ruling was only an interim report, and the committee concluded that because the issues were complex, it needed to send representatives to New Zealand before it could produce a final judgment. In October, the ILO dispatched an investigating officer, Alan Gladstone, to New Zealand. Over several days, Gladstone talked with ministers, government officials, the Employers' Federation, industrial arbiters, chief executives, Federated Farmers, the CTU, a selection of union leaders and university academics. He also received detailed reports from many of these groups, including a detailed analysis of the Act in a series of papers from the CTU with reports from unions and a selection of "case studies" outlining instances of workers having been disadvantaged by the Act.

The ILO's governing body—which used a panel of prominent international jurists known as the Committee of Experts to adjudicate—released its final report on 16 November. It criticized the lack of real consultation among government, employers and employers' organizations and unions before passage of the Employment Contracts Act, and concluded that the Act did not encourage or promote collective bargaining.

It suggested that the government pass legislation that would provide an industrial relations structure that encouraged and promoted negotiations between employers and unions; maintained that any industrial legislation should not allow employers to bypass a worker's chosen union and pressure that worker into direct negotiations; asserted that such law should lay down explicit remedies and penalties against acts of interference and discrimination on the basis of a worker's choice of representation; believed that industrial legislation should specifically ensure that collective bargaining could not be undertaken by employee organizations under the control of employers; argued that such legislation should not require a union to establish specific authority from every member it claimed to represent in negotiations; maintained that the legislation should provide workers with a right to strike in support of multi-employer contracts; and concluded that such legislation should also provide workers with a right to strike over social and economic issues affecting their interests.

The ILO's findings caused ructions in the House. The new Minister of Labour, Doug Kidd, condemned the "wrong" processes of the ILO (without explaining what was wrong about them) and lambasted its conclusions as "very erroneous and unjustifiable". "It was wrong that the New Zealand combined trade unions had gone 'whingeing' and 'wining' to Geneva," he maintained. (After the ILO's first assessment in April, Kidd had denigrated its work as "archaic.... a blast from the past" and characterized the Committee's procedures as "Stalinist and kangaroo court stuff").

This contrasted markedly with his Prime Minister, Jim Bolger's assessment of the organization in 1983 after he had accepted the post of president when he was Minister of Labour in Muldoon's government. He called it a "unique international forum", and his presidential recognition "a high honour". "It exerted a positive influence in all parts of this interdependent world," Bolger continued, "its declarations of aims and purposes the most powerful statement of objectives for the international community on labour and employment matters...the ILO must continue to exercise its influence on a universal basis in whatever matter possible. It cannot select which violation it will oppose and which it will ignore." Meantime, in reply to Kidd in parliament, Opposition labour spokesperson Steve Maharey described the report as one that fairly

reflected industrial relations in New Zealand, and lambasted the government for not taking up some of the ILO's recommendations.

Conversely, the Employers' Federation attacked the messenger rather than the message. It argued that New Zealand should consider pulling out of the ILO if it refused to accept the country had enshrined new labour rights in law. Earlier, its president Richard Tweedie had said that the ILO was "a blot on New Zealand's improving economic horizon", maintaining that the ILO's findings were hardly surprising as "it was set up on the basis that unions were an integral part of the labour process. In New Zealand we have been able to show that in fact unions are not a necessary or required group in the employment relationship". These comments, however, did not stop Tweedie and Federation chief executive Steve Marshall from travelling to Geneva to talk to the ILO about its mission to New Zealand later in the year.

Bizarrely, both the government and Employers' Federation claimed publicly that the ILO's final report "substantially endorsed the Employment Contracts Act as being consistent with international principle of freedom of association". This was spin and patently untrue as the summary has indicated. In its conclusion, the ILO's report stated that "on a prima facie basis a selective number of collective bargaining problems have arisen, and continue to arise in practice from the point of view of compliance with ILO principles of freedom of association". It pointed to a fundamental different philosophical outlook as being at the root of the inconsistencies between New Zealand's Employment Contracts Act and internationally accepted principles on freedom of association. It also expressed the hope that the New Zealand Government would hold discussions with the CTU and the Employers' Federation as part of a process of rewriting the Employment Contracts Act, and it offered technical assistance with the rewrite. No such meetings took place.

For his part, Steve Maharey indicated that when Labour was in power it would revamp the legislation so that, at a very minimum, it would be able to ratify the two conventions in question "for the fairness of all concerned". Ken Douglas welcomed the ILO report on the Act as it provided the basis for a process to establish fair labour laws in New Zealand. He contacted Jim Bolger suggesting government-initiated tripartite discussions as part of a process aimed at ensuring that the legislation's provisions could be made fully consistent with the ILO's established principles on collective bargaining, but he made it clear that any discussion needed to be directed towards implementing the ILO's conclusions. As before, no such discussions were held. There was no "rewrite" of the Employment Contract Act.

The National Government never ratified these key ILO conventions, nor did it care. Only when Labour was elected to government in 1999 and repealed the Employment Contracts Act in favour of a more sensible Employment Relations Act was any New Zealand Government able to ratify these two conventions and bring the country back into the mainstream of international industrial law.

David Grant is a Wellington writer and historian. This article is based on research conducted for his biography of Ken Douglas, Man for All Seasons. *Endnotes have been removed for reasons of space.*

UNION FAMILY

John Dowgray - A Life to a Cause

Rick Barker

JOHN DOWGRAY IN HIS LIBRARY

'Union Family' is an occasional series about a contributor's family member and their involvement with the labour movement. We welcome suggestions for contributors and subjects for this series.

Pat Hickey writes in his book *Red Fed Memoirs* that he first met John Dowgray at the first Miners' Conference in Wellington and that Dowgray had recently arrived from Scotland, where he had held high office in the British and Scottish Miners' Federation. "I remember one of Jack's opponents writing sneeringly to the press that 'Dowgray landed at Westport wharf with 15s in his pockets and with two tons of books.' I did not know of his financial position at the time, but I did know that his critic was correct regarding Jack's library. Quite recently I had the pleasure of looking over his bookshelves again, one of the finest private libraries I have ever seen and am certain that ten, rather than two, would adequately express its weight today."

John Dowgray lived a lifelong commitment to his personal education, a commitment that was synonymous with the early socialists, as they appreciated that their dream to change the existing social order could not be achieved by organisation and militancy alone, but required ideas, a vision of a future, better society, one they could describe and communicate. The slogan of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or Wobblies) puts it succinctly: "Organise, Educate, Agitate".

The name Dowgray is unusual and a family historian notes that it cannot be found anywhere in the 1881 census of Scotland or England. John Dowgray's surname at birth was Gray, and 'Dowgray' may be an amalgam of the names 'Dow' and 'Gray', combined when the Gray family emigrated from Scotland. Not all of his family adopted the new name. One brother, Andrew, emigrated but kept the Gray surname.

John Gray was born in 1873, in Bothwell, Lanark, Scotland, the son of a miner. Little is known of the family at this time but John did follow his father into the mines. In all probability he was working underground by the age of 13 in one of the 390 coal pits operating in Lanarkshire at this time. John is understood to have gone to the Coatsbridge Mining Academy and he started his personal education on the principles of socialism. As a result he rose through the ranks of the union in Scotland as an activist. He played a role in establishing workers' co-operatives in Lanarkshire and the Scots Miners' Federation and was an active member of the Scottish Social Democratic Party, a forerunner to the British Labour Party.

Sometime in the 1890s John moved to Seaham in Durham to join his brother William. It was here that he married Elspeth Sey. The couple and their three daughters migrated to Westport on the Corinthic in 1907 to join John's parents and brothers who had migrated earlier. The family settled in Granity, where John and his brothers worked at the Millerton mine. Some of the family shifted to mines at Denniston and Burnett's Face.

With his background in union affairs, John became an active member of the Millerton Miners' Union where his abilities were recognised and he was elected president of the union. This was his power base for many years. He was a militant and believed in a national organisation of miners, opposing the small unions, a number of which he viewed as employer-sponsored and at risk of giving "the minority the right to coerce the majority". John led the drive to unite the West Coast miners into a single organisation and it was from this base that the Miners' Federation was formed in 1907.

JOHN DOWGRAY (FIFTH FROM LEFT) AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FEDERATION OF LABOUR EXECUTIVE, 1913

The Miners' Federation was a cornerstone of the United Federation of Labour, 'the Red Feds', in which John Dowgray held the position of treasurer in recognition of his financial knowledge and considerable administrative skills. It was a turbulent time of organisation, agitation and strikes. John was at the centre of this activity with Bob Semple, William Parry, Pat Hickey, James Glover and Paddy Webb, to name a few.

TRADE UNION HISTORY PR

The Red Feds had little time for the craft union-dominated Trades and Labour Councils, and sought to advance their cause by militant action. They had many successes but 1912 was a year of defeats, particularly the strike at Waihi which proved to be a watershed for political action. The syndicalists, including the IWW, were committed to improving union strength and combining this with industrial action to bring about social change. On the other wing of the Red Feds were those who advocated militancy combined with political action, by electing representatives to Parliament and changing the law. At Waihi the forces of labour met the combined forces of capital and the State, and lost heavily.

John, drawing on his experience in Scotland, advocated political action in addition to industrial organisation. He felt that the Federation could not overlook politics and that the rank and file would force them to do so by joining a political party. If the Federation was not a part of that party, then they would have no influence over it and their industrial destiny. His motion that the Federation form its own political party was defeated in favour of support for individual Federation candidates.

John was recognised as a knowledgeable, professional miner. He was a strong advocate of mine safety and was the coal miners' representative on the Mines Commission, along with Bill Parry who represented the quartz miners. They wrote a minority report condemning the practices of the day which encouraged speed of production over safety. Instead they advocated a system of "workmen's inspectors", with the power to report directly to the Mines Department rather than the employer, and halt work immediately if necessary. This report was rejected, but John continued to campaign for improved safety measures at every opportunity.

The issue of conscription during the First World War caused John to take a step back from his union activities at national level. The Federation of Labour was united in its opposition to the wartime conscription of labour, but was split over tactics. John's focus shifted to the politics. In 1916 he chaired the inaugural meeting of the present New Zealand Labour Party, at Trades Hall in Wellington. He put his name forward as a Labour candidate and was beaten by Bob Semple, a man with more platform presence. John was seen as solid but somewhat dour and was hampered by his thick Scots accent which made him difficult to understand. He continued to work for the Labour Party and his family believes that he wrote its early economic policies.

When Labour was elected in 1935 and nationalised the Bank of New Zealand, John was appointed to its Board. The Dominion newspaper was incredulous that a coalminer from Granity could be worthy of such a position, but they did not know of his extensive knowledge of economics, his ability and diligent application to any task he undertook. He proved to be a worthy Board member and held the position until 1947.

Study was John's relaxation. He was known to have the odd dram of whisky occasionally, but every night he would retire to his favourite chair in his library and resume reading. His preferred subject was economics. He had standing orders with English booksellers for a copy of every book printed on this subject to be forwarded to him directly, from England to Granity. He also had standing orders for books with New Zealand distributors. He collected books covering a wide range of subjects and was thought to have the largest private library in

the country, requiring his house in Granity to have extra piles under it to bear the weight. After he died his collection was sold and the proceeds paid for his nephews' boarding school fees through high school.

John Dowgray was a physically powerful man. At a time when union militants were being rounded up by the police, John was approached by two constables and with the threat of a confrontation they left, without arresting him. During the Murchison earthquake he was underground and sought to lead his men out. One of them fell to the ground wailing and praying and refused to move. John, with no other options, knocked him unconscious and carried him out of the pit.

There were many visitors to the family home in Granity; a regular was Harry Holland who would often walk the distance from Westport to Granity. Harry's hobnail boots would be so hot from the nails striking the stones over the 26 miles that the kids could not touch the soles. When he arrived all the kids were told to be quiet and all that could be heard were the birds. When he woke up the call went out, 'Harry's up', instantly releasing hours of suppressed kids' noise, and nothing could be heard of the birds.

John Dowgray was, like his peers, committed to principle, to class, to his colleagues and their families and to forging a better future for their children. This was a lifelong commitment, and he served as chair of the Granity school committee for over 30 years. The family was active in organising relief for the distress that befell families and the community. Although much of his later working life was spent in Wellington, he never left Granity, his community, his home. He lived what he believed.

He died on 28 January 1950 and is buried with Elspeth in Orowaiti Cemetery, Westport.

I first became aware of my relationship to John Dowgray when I attended my father's funeral in 1994. My parents' divorce left me with very little contact with my father's side of the family, so I was very surprised when my uncle approached me and said that I was keeping up with the family tradition. "What tradition?", I asked. "Unions and the Labour Party" he replied, and explained that I was John Dowgray's great-grandson. I had been the National Secretary of the Service Workers' Union, and an Executive Member of the Federation of Labour, and had just been elected as a Labour MP. I knew my labour history, knew the name Dowgray, but not the personal connection. I had to read my history books again.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Family members have contributed to these and many other stories I have of John, and in particular I thank John and Dorothy Dowgray for their assistance. I have made reference to the following publications: Coal, Class and Community *by Len Richards;* The Red Feds*, by Erik Olssen;* Red Fed Memoirs *by Pat Hickey*

Rick Barker is an MP and the senior Labour whip.

REVIEWS

If you have material you think we should review, or are interested in reviewing for us then contact the reviews editor at reviews@lhp.org.nz

Made in Dagenham

Megan Cook

Machinists at Ford's UK Dagenham plant went on strike in 1968, arguing first that their work was skilled, and then for equal pay. The strike was part of the British campaign for equal pay and director Nigel Cole (*Calendar Girls*) saw its cinematic possibilities: *Made in Dagenham* was released in 2010.

Funny, colourful, and admiring of the women it portrays, *MiD* shows a working class community that's functional, affectionate, and relaxed. The machinists work in a rundown warehouse that gets too hot in good weather and leaks in bad. They like and support each other, socialise together, get drunk, dance, have sex. They get on with the men around them, love their partners, and stand by them. (There are surprisingly few children shown—in 1968, Dagenham would have been over-run by kids.) It's a film with few dark moments, but it isn't altogether unrealistic—pieces of car seat fabric are nicked to mend a family tent, they're not all good at the job, marriages aren't always happy, and people die.

Rita O'Grady leads the strike, speaking up during negotiations with employers, challenging union leaders (shown as happy to sell equal pay, and even the women's claim to skill, down the river) and dealing with her husband's frustration when he's left to keep house and mind the kids. Their union organiser supports them, but the relationship isn't entirely sugar sweet. Telling Rita why the women are underpaid, he assumes she needs to be told the facts of her own life, and slides into stating the obvious (her response, with its inflection of "yes, I know that" interrupts the lesson). *MiD* ends with the women going to see Employment Secretary Barbara Castle, who negotiates a settlement that will see them get a significant pay increase and promises that an equal pay act will be passed.

A number of reviewers have pointed out that *MiD* is predictable, a feel-good movie in a British comedy tradition that includes the *Carry On* films made in the 1970s. Others have argued that it's unusual: it shows a strike as successful and the strikers as heroines. Director Nigel Cole argued that when working class life is depicted on film, it's "often in a very negative way. ... The film we've made is not about being ground down by poverty—it's about fighting injustice, and I hope more people make films about that".[1]

It's an entertaining story, lightly seasoned with gender, parliamentary, and industrial politics (and a few very flash clothes)—if you've had enough special effects, romance and crime, take this one home for the night.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

The campaign for equal pay, which had been stuttering along since the Second World War, was revitalised by the Dagenham strike. It wasn't led by Rita O'Grady —she's a composite of several of the women involved. Women in other workplaces went on strike, and Employment Secretary Barbara Castle did get

involved. (The meeting wasn't quite as portrayed in the film—it started with cups of tea and the media present, but after the reporters and photographers left, Castle opened the drinks cabinet, kicked off her shoes, and settled back on a couch to talk.) A national campaign committee was formed, and a huge demonstration held in May 1969.

THE REAL DAGENHAM WORKERS

Castle, wanting to forestall further unrest, introduced equal pay legislation. Passed in 1970, the Equal Pay Act was not implemented until 1976—Mary Davis, writing on equal pay on the Union History website, argues that employers had "six years to re-grade jobs in discriminatory ways ... rendering them immune from the very limited scope of the act".[2]

The act was amended several times, largely as a result of European Union directives. A 1983 amendment allowed equal pay claims for women doing work of "equal value" to that of male comparators who were getting higher hourly rates and bonuses. A number of successful cases were brought by groups of women workers, including surface coal workers, school dinner ladies, cleaners, home care workers, and NHS speech therapists. These equal value claims for large groups of women workers make up the bulk of claims still being brought in the UK (about 38,000 claims were lodged in 2010). The Equal Pay Act was replaced by the single Equality Act in 2010.

Some of the women involved in the Dagenham strike are shown in one of a series of short films on a British union website (http://www.unionhistory.info). Longer versions of these films can be ordered on the same site.

MAKING DAGENHAM IN NEW ZEALAND?

Could *Made in Dagenham* be made in New Zealand? Our fight for private sector equal pay is a rich source of material. The campaign was led by accountant Rita King, deeply committed to the cause, smart, delicately pretty and ladylike, who led the Council for Equal Pay and Opportunity. She worked closely with a group of upper-middle class women who slipped into unpaid positions of authority within government, assisted by Department of Labour officials desperate to alleviate a chronic labour shortage. Getting women into paid employment was their priority—equal pay was the women's.

On the union side, there's Connie Purdue, daughter of activist Miriam Soljak, who promoted equal pay at fashion parades and champagne breakfasts, and led a march and a wreath-laying ceremony at the Auckland Employers Federation building. Purdue, Sonja Davies, Mary Batchelor and many others were joined by union men like George Hobbs, Graeme Kelly and Frank Thorn. After shifting from the Freezing Workers' Union to the Clothing Workers', Thorn told a reporter that he was "ashamed at the rates paid to skilled females in the clothing industry"—wages and conditions were depressed, and employers had "for too long waxed fat from the profits of a workforce they've kept on a low wage basis".[3]

A strong radical voice was added by the Women's Liberation Movement. Local women, including Therese O'Connell, challenged employers and other equal pay campaigners. Germaine Greer visited in 1972. Speaking at the Auckland Town Hall, where she was introduced by Tom Skinner (who was asked to do it by Connie Purdue), Greer challenged the unions to do right by women members.

Skinner, then Federation of Labour president, is a superb representative of old-style unionists. His support for equal pay was reluctant and late—the PSA did much of the heavy lifting in this fight. Joining Skinner were the employers, who claimed equal pay would send them broke. Did this ever happen? Their determination not to pay men and women equally shaped an Employers' Federation guide to the 1972 Act, which provided their members with the information needed to evade the Act's provisions.

And of course there's the 1950s fight for equal pay in the public sector, and the on-going struggle to break down occupational segregation in freezing works, the fire service, and other areas of work. A single case—the 1980 Ocean Beach Freezing Company dispute, for example, in which women fought to be allowed to work as slaughtermen—could be the basis for a feature film or documentary, or the complexity and richness of the material developed as a television series.

Megan Cook is a writer at the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, where she is a PSA site delegate. Her 2000 MA thesis examined responses to the equal pay campaign, from the 1940s to the 1970s.

ENDNOTES

1. Nigel Cole, talking to Yuri Prasad, Socialist Worker Online, *http://www.socialistworker.co.uk/art.php?id=22457*
2. Mary Davis, 'An historical introduction to the campaign for equal pay', within 'Winning equal pay' at *http://www.unionhistory.info/equalpay/roaddisplay.php?irn=820*
3. Frank Thorn, in 'Equal pay issue leads to standover campaign' *Evening Post*, 22.7.72, and 'Exemptions

1951

A screening commemorating the 60th anniversary of 1951 waterfront lockout. Reviewed by Ray Markey.

WATERSIDE WORKERS' UNION PRESIDENT JOCK BARNES (LEFT) AND SECRETARY TOBY HILL. *IMAGES COURTESY JOHN BATES.*

At the 2002 New Zealand Television Awards John Bates' documentary *1951*, on the '51 waterfront lockout, won Best Documentary and Bates was named Best Director, Documentary. A recent showing of the film by the Auckland Labour History Group attracted an enthusiastic group of about 50 to the Auckland Trades Hall in Great North Road, Grey Lynn, which showed that it had lost none of its impact.

The group initially took refreshments on site courtesy of the Working Women's Resource Centre in the Red Flag bar, before viewing the film downstairs, and returned to the bar for intermission. The audience was remarkable not only for its size but also for its high level of engagement and broad mix of participants. The audience composition was a veritable 'popular front', with a strong contingent from the Maritime Union led by National Vice President and Local 13 President Garry Parsloe and Local 13 Secretary/Treasurer Russell Mayn, together with the Labour Party spokesperson for Labour, Darien Fenton, academics, and activists of many persuasions, including one participant in the film and supporter of the lockout at the time. John Bates, the filmmaker, briefly addressed the group at the end of the screening, and this was followed by a vigorous discussion of the events leading to the making of the film. One important point made at the time was: "where were the Maori waterside workers in the film?"

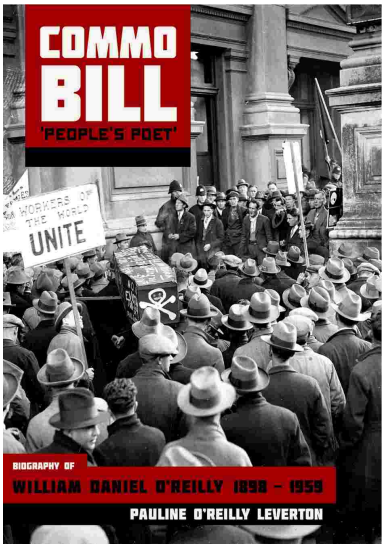
The People's Narratives

Clandestine! Illegal Leaflets, 1951, *by elag (Len Gale), Payless Copy Centre, 2011.* Commo Bill: 'People's Poet': Biography of William Daniel O'Reilly, 1898-1959, *by Pauline O'Reilly Leverton, One Off Press, 2010, ISBN 978-0-473-16854-4. Reviewed by Carl Blackmun.*

Personal narratives, whether in the form of memoirs, oral histories or biographies, are an important source for labour historians. They offer an opportunity to reveal the individual and personal dimensions of events typically approached through political and institutional frameworks. Two recent works by Len Gale and Pauline O'Reilly Leverton fit into a body of literature by authors such as Maureen Birchfield, Sid Scott, and Ron Smith that shed light on the experiences and activities of New Zealand activists in the first half of the 20th century.

Len Gale's *Clandestine! Illegal Leaflets, 1951* consists of an account of his involvement in producing pamphlets during the 1951 waterfront lockout as well as reproductions of several of those images. Though succinct, the account provides an interesting insight into the operation of illegal presses during the lockout and the motivations and experiences of their operators. It also serves as an introduction to the images themselves, which are an important part of the visual history of the lockout (a point well made by Dean Parker's introduction). There are also recollections about the men and women of '51 and an account of some of John Walker's memories of the 1951 coal miners' strike. While

interesting, they are somewhat out of place here, and interrupt the coherency of the collection. The pamphlet's production is very simple. Given the artistic content, a more stylised layout might have been beneficial, though this does not detract from the value of the pamphlet's content.



Pauline O'Reilly Leverton's biography of her father, *Commo Bill: 'People's Poet': Biography of William Daniel O'Reilly*, offers a different form of personal narrative. When O'Reilly died in 1959, Bruce Skilton of the Communist Party (CPNZ) remarked that he would "have an honoured name when New Zealand's working-class history is finally written". Instead, Leverton contends, O'Reilly largely disappeared from the historical record. This biography is an attempt to amend that deficiency, though its scope goes beyond O'Reilly's life to also offer a historical account of New Zealand radicalism in the first half of the 20th century.

William O'Reilly was born in Rakaia in 1898, the oldest of six children. After marrying and moving to Wellington in the 1920s, O'Reilly joined the Communist Party in 1929. In the next 30 years, he dedicated himself to fighting for the rights of workers. He was imprisoned several times, and was once arrested alongside Reverend Ormond Burton, at a pacifist meeting in February 1940. Although his political activity declined after the war, he continued to be involved in the CPNZ and was active during the 1951 waterfront lockout. After battling throat cancer, he died in 1959 when the author, his youngest daughter, was just 12. His funeral attracted hundreds of workers, indicating the esteem in which he was held in Wellington.

Commo Bill dedicates most attention to O'Reilly's involvement in the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) during the 1930s. In doing so, it sheds light on an organization that Leverton argues has hitherto been either misrepresented or ignored. A more radical counterpart to the National Unemployment Union (NUU), the NUWM's activities were hampered by the anti-communism of both the state and the Labour movement. Despite this, the NUWM garnered a number of victories for the unemployed. O'Reilly's role in the movement was influential. He was a member of the Executive, a frequent presence at rallies and often a thorn in the side of those in power. Leverton's treatment of O'Reilly's life during this period also reveals the extent of state repression against those fighting for the rights of the unemployed during the Depression—and their responses. One particularly amusing anecdote describes O'Reilly taking notes on a tiny pad with an oversized pencil during a court trial to protest the farcical nature of the proceedings.

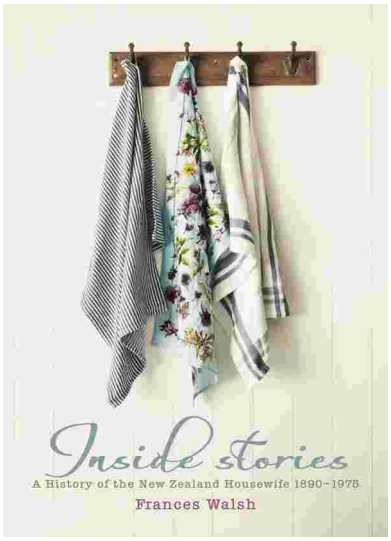
Another central theme in Leverton's book is O'Reilly's poetry, which was a constant presence throughout his political involvement. Simply phrased and often acrostic, his poetry was, in the words of Leverton, "not complex". It was, however, accessible to the great mass of workers to whom O'Reilly was appealing: "It's been the slogan of our class, the battle's clarion call / No injury can fall on one without affecting all." Dealing with topics as wide-ranging as class relations, the waterfront lockout and the Indonesian independence movement, his poems reveal how "the poet can help mediate shared frustrations", and they provide insight into O'Reilly's political—and personal—development.

One Off Press has tastefully produced the book, with a striking cover design and a tidy layout throughout. The inclusion of numerous high-quality scans of photos, letters, and security files as well as several of O'Reilly's poems is

particularly laudable. However, beyond the poems, Leverton's tendency to paraphrase rather than quote means O'Reilly's voice is somewhat absent from the book. In a work in which much of the focus is on his involvement in various movements, this means the account is sometimes detached from its subject. Nonetheless, Leverton has made an important contribution to the historiography with *Commo Bill*, restoring O'Reilly's place in New Zealand radicalism and his contribution to the fight for workers' rights.

Inside Stories

Inside Stories: A History of the New Zealand Housewife 1890-1975, *by Frances Walsh, Random House, 2011, ISBN 9781869621650. Reviewed by Grace Millar.*



When *New Zealand Woman's Weekly* was launched in 1932, Prime Minister Forbes wrote his congratulations to the magazine: "There is no doubt that a large share of the troubles arising out of the strenuous and anxious times through which the world is at present passing falls on the shoulders of our women." These sorts of empty platitudes are common in the treatment of unpaid work, both by contemporaries and historians. By writing a book about the day to day work of New Zealand housewives, Frances Walsh* has challenged this approach, and given women's work the attention it deserves.

Inside Stories is organised thematically with chapters on the main responsibilities of the housewife: the filth, the kitchen, the needle, the shopping, the tub, the child and the husband. This enables Walsh to cover a wide range of topics and demonstrates the amount of work and knowledge women needed. Walsh emphasises housewives' resourcefulness. She reproduces some historical tips for dealing with stains and dust, so the modern reader can develop their housekeeping skills. Although the recipe which requires 1 cup of cigar ashes may not be the easiest or cheapest way to create metal polish.

The section on laundry, a job that has been truly transformed by electricity, should terrify anyone who struggles to find time to wash their clothes the easy way. Walsh extensively quotes from contemporary descriptions of wash-day, and reproduces images of boilers and effectively conveys the level and nature of work required.

Walsh describes her goal as follows: "This is not a conventional history book; in the spirit of its sources, it is, rather, a wayward compendium of housewives' lore and preoccupations." The main sources for this book are an astounding array of magazines read by women: *White Ribbon, Home and Country, New Zealand Tablet, New Zealand Woman's Weekly, Vogue New Zealand, Te Ao Hou, Woman Today, New Zealand Woman and Home, Mirror, Eve, Thursday,* and *Broadsheet*. Walsh concentrates on discussing the advice they gave housewives, but women wrote back to these magazines, and she uses this material as well. This leaves open the vexing historical question of the relationship between advice books and those who read them, which Walsh only addresses in passing. However, they are such a rich vein of material that such an in-depth study would be justified.

The thematic organisation does mean the book sometimes feels untethered in time. In general, Walsh neatly places various magazines in their historical time,

effectively conveying the role of depression in the early *Woman's Weekly* and the very different context of *Eve* and *Thursday*. However, sometimes the way she jumps between the 1920s and 1960s hides the substantial changes in women's lives and domestic organisation between 1890 and 1975. Electrification is well covered, but the effects of the many other substantial historical changes are only hinted at. This reinforces the idea of the home as a place isolated from the world.

Inside Stories is a beautiful book; each page is full-colour. The page edges are decorated with a thin strip of reproduced textile, a different textile for each chapter. However, the lavish printing is not just decorative. The book is generously illustrated with reproductions of advertisements, photos, and articles from the magazines. The advertisements, in particular, give a sense of the pressures society put housewives under.

This is a very easy and engaging book that is aimed at a general rather than an academic audience. I hope it reaches as wide an audience as its accessibility deserves.

Laundry, cooking and cleaning, have taken a huge amount of labour throughout New Zealand's history. They have not received their historical due, and the women who undertook most of that labour have been ignored. This book is an important step in recording the importance of women's work.

* This is the Frances Walsh who was the Actors' Equity representative at their recent dispute with Peter Jackson, not Fran Walsh who co-writes films with Peter Jackson. So that's another reason to buy the book.

Remains to be Seen

Remains to be Seen: Tracing Joe Hill's Ashes in New Zealand *by Jared Davidson, Rebel Press, Wellington, 2011, ISBN 978-0-473-18927-3. Reviewed by Arthur Price.*

Until this week I had a fear of history books. *Remains to be Seen: Tracing Joe Hill's Ashes in New Zealand* dispelled my fear with its stunning layout, exceptional readability and perfect length (85 pages). The book's subtitle might be a little misleading, as the book takes us through events that seem to have produced no trace of Joe Hill's ashes in New Zealand whatsoever. The journey, however, is very informative, revealing sad truths about New Zealand's history and the origins of today's repressive state. If a history book should do anything it is to kindle an interest in the past. Davidson's book left me with inspiration to learn more of Joe Hill and dissenters during World War I, and therefore comes highly recommended.

From the Publisher:

On the eve of his execution in 1915, Joe Hill—radical songwriter, union organiser and member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)—penned one final telegram from his Utah prison cell: "Could you arrange to have my body hauled to the state line to be buried? I don't want to be found dead in Utah." Hill's body was then cremated, his ashes placed into tiny packets and sent

to IWW Locals, sympathetic organizations and individuals around the world. Among the nations said to receive Hill's ashes, New Zealand is listed.

Yet nothing is known about what happened to the ashes of Joe Hill in New Zealand. Were Hill's ashes really sent to New Zealand? Or was New Zealand simply listed to give such a symbolic act more scope? If they did make it, what ever happened to them?

Remains to be Seen traces the ashes of Joe Hill from their distribution in Chicago to wartime New Zealand. Drawing on previously unseen archival material, it examines the persecution of anarchists, socialists and Wobblies in New Zealand during the First World War. It also explores how intense censorship measures—put in place by the National Coalition Government of William Massey and zealously enforced by New Zealand's Solicitor-General, Sir John Salmond—effectively silenced and suppressed the IWW in New Zealand.

Remains to be Seen can be downloaded for free at: *http://www.rebelpress.org.nz*

DETAIL FROM *REMAINS TO BE SEEN*

Recent research

The Labour History Project regularly receives requests for information from throughout the country, on individuals, organisations, events and issues. We aim to answer these ourselves or pass them on to suitable experts, but some questions remain.

This section of the newsletter summarises some of the research that has recently come our way. It is hoped that this will become a feature of all future issues of the newsletter.

To send us a research request, advise of any research planned or underway, or for more information on the projects below, contact: research@lhp.org.nz

Wellington's Brian Wood has been researching the waterfront commissions that operated between 1940 and 1989. He has written his findings as a paper titled *Worker Participation in Stevedoring 1896 to 1989*, and is planning to publish it in some form.

Auckland writer Sandra Coney is researching the history of Piha's Kauri timber milling industry. For more information, see p. 14 of this newsletter.

Jared Davidson is currently undertaking research on Philip Josephs, co-founder of New Zealand's first anarchist collective. The Freedom Group was formed at a meeting of anarchists in Josephs' Wellington tailor shop in 1913, and according to folklore, engaged in running battles with Police during the Great Strike before being lost to antiquity.

Jared is seeking any information on Philip Josephs and anarchists during this period. He is also interested in stories of immigration, the tailoring trade, and life in Wellington at the turn of the 20th century (Josephs was a Latvian Jew, who arrived in 1903 via Scotland). Please contact: *garage.collective@gmail.com*

Eric Fry Research Scholarship

A scholarship of $1000 p.a. is available for students wishing to travel to Canberra to use the Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour at the Australian National University. For more information, including application details, contact:
—Paul Pickering, ANU, tel 02 6125 3451, email *paul.pickering@anu.edu.au*
—Maggie Shapley, NBAC, tel 02 6125 9602, email *maggie.shapley@anu.edu.au*
—Peter Ellett, ASSLH, tel 02 6278 5307, email *petere@vtown.com.au*

What is the Labour History Project?

The struggle for workers' rights has a long history in Aotearoa New Zealand. Trade unions and the fight for a fair society are important strands of our national story. Many major historical events have their roots in labour-related issues. These have also been key influences on national politics and the evolution of New Zealand society. Labour history connects New Zealand to the world. Work has been a prime factor in our migration history and local unions (and related groups) have important links overseas.

Much of New Zealand's labour history, however, remains undocumented and unpublished. The social history of work in New Zealand has been relatively neglected by historians. Without a more accessible labour heritage, we overlook important ways of understanding New Zealand's past and present, and vital perspectives on where we are heading.

In 1987 the Trade Union History Project (TUHP) was formed by historians, trade unionists and political activists to help document New Zealand labour history. Initially established with state funding, since 1991 the organisation has relied upon volunteer resources, donations, and occasional publishing grants. In 2008 the TUHP changed its name to the Labour History Project (LHP) to better reflect the range of member interests. The LHP is an energetic and independent incorporated society. It has over 150 individual and institutional members and maintains links with affiliated organisations such as the Auckland Labour History Group, trade unions, libraries, museums, academics, and counterpart groups overseas. It is the only national organisation dedicated to fostering New Zealand labour history and cultivating an important part of our collective memory. The Labour History Project has no affiliation with the New Zealand Labour Party or any other political party.

Membership form

Yes, I want to become a member of the Labour History Project. Inc.

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Individual subscription (inc. GST)	$30.00
Institution subscription (inc. GST)	$75.00
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