

# The Queensland Journal Of Labour History

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## Contents

<b>EDITORIAL</b>	Dale Lorna Jacobsen	1
<b>BLHA President's Column</b>	Greg Mallory	3
<b>IN MEMORIAM</b> Maureen Frances Watson	Sheryl Gwyther	6
<b>ARTICLES</b> Eva's Story	Connie Healy	9
The Great Sex Education Pamphlet Scandal of 1971	Katrina Barben	19
A Commitment to Peace: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Queensland	Tanya Negerevich	25
<b>BOOK REVIEWS</b> Market versus Nature	Peter Riedlinger	37
Trade Unionism in Australia & After the Waterfront	Greg Mallory	40
Against All Odds	Barbara Webster	43
ASIO: The Enemy Within	Dan O'Gorman	46
A Probe into Disturbing History (A Report on Mick Tubbs' Book Launch)	Tony Reeves	48
The Flames of Discontent Rekindled at Woodford Folk Festival (A Review of Two Concerts)	Dale Lorna Jacobsen	51
<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>		54
<b>NOTICEBOARD</b>		56



# Editorial

Dale Lorna Jacobsen

It gives me great pleasure to bring you this special Women's edition of *The Queensland Journal of Labour History*. For some time I have wanted to devote a March issue to the stories of the Women's Movement and to salute the members of the Union of Australian Women. (We are proud to say that this issue has been supported by the Queensland members of UAW.) I also acknowledge the co-editorship of BLHA member Peter Riedlinger for this issue.

Eva Bacon was a founding member of the UAW in Queensland and went on to become State Secretary, President, national committee member and Enoggera branch activist. It became her life's work. Hence it seemed fitting to invite Eva's friend (and BLHA member) Connie Healy to write an article celebrating the life of this pint-sized powerful woman.

The second of our major articles, "A Commitment to Peace: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Queensland", gives an insight into the unflagging endeavours of WILPF from its formation as an international Non-Governmental Organisation in 1915. During a time

which encompassed two World Wars and the Vietnam War, WILPF worked towards empowering women of different social, economic and political backgrounds, in the hope of achieving peace, disarmament and social justice globally. Tanya Negerevich, a student of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Queensland, undertook an internship with WILPF, resulting in a deepening interest in gender issues and exploration of the role of women's peace activism in global society.

And who could forget the great sex education pamphlet scandal of 1971? I remember it well, as does Katrina Barben who challenged Gabby Horan on talkback radio when Brisbane was abuzz with debate.

We also have five important books reviewed within these pages: Eric Aarons *Market Versus Nature*; Mick Tubbs' *ASIO: The Enemy Within*; Bradley Bowden's *Against All Odds: The History of the United Firefighters Union in Queensland 1917-2008*; Tom Bramble's: *Trade Unionism in Australia: A history from flood to ebb tide*; and *After the Waterfront: The Workers are Quiet*, by LeftPress

Collective. The latter two are to be discussed at a seminar, *Trade Unions: Past, Present, Future*, hosted by BLHA on 7 March.

We have a moving tribute to a remarkable woman who passed on in January this year: Aunty Maureen Watson — she will be sadly missed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. And there is a report on the hugely successful staging of two *Flames of Discontent* concerts at the Woodford Folk Festival — and much more...

While on the subject of folk music and International Women's Day, I thought I would take the liberty of including the photo below taken in the early 1990s in the Queen Street Mall on IWD. At that time I was a member of the folk group *Rosehill Fayre*. We sang without fear, upholding principals we held dear, and were invited to play at UAW functions, Reclaim the Night rallies, CPA events and, of course, IWD celebrations. I am the one on the left; the other two are Lonnie Martin and Toni Wood, both powerful women who still sing.

## HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

\* \* \* \*



*Rosehill Fayre* perform for IWD celebrations, Queen Street Mall, early 1990s.  
Dale Jacobsen (your editor), Lonnie Martin, Toni Wood.

# BLHA

## President's Column

### Greg Mallory

Once again, it is pleasing to report on the great activism of the BLHA, making it one of the most active ASSLH branches in the country.

#### 2008 Events

The BLHA conducted three major events at the end of 2008. Firstly, the Queensland Mines and Energy Minister, Geoff Wilson, launched Mick Tubbs' book, *ASIO: The Enemy Within*, at the Brisbane Workers Community Centre (BWCC). The event was well attended and Mick's speech on the activities of ASIO over the past 60 years was well received. The second event was our AGM, the highlight of which was the bestowing of Life Membership on Manfred Cross. Manfred has given life-long service to labour history and the labour movement. A short piece on Manfred's involvement was provided in our February Newsletter. Another highlight of the AGM was the fabulous "political cabaret" performance by Absolutely Scandalous.

At the Woodford Folk Festival the BLHA was honoured to work with the CFMEU Construction branch in presenting two concerts on our theme of "Rekindling the Flames of Discontent". The first concert, which was held in a smaller venue (The Muse), attracted around 150 people and the evening event at the Concert Stage attracted a crowd of around 800. The "Flames" concert will be a regular feature of the Festival from now on. The BLHA would like to thank Bill Hauritz, CEO of the Festival, the behind the scenes workers, and the organising committee for their support. We would also like to thank Jason Stein and the CFMEU Construction branch for their help, particularly with the slide show at the evening concert.

#### 2009/10 Planned Events

On 7 March we are holding a seminar at the BWCC on the topic *Trade Unions: Past, Present, Future*. The speakers will be: Dr Joan Corrie, from Griffith University, on union amalgamations of the 1990s concentrating on the AMWU

and the CFMEU; Dr Tom Bramble, from the University of Queensland, on his book *Trade Unionism in Australia*, and the LeftPress Collective on their book *After the Waterfront*. Margaret Lee, State Secretary of the NTEU, will be launching this edition of *The Queensland Journal of Labour History* at this event as well as chairing the discussion panel.

It is a great pleasure to announce that the BLHA will be holding the inaugural *Alex Macdonald Memorial Lecture* in mid-May. The year 2009 marks 40 years since Alex's death and it is only fitting that a memorial lecture be held in his name. The lecture will be presented by Professor Margaret Levi, formerly the Harry Bridges Chair in the Harry Bridges Centre for Labor Studies at the University of Washington, and who currently holds, jointly, Professor of Politics, United States Study Centre, Sydney University, and Bacharach Professor of International Studies, University of Washington. The lecture will be preceded by a talk by Hughie Hamilton, Manfred Cross and Alan Anderson on the contribution Alex made to the labour movement in Queensland.

The next big event of the BLHA is a "red-green" conference to be held on 7-8 February 2010. The conference is in the early days of planning but essentially will bring together academics and activists from the two most significant movements of our

times: the labour movement and the environment movement. The BLHA Executive has written to academics and activists in both these areas inviting them to attend. Jack Munday has been asked to open the conference and other notable speakers who have been invited are Professor Ian Lowe, John Bellamy Foster from Canada and Tony Maher from the Federal CFMEU Mining & Energy Division. This will be an historic conference and should attract wide media attention. The academic papers from this conference will provide the basis for a special thematic edition of the federal journal *Labour History* in November 2010.

### **Federal Matters**

The Federal Executive has been holding its Executive meetings by telephone hook-up during the year, however in November I attended a Federal Executive meeting in Sydney as well as the Federal AGM. I also attended the Federal Editorial Board meeting of *Labour History*. A number of major decisions were made at these meetings. Firstly Janis Bailey, Dale Jacobsen and myself have been appointed by the Editorial Board to edit the thematic "red-green" edition of *Labour History* in November 2010.

Another decision relates to the Federal ASSLH web-page. It will be updated and branch secretaries will be "trained" to administer the web-page.

A significant event also occurred at the AGM. Terry Irving was made a Life Member of ASSLH. Terry was one of the founding members of the organisation and it is only fitting he receive such an honour. Terry has been a long-term member of the Sydney branch, and in the last number of years has also been a BLHA member. The BLHA congratulates him on this honour.

### **“Power to the People: Legacies of 1968”, University of Wollongong Conference**

In September I attended a conference at the University of Wollongong on the “politics” of 1968. The conference was partly organised by the Illawarra Branch of ASSLH and had some funding from the University. It was an excellent conference but I was disappointed that a number of 1960s activists from Brisbane and Melbourne did not know about it and would have liked to attend. I raised this at the Federal level and it was decided that I become the Federal Branch Liaison Officer. Part of my job will be to make sure all branches are aware of such activities. As stated before, when the Federal web-page is up and running, this will make the job a lot easier.

### **New Executive and Thanks**

At the AGM, Ted Riethmuller stood down as Treasurer and hence has left the BLHA Executive. Ted was made

a Life Member in 2006. The BLHA thanks Ted for all his work as Secretary and Treasurer over the years. Ted has assured us that he will be available for various jobs. With a number of activities to occur in the next 15 months, the Executive will be calling on Ted, particularly for his expert help on photographs. Jason Stein takes over as Treasurer and Andrew Martin has been elected to the Executive. I wish them well in their new jobs.

Lastly I must thank the old Executive for making 2008 a rewarding year and in particular Dale Jacobsen for her excellent work as Secretary, the putting together and editing of Newsletters, e-bulletins and the Journal. I would particularly like to thank her for getting the Woodford events happening and making them such a great success.

\* \* \* \*

# In Memoriam

Maureen Frances Watson  
1931–2009



From 'Portraits of Australian Aborigines, 1981-1984' / photographed by Penny Tweedie. Copyright ownership is acknowledged from the State Library of NSW, Sydney

On the fourth day of the New Year, Australia lost one of its most respected Aboriginal women — Auntie Maureen

Watson: tireless educator and campaigner for the rights of her people; gifted and passionate performer on stage and film; poet, author and playwright; children's author; beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother and recognised Murri elder in south-east Queensland.

Born in Rockhampton in central Queensland on 9 November 1931 of Birri Gubba descent, Maureen was brought up in the Dawson Valley, her mother's Kungulu country.

She was a dux of her school, an all-round sports person and brilliant horse rider, but her scholarship year came to an abrupt end with a bad horse fall. So, as a teenager, she worked beside her father, becoming skilled at shooting kangaroos, trapping dingoes, mustering, droving and branding cattle, picking cotton, planting seed crops, driving tractors and bulldozers.

At 21 she married Harold Bayles, a Wakka Wakka man from Eidsvold, and in 1970 Maureen, with their family of five children, moved to Brisbane. She joined the fledgling Aboriginal



rights movement and commenced an arts degree at the University of Queensland.

Her experiences of growing up in a home where her family and visitors talked of politics, culture, spirituality and social issues, and her own innate story-telling ability, prepared her well for the rest of her life. She was popular and highly-respected by non-indigenous as well as Aboriginal Australians, and showed her strong sense of justice by confronting bullies, discrimination and injustice wherever she saw it.

Maureen was a founding member of Indigenous organisations that include Radio Redfern and the Aboriginal People's Gallery. She attended the first National Aboriginal Theatre Workshop in Sydney and a Black Film-makers course. Her first collection of stories and poems, *Black Reflections*, was published in 1982. She went on to produce six more poetry anthologies, one children's book and one picture book. She has performed and taught in many venues, from major festivals to local schools and arts organisations.

She was at the forefront of Aboriginal protests against the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane in 1982, facing arrest during demonstrations. In 1996 she was awarded the Australia Council Red Ochre award in recognition of her national and international contribution towards recognition of Aboriginal arts. Also, she received the inaugural United

Nations Association Global Leadership Prize for her outstanding work towards building cross-cultural understanding and harmony.

Maureen worked with "Sisters Inside", a support group for women in prison. She was a qualified and experienced Neuro-Linguistic Programming counsellor.

Her son, Tiga Bayles, spoke at the very moving ceremony to celebrate the life of Maureen Frances Watson. His words of her intense spiritual connection to the Land were a fitting tribute to this feisty, wise, beautiful, intelligent, creative and strong Black woman.

*..she taught us to look past the racism, injustice, lies and greed. She taught us to look past those things — to look for the goodness inherent in every person. The goodness we all share when we dream of clean air and water, as the essential birthright of every child, regardless of race, colour, creed or country ... how all of us, individually, collectively and globally — can empower ourselves to become honourable ancestors to our future generations by bequeathing them a healthy Mother Earth.*

12 January 2009, Murri School, Acacia Ridge, Brisbane.

**Sheryl Gwyther**

(<http://sherylgwyther.wordpress.com>)

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# Female of the Species

By Auntie Maureen Watson

Whoever said I can't fly?  
Why, Sisters, I can – can't I  
Whoever said, that because I'm a girl,  
I'd be moulded and scolded by a sexist world.  
Told me I could only be a mother,  
Said I could never do things like my brother.  
Well, here's mud in your eye,  
'Cause Sisters, I can-can't I?  
Why, Sisters, you told me, I could be free,  
Showed me I could be, what I wanted to be,  
That I need never be left on the shelf.  
Why, I can spread my wings and fly away,  
From the depths, to the heights any night, any day.  
Why, the whole world is within my reach,  
I can learn or I can teach,  
Why, I can dig ditches or write professorial theses,  
'Cause me-why, I'm the female of the species.  
And I've rewritten the story of the power and glory,  
The wonder of being, the joy of seeing.  
In every direction, my reflection,  
In a million women's faces,  
And I've found my place in a million different places,  
For a human being, the female version.  
And you know what?  
It couldn't have happened to a nicer person,  
'Cause I like what I see, when I look at me,  
And I don't have to be, what I use to be,  
I can be whatever I choose to be.  
So you can throw out your book on your sexist theses,  
'Cause me, why, I'm the female of the species.

\* \* \* \*

## Eva's Story

### Connie Healy

My friend Eva Bacon was born Eva Goldner into a poor Jewish family in Vienna, Austria, on 1 October 1909; her mother was from the Czech lands and her father was a Talmudic scholar from Hungary.<sup>1</sup> After attending a trade school in Vienna she became highly trained in her profession as dress designer, cutter and dressmaker. She established her own business working from her flat. She died in Brisbane on 23 July 1994 aged 84 years. Her long

life spanned some of the most important historical events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: she lived through two world wars, the world economic depression, the rise of fascism in Europe, and the occupation of her own country, Austria, by Nazi invaders. All these events influenced her social and political viewpoint throughout her life.

Youthful Eva became a militant activist after 1934 when she joined the underground anti-fascist resistance after the Austrian chancellor, Dollfuss, seized power and attempted to crush



Eva Goldner third from right, front, at trade college in Vienna circa 1922. Photo from the Bacon family collection.



Eva Goldner in Vienna 1930. Photo Connie Healy.

the Viennese workers' movement. In March 1938 Hitler drove into Vienna and annexed Austria. As a leftist and activist, and a Jew (although an atheist from her teens), it became an urgent necessity for her to leave the country as the campaign of terror orchestrated by the Nazis against Jews escalated in intensity. Her boy-friend E... left to go to England, and her two brothers John and Fred, both in a dance band, were fortunately touring South America. Eva sent a message to them saying that she would try to follow her friend E... to London and then to Australia,

and that her brothers should join them and her mother in Australia.<sup>2</sup> After travelling through France, Eva and her mother arrived in London to be met by E.... Eva booked a passage to Australia for herself and her mother, with E... to follow. But his ship never sailed; the ship that brought Eva to Australia was the last to leave its shores. The British government commandeered all subsequent passenger ships for the war effort. So Eva was separated from her great love, something she never forgot. She corresponded with him and met



Eva with her two brothers, John and Fred (Freddy) Goldner in 1936 in Vienna, Austria. Photo from the Bacon family collection.

him again in 1952 as she passed through London on an overseas delegation.

I met Eva for the first time at the home of Florence Callaghan (whose husband was a Brisbane Land Court judge). She had an interest in international and Australian culture, particularly working-class culture. I was attending a musical evening along with other members of Unity Theatre, a left-wing group. I was looking through the doorway to the verandah and saw an attractive, dark-haired young woman of rather unusual appearance. She was seated next to Ted Bacon, a theatre member that I knew. On enquiring from

my companion who she was, he told me that she and her mother were Jewish refugees who had recently arrived in Australia having fled from Austria, following the occupation of Hitler's armies: an occupation welcomed by the Austrian government. I was introduced and spoke to her briefly. The year was 1939.

The following year I was working at the Commonwealth Bank, Queen Street. I stepped out one lunch hour to be accosted by Eva. She told me that she was working at Penneys Emporium up the street and asked me to join a women's fitness group that she had



Eva Goldner, second from left, with colleagues at Penneys circa 1941. Photo from the Bacon family collection.

started on the roof of that building. I was more interested in playing sport, but Eva had a very persuasive manner and I was won over. For some time the group exercised and developed not only a gym routine but also friendships, until our little club broke up. Years later I met Eva in quite different circumstances. I was a young widow walking down Adelaide Street. (I had married my Unity Theatre companion who had joined the air force to help defeat fascism. He was killed when his plane was shot down over Belgium in 1944.) I remember to this day Eva's expression of sympathy at this time for my loss. Eventually the friendship commenced in these brief encounters, grew into a deep and lasting friendship when, again by chance, we became neighbours in a housing estate in Enoggera, Brisbane.

Eva joined the Communist Party after her marriage to Ted Bacon in 1944. She had met Ted after she went to a performance by Unity Theatre of *Till the Day I Die*, a play with a strong anti-fascist message, in which Ted played a leading role. The people she met in the theatre were, she said, 'interested in what was happening in Europe and were ready to speak out against atrocities' and this fitted in with her beliefs. Shortly after Eva married Ted (then State Secretary of the Queensland CPA) and their daughter Barbara's birth in 1946, Eva and Ted moved to live in Enoggera. They were already settled into their house when Mick and I



Eva and Ted Bacon with daughter Barbara (born 1946). Photo from the Bacon family collection.

moved to another housing commission home not far from their residence. I had married Mick Healy (waterside worker and Trades & Labor Council Secretary for 10 years) and we now had a baby son, Jim, when we moved to Enoggera. We found we were almost back-to-back with Eva and Ted. We commuted over the fence (we built a stile), our children played together and we talked, laughed and worked together.

A branch of the Communist Party was set up in Enoggera. Eva and I took responsibility for the local area. We participated in the many campaigns of the post-war era. We held cottage



meetings in our homes, with speakers dealing with social issues. We canvassed the area with leaflets and for sales of the Communist press, the *Guardian*, and over a period became well known to many people.

In 1950 the Union of Australian Women (UAW) was formed in Brisbane as a result of activity of women in many organisations — the Queensland Housewives' League providing the nucleus of a membership which included women from the Queensland Women's Peace Movement, working women and those in the early women's auxiliaries of the Trades and Labour Council and other trade union women's committees. A foundation member of the UAW, Eva was at one time state secretary, president, national committee member and Enoggera branch activist.<sup>3</sup>

Eva was attracted to the UAW because its aims coincided with her own ideology: to fight injustice; to improve the status of women in society; to struggle for peace; to help improve living conditions and concentrate on the needs of children. Through her extensive friendships with women in the area of Enoggera, this local network of women came together to form a branch of the UAW, under her leadership, that gradually extended to neighbouring suburbs. A talented pianist and craftswoman, Eva was the guiding force of the group which met in the local RSL hall in Enoggera to do crafts, discuss current issues and

organise activities around central campaigns.<sup>4</sup>

In 1952 Eva returned to Vienna as a UAW delegate to an International Women's Conference for the Defence of Children, a world conference organised by the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). This was the first international conference in which the UAW had participated. Eva was accompanied by a member of the Enoggera branch, Jessie Ferguson, a music teacher, who paid her own way. I looked after young Barbara (now of school age) during her absence. They returned to enthuse the local Queensland organisation about what they had learnt overseas. Eva was overwhelmed to return to the city of her birth and from which she had escaped. She was deeply affected personally to discover the tragedies that had occurred there amongst many of her close friends during the terrible war years.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the world, International Women's Day (IWD) has been observed since the early 1900s, a time of great expansion and turbulence in the industrialised world that saw booming population growth and the rise of radical ideologies. In 1908, 15,000 women garment workers marched through New York City demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights, and in 1910, at a Socialist International meeting in Copenhagen, over 100 women from 17 countries unanimously agreed to the proposal for establishing



an International Women's Day on 8 March to honour women's rights and to assist in achieving universal suffrage for women.

The day was first celebrated in Sydney, Australia, in 1928, organised by the Militant Women's Movement (MWM) calling for equal pay for equal work and other demands. In 1929, in Brisbane, a social and dance was organised by MWM marking Brisbane's first IWD. Shortly after her arrival in Brisbane in 1939, on the invitation of a woman friend, Eva went to an IWD function at a meeting hall near Atcherley House. Prior to this, she had never heard of International Women's Day. Her friend, Marjorie, announced that Eva had recently escaped from Vienna and would speak of her experiences to the gathering. With great trepidation and faltering English, Eva spoke — a rather terrifying introduction to International Women's Day. But it was not until 1951 that the UAW held its first International Women's Day celebrations as part of a well-attended quarterly meeting.<sup>6</sup> The UAW continued its role as main organiser for IWD celebrations in Brisbane.

In 1954 Eva became the IWD Organising-Secretary of a broad committee until 1974. The Brisbane IWD committee adopted specific themes for their activities which sometimes linked to other public activities such as Under Fives Week, concentrating on the needs of children.

They organised luncheons and concerts which consistently involved Aboriginal women and also raised their demands and problems.<sup>7</sup>

1957 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of white women exercising their right to vote in Queensland. Legislation passed in 1905 resulted in the first election in 1907. The basement of the Town Hall was packed for a display of photos, documents, posters and crafts. Jessie Street, three women who had voted in May 1907, an Aboriginal woman, and others addressed 300 people emphasising the themes of the day, such as unity for equality, world peace and the happiness of children.

IWD activities in Australia in the 1960s saw an increasing number of visits of international delegates. For example, in 1960, as national co-ordinator and organiser of the IWD tour, Eva welcomed visitors from China, Madam Chao Feng from the National Women's Federation of China and Madame Roesijati R. Sukardi, a journalist from the Indonesian Women's Organisation who were attending meetings from Sydney to Perth.

Out of a growing recognition that the full and equal participation of women was essential to world development and peace, the United Nations declared 1975 "International Women's Year". In the same year, the Federal government held its first inquiry into the status of women to which 200 women's groups

made submissions. However, the focal point of the year was a United Nations International Conference held in Mexico City which adopted a world plan of action for improving the situation of women. They called for the period 1976–1985 to be proclaimed by the UN as the decade for women in which the World Plan of Action could be implemented. These conference recommendations on the plan of action were endorsed. At this conference in Mexico City, the UN sponsored the convention of official government representatives, but there was also a Tribune for other individuals and groups.<sup>8</sup> Having played such a key role in IWD over the years, Eva was the logical choice for selection by the International Women's Year Advisory Committee to attend the IWD Tribune in Mexico City. It was a signal honour as she was the only Queenslander to attend the Tribune. In looking back over her life, she confided that her selection and attendance at the UN International conference in Mexico represented “the pinnacle of my career”.<sup>9</sup>

The Women's Liberation movement of the 1960s and 70s has received world-wide media attention as the birth of “feminism”. Eva gave tribute to the Women's Liberation movement, saying that — ‘It was Women's Lib which had the insight to define that “the personal is political” — to define how inequality of the sexes permeates all facets of society’.

However, she recognised that IWD had much wider appeal. It introduced thousands more women throughout Australia to the feminist movement, bringing together far more diverse strands than existed in the Women's Liberation movement.<sup>10</sup>

In her history of Queensland's IWD celebrations, she wrote:

The UAW'S aim was to restore the Day to its intended purpose of rallying working-class women and promoting consciousness of their double oppression as women and as members of the working class.<sup>11</sup>

It was mainly for this reason that she saw organisation around the day as her primary focus.

Today, in Australia, many women's organizations and governments now observe IWD annually on 8 March. From small beginnings, International Women's Day is now an official holiday in many countries. In some countries the day has equivalent status to Mother's Day, a much-advertised day in this country, where children give small presents to their mothers and grandmothers. Great changes have taken place regarding attitudes to women in the last decades so that now women can have real choices, equal rights and job opportunities (unfortunately not world wide). But not all the battles of the past have been won for women.



Eva Bacon, on the right, carries the UAW banner during the 1979 May Day march. Photo Doug Eaton.

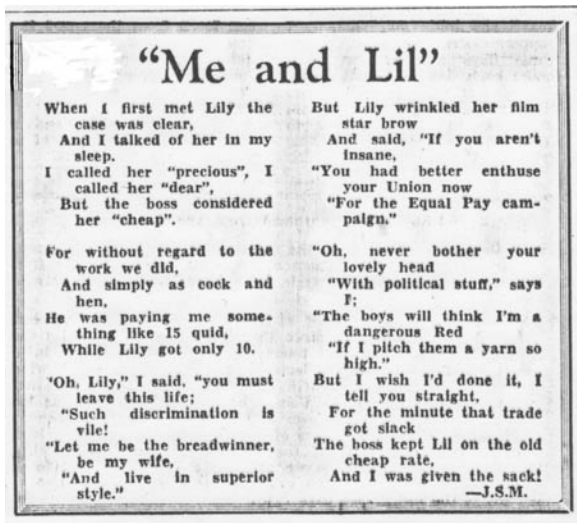
Like many migrants to this country, Eva chose Australia and then proceeded to make a life for herself here. She was always grateful that she and her family had found a haven. This fact and the circumstances of her lucky escape from fascism, led her to overcome great obstacles to reach acceptance by the Australian community. After a very tragic beginning she reached out to help others. The secret of her ready acceptance in the community, despite her known political viewpoint, her sex and her Jewish origins, was her preparedness to accept and work with people of other views and backgrounds. 'One of her great qualities was her humanitarianism'.<sup>12</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed to me by a friend who had not seen Eva for some time. She wrote to me after Eva's death saying that she had 'many memories of her strong convictions, insight, courage and caring for the needs of others'. It is hoped that Eva's life and work for

women's equality and recognition and the work of her predecessors in the women's movement will not be forgotten.

### Endnotes

- 1 *The Australian*, Friday August 5 1994, p. 18. Obituary Laurie Aarons.
- 2 *The Australian*, *ibid.* One of Eva's brothers arrived in Australia prior to Eva and her mother's arrival and was working as a musician. He assisted their entry to the country.
- 3 Pam Young, preface, Sue Pechey, Crow's Nest, Qld. *Daring to take a stand: the story of the Union of Australian Women in Queensland*, Wavell Heights, Qld, 1998.
- 4 Rachel Shotet, *Sun Magazine*, "From War Horrors to Women's Rights", 16 July 1989, p. 17.
- 5 *Ibid.* And conversations with the author.
- 6 Pam Young, *ibid.*, pp. 122–123.
- 7 Joyce Stevens, *A History of International Women's Day in words and images. The nineteen Fifties and Sixties*, pp. 5–6 IWD Australia.
- 8 Susan Hocking, *The Sunday Mail*, March 10 1985, p. 37 and Joyce Stevens, *ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Joyce Stevens, *ibid.*
- 11 Eva Bacon, *International Women's Day, Twenty-six Years of International Women's Day*, p. 3. For more detailed information on IWD see the Eva Bacon Collection, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.
- 12 *Green Left Weekly* No 155, 17 August 1994. Eulogy by J McIlroy at Eva Bacon's memorial gathering. (Quoting Warren Bowden).

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John Manifold wrote this poem in support of the Equal Wage Campaign. This is how it appeared in the March–May 1962 edition of *Our Women* – newsletter of the UAW. With thanks to Doug Eaton, who performed as a member of the Bandicoots.



The author: John Manifold. Photo courtesy Doug Eaton.

# **The Great Sex Education Pamphlet Scandal of 1971**

**Katrina Barben**

On Tuesday 28 September 1971 members of the Women's Liberation Movement handed out copies of a pamphlet entitled *Sexuality and Education*. They distributed it to young women high school students leaving State High, Somerville House, St Margaret's and Clayfield College. The pamphlet contained as much information about reproduction, female sexuality, masturbation and contraception (with diagrammatic illustrations) as could be fitted on two sides of a foolscap sheet. It was produced and distributed as part of a campaign for sex education in schools. At the time, Jo Bjelke-Petersen was Premier of Queensland, John Gorton was Prime Minister of Australia, and Richard Nixon was President of the USA.

There was a huge upsurge of demand for fundamental change in Australia — against the Vietnam War, for human rights for Aboriginal people, and against the oppression of women — but this has not yet achieved significant results. The establishment fought back with distortion, trivialisation and demonisation, resorting to legal sanctions and state violence when these failed.

Throughout 1970 and 1971 there was sporadic public discussion about whether sex education should be introduced into Queensland schools. Advocates pointed to the 11% rate of “illegitimate” births in Queensland and opponents argued, basically, that giving young people information about sex would only encourage them.

The extent of social change since, including access to the internet, makes it difficult to comprehend the degree of ignorance among young women at that time. One indicator is that university students' organisations were beginning to provide basic information about sex to students — the best educated and most privileged young people — at orientation. (They were criticised for doing so.)

Not only was there no sex education in schools, but also access to birth control was often difficult. Many general practitioners and pharmacists refused to prescribe or sell contraceptives, even to married people. In the same week as the *Sexuality and Education* pamphlet was distributed, the state central executive of the Country Party (later the National Party) defeated a proposal to legalise vasectomy as a contraceptive measure. Access to abortion was expensive and problematic. A series of stories in the media during the period reported on the Victorian enquiry into police corruption in relation to abortions in that State, as a result of a campaign by Dr Bertram Wainer and others.

In September 1971, Queensland was still coming to terms with the South African Rugby tour of Australia by the Springboks. The Queensland Government's action in declaring a state of emergency to prevent disruption by anti-racist protestors was still being criticised internationally. What a relief it must have been for members of this government to be able to divert attention to an attack on Women's Liberation!

### **The Media Attacks the Pamphlet**

A *Courier-Mail* story on Friday 1 October reported that parents were "up in arms". There was talk of vigilante patrols to guard high schools. The *Courier-Mail* editorial the next day accused activists of "making sex a dirty word" and called for legislation to criminalise any further distribution of the pamphlet. Most published letters to the editor on the subject were hostile, typically expressing "shock at the whole tone of the thing" by those who had read the pamphlet, and more generalised outrage by those who had not seen it, but knew it was a bad thing anyway. In retrospect, one might hypothesise that what had really upset people was the discussion of the functions of the clitoris, although this word would not have been printed in newspapers at the time.

Erica Parker, a columnist with the *Telegraph*, Brisbane's afternoontabloid, joined the attack on the pamphlet. She also reported being asked to leave a

Women's Liberation meeting. (The pamphlet had given the times and venues of meetings and invited any interested women to attend, which may indicate that the group did not anticipate the full extent of the reaction.) Gabby Horan, a popular talkback radio host, used her weekday morning program to orchestrate indignation, and hung up on a lone caller from the group as soon as she identified herself. Readers who remember Brisbane in that period will recall Ms Parker and Ms Horan for their unflinching support of the status quo.

### **PMG and Parliament Demand Action**

The *Sunday Mail* of 3 October reported an interview with Merle Thornton, who said: 'If they don't like our stuff let them produce better'. She stated that Women's Liberation would "continue the campaign to ensure that girls received 'an adequate sex education'." The same article quoted a representative of the Liberal Party Women's Council who said that "Women's Lib." had gone too far and "must be sternly dealt with", and who called on the Postmaster-General to cancel the group's post office box. He must have been listening, because PO Box 175, North Quay was cancelled effective from Friday 1 October, with any mail to be returned to senders. His staff might not have been so alert, though, because mail was collected from the box the following Monday morning.



**SIDE TODAY**  
 Development, Dept. 2  
 The View, Page 3  
 The View, Page 3  
 The View, Page 3  
 The View, Page 3

# The Courier-Mail

**TODAY'S WEATHER**  
 Brisbane, Queensland, N.S.W.  
 Today's Forecast: Partly cloudy, with a shower or two in the afternoon.  
 Temperature: 65-75 F.  
 Wind: Light to moderate, variable.  
 Humidity: 60-70%.

**BRISBANE HOME EDITION**

BRISBANE, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1971

## COMPLAINTS ON SEX PAMPHLETS FOR STUDENTS

PARENTS were up in arms yesterday over women's liberation pamphlets handed to young high school girls this week.

Dr. F. J. O'Connell, who is the director of the Queensland Department of Education, said that the pamphlets were distributed to girls in the 10th and 11th years of school. He said that the pamphlets were distributed to girls in the 10th and 11th years of school.

**'Seen unhappy results'**  
 The Queensland Department of Education has received a number of complaints from parents about the distribution of sex pamphlets to their daughters. The department has received a number of complaints from parents about the distribution of sex pamphlets to their daughters.

**Pamphlet 'sheer filth'**  
 A number of parents have expressed their concern about the distribution of sex pamphlets to their daughters. They have expressed their concern about the distribution of sex pamphlets to their daughters.

**The Courier-Mail**  
 Our Liberty depends on the Freedom of the Press, and that cannot be limited without being destroyed.

**Porn boo**  
 A number of parents have expressed their concern about the distribution of sex pamphlets to their daughters. They have expressed their concern about the distribution of sex pamphlets to their daughters.

Many parents and others are concerned at the spread and growing acceptance, even acquisition, of books and pamphlets which may fairly be described as pornographic. They have every right and justification to be concerned. But equal danger lies in a reaction which could become repressive.

The preposterous behaviour of the so-called Women's Liberation Movement in Brisbane warrants stern measures to prevent

## POLICE RAID RED HEADQUARTERS

### Sex pamphlets find

POLICE late yesterday afternoon raided the Brisbane headquarters of the Communist Party. They seized copies of the sex pamphlets handed to schoolgirls last week.

They took possession of 285 completed pamphlets and 25 uncompleted copies. The police had to search without

## 'Vigilante' threat by irate parents

PARENTS yesterday threatened "vigilante" action to prevent further distribution of Women's Lib. movement sex pamphlets to Brisbane school children.

Some authorities and schools said yesterday that the idea of parents' guard rooms had been suggested in school principals.

Many parents — both men and women — have offered their services to the schools as guards.

A Parents and Citizens' committee has been formed over the matter of the distribution of sex pamphlets to school children. The committee has been formed over the matter of the distribution of sex pamphlets to school children.

**'Horrid'**  
 The distribution of sex pamphlets to school children has been described as "horrid" by many parents. They have described it as "horrid" by many parents.

**'Indecent'**  
 The distribution of sex pamphlets to school children has been described as "indecent" by many parents. They have described it as "indecent" by many parents.

**'Wide open'**  
 The distribution of sex pamphlets to school children has been described as "wide open" by many parents. They have described it as "wide open" by many parents.

**Prostitution**  
 The distribution of sex pamphlets to school children has been described as "prostitution" by many parents. They have described it as "prostitution" by many parents.

**N.Z. visa protester to leave**  
 A New Zealand visa protester has been ordered to leave the country. He has been ordered to leave the country.

**Two wro**  
 Two women have been involved in a dispute. They have been involved in a dispute.

## Govt. to move on child obscenity

The Government is taking a new step in its campaign against child pornography. It is taking a new step in its campaign against child pornography.

On Monday 4 October, Ann Doggett, speaking for Women's Liberation, said that it might stop using the pamphlet in its sex education campaign, and the next day it was announced that "a closed meeting of the movement was to be held at a private address to decide on future policy". That week, both Government and Labor Opposition members of the Queensland Parliament demanded action. There was talk of prosecuting the women who had distributed the pamphlet, and also the University of Queensland Press if it could be proved that they had printed it. The matter was referred to the Literature Board of Review, but banning the pamphlet presented difficulties, because this would not cover pamphlets which were similar but not identical. Later that week, Parliament discussed introducing a Bill "to penalise those who contributed to the delinquency of minors".

Women's Liberation produced a second pamphlet, *Why Women's Liberation published that pamphlet*. This was sent to women's organisations, parents and citizens' groups, the Education Department and Members of Parliament, and distributed at teachers' colleges. It referred to the number of "illegal" abortions, the rate of "illegitimate" births and the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections in young people. It asserted that a focus on the mechanics of reproduction was not enough, because 'sex also serves the function of pleasure', and spoke of

possible health issues for women as a result of consistent lack of orgasm. The pamphlet concluded that the reaction to the first pamphlet was 'an explicit admission that this society will not easily relinquish its control over women and their bodies, nor allow one of its prime socializing agents, the school system, to be so easily subverted'.

Erica Parker attacked this pamphlet too, while ignoring most of the content. She triumphantly pointed out that the contact phone number given was that of *Semper Floreat*. (Well, did she think that people would provide their home numbers for contact?) Another news story alleged that the University of Queensland Student Union had provided funding (of \$20) to Women's Liberation.

### **Licensing Squad Raids Communist Party Rooms**

On the afternoon of Friday 8 October police from the Licensing Squad raided the Brisbane rooms of the Communist Party, and seized copies of the pamphlet as well as the plates which had been used to print it. This was reported on the front page of the *Courier-Mail* the next day ("Police Raid Red Headquarters"). Women's Liberation was, if possible, further discredited.

However, on the same day, the *Courier-Mail* carried an editorial which concluded that 'it would be a retrograde step if this and other issues were used as a blank cheque



for sweeping censorship'. A few days later, on 12 October, the Queensland Teachers' Union called for a "properly balanced" program of sex education (while at the same time condemning "extremist attitudes").

After that, the story disappeared — it had, after all, run its nine-day course. But one also has the impression that some individuals re-collected themselves and decided that they did not want to be accessories to a further backward step — people were already making jokes about turning watches back 100 years when they came to Queensland.

No prosecutions eventuated and no special legislation was enacted. However, as predicted in the second pamphlet, Queensland's civil liberties became weaker and weaker. Shortly afterwards, Dr Bertram Wainer moved to Queensland to practice as a general practitioner — one more doctor in Queensland willing to prescribe contraceptives.

The role of the Communist Party in printing the leaflet reflects the nature of alliances at that time. The Women's Liberation Movement met in the Ann Street rooms of the Union of Australian Women, whose advocacy for women's rights led them to support the group. One member of the group worked at *Semper Floreat* and the young women who handed out the leaflet were university students. "Students" had

been identified by the media as central to such dangerous and subversive activities as the Vietnam Moratoriums, resistance to National Service and advocacy of the rights of Aboriginal people. The Communist Party of Australia had by that time distanced itself from the USSR and supported progressive movements in the wider community.

In reflecting on this eventful couple of weeks in 1971, I am struck by two things: how courageous and straight talking those pamphlets were! and how interesting it is that there were no reports of the reactions of the young women who received the first pamphlet. It seems unlikely that they really were traumatised. I imagine them as being empowered and delightedly amused.

*Oh to live dangerously again  
Handbags stuffed with illegal lit ...*

- Dorothy Hewitt, *Rapunzel in Suburbia*

\* \* \* \*

*"Women in Politics -  
Past, Present and Future"*

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✕

Address by

ALICE HUGHES

for the

Union of Australian Women (Qld)

on

*International Womens Day*

8 March, 1996

BRISBANE

# **A Commitment to Peace: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Queensland**

**By Tanya Negerevich**

As Queensland commemorates its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009, so too can be celebrated the invaluable role of groups and organisations that have contributed towards the emergence of peace, justice and social equality throughout the state's history. In particular, the enduring efforts of peace activists, and the organisations they have represented over the years, can be recognised as an important element of Queensland's social tapestry since its earliest days, allowing for the emergence of a social conscience and the establishment of vital infrastructure and services intended to aid all members of the Queensland community. Focussing upon the important work of such organisations, this article will examine, in particular, the role of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) as an organisation pursuing peace and justice in Queensland, highlighting the significant contribution it has made towards the enrichment of the state's social and political environment since its conception. Specifically, the history of the organisation will be explored, in addition to the notable efforts made by its members as well as other peace

activists associated with WILPF and the wider peace and justice movement in Queensland. Examination of these areas will reveal the extent to which such groups, along with those individuals who have contributed towards their development and maintenance, have played an important role in shaping the political, economic and social landscape of Queensland throughout its history.

## **The Formation of WILPF and its Goals**

From the time of its formation as an international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in 1915, WILPF has worked towards empowering women of different social, economic and political backgrounds, in the hope of achieving peace, disarmament and social justice globally.<sup>1</sup> Emerging as a result of The International Congress of Women, which gathered in The Hague (The Netherlands) in the context of World War I, WILPF developed as a forum for the collaboration of women from different countries, joining together in an expression of opposition to war and conflict.<sup>2</sup> The primary goal of WILPF's activities subsequently focussed upon ending the atrocities of war and finding ways through which to prevent its future emergence. This goal has remained with WILPF since 1915, with the aim of exploring and challenging the underlying causes of war and conflict, providing a

foundation upon which to base its activities globally.

Significantly, the political ideology underpinning WILPF and its activities can be recognised as emanating from the philosophy of “women’s peace activism”, which provides an alternate approach to the achievement of peace and justice, pursued through feminist principles. In basing its core values upon such ideology, it has been claimed, WILPF has provided a useful framework through which to enable women to operate outside the given paradigm of mainstream society, and rather, attempt to pursue peace and justice through alternate, and perhaps more abstract (and ultimately more effective) means.<sup>3</sup> Importantly, whilst women’s peace activism embraces mainstream approaches that attempt to pursue peace and justice, advocating the need to foster cooperation and integration between states and their citizens, women’s peace activism additionally recognises the problematic nature of an international order dominated by patriarchal ideology, and in particular, its propensity for war and conflict.<sup>4</sup> As such, women’s peace activism, as pursued through organisations such as WILPF, refers to the participation of women in public affairs in order to encourage the promotion of feminist principles identified as being conducive to the emergence of peace and justice.<sup>5</sup> This is based upon the belief that an alternative approach to peace, pursued through

feminist principles, represents another means through which to overcome the emergence of war and conflict globally, with the goals of sustaining humanity, ensuring basic human needs, promoting human dignity and the preservation of human rights. This alternative approach ensures protection from preventable harm and underpins the ideology of women’s peace activism.<sup>6</sup>

In founding itself upon such a philosophical and political platform, WILPF has gained increasing support worldwide and developed exponentially as an organisation, building ties with such international institutions as the United Nations (UN) and its agencies,<sup>7</sup> along with numerous NGOs operating in the international environment. It has also been successful in establishing itself throughout 45 countries worldwide, opening sections and offering its services in states as diverse as Palestine and Sierra Leone.<sup>8</sup>

### **WILPF in Queensland**

In Queensland, WILPF can trace its origins to the establishment of a branch in Rockhampton in 1920, facilitated in large part by the efforts of a Quaker<sup>9</sup> and women’s peace activist, Felicia Hopkins. Like other peace organisations such as WILPF’s predecessor, the Sisterhood of International Peace (SIP)<sup>10</sup> and also the Women’s Peace Army (WPA),<sup>11</sup> WILPF developed in direct response to the onset of World War I and represented a commitment

by its members to the opposition of war and violence.<sup>12</sup> The atrocities of war, including the mass casualty rate of soldiers and civilians, as well as the development and introduction of more advanced weaponry and technology capable of achieving military objectives more effectively, brought the reality of ceaseless killing to the fore of the peace movement at the time. It was in this context that groups such as WILPF capitalised on the anti-war sentiment that was so prevalent, calling upon women to condemn the violence which continued to rage, and unite together to ensure the cessation of hostilities and the return of fathers, sons and brothers to their families.<sup>13</sup>

Women such as Felicia Hopkins were particularly successful in garnering support for the women's peace movement and using the unstable and hysterical war climate to encourage increased membership in peace organisations.<sup>1415</sup> Through promoting rhetoric which encouraged the need for peace to ensure stability and the well-being of Australian women and children in particular, Felicia Hopkins, and others like her, worked to establish vital infrastructure and services to allow for support to be provided for those affected by war. Prompted fundamentally by her strong Christian faith, Felicia's efforts in peace activism involved facilitating the settlement of new migrants in the Rockhampton area in addition to aiding her husband in the establishment of a home for orphan



*Felicia Hopkins*

Felicia Hopkins. From "Widening Horizons: the YWCA in Queensland 1888-1988" by Aline Gillespie, Brisbane: YWCA Inc, 1995.

children.<sup>16</sup> Her activities through WILPF also involved her work in providing suitable accommodation and support for young women migrants who faced particular challenges in the new colony, assisting them in their settlement in Australia.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, following the influx of migrants to Australia throughout the wartime period, Felicia's activities also included undertaking efforts to resist the strict limitations imposed upon Australian society as a result of the White Australia Policy, through which those considered to exist outside the acceptable standards of culture and ethnicity risked deportation as a result of their perceived inferiority.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the efforts of such women as Felicia Hopkins and other peace

activists however, the wider peace movement faced significant obstacles in relation to the unstable and chaotic war climate. As Patsy Adam-Smith has noted:

In Australia, the war brought hard, inhumane, hysterical times. There was draconian censorship [as well as] personal and political threats [made] to all who spoke out, published and distributed their views for peace.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, opposition also came from within, where many organisations, supposedly working towards the

achievement of peace and social justice, advocated war as a means through which to cement Australian identity and defend the values and principles that were perceived as vital in forming the country's idealistic foundations.<sup>20</sup>

However, despite such obstacles faced, the women's peace movement continued with organisations such as WILPF, despite limited membership in its sections (including that in Rockhampton), continuing to operate with relative success. In particular, the role of Felicia Hopkins, as a key figure in the organisation, allowed it to successfully form regular meetings



WILPF Qld perform a skit about women's anti-war activities in WW1 Queensland. Photo from WILPF archives.

and distribute literature regarding peace and issues pertaining to women's peace activism, in addition to allowing for members to pursue anti-militarist activities in response to the continuing atrocities of war.<sup>21</sup> At the national level, the Rockhampton branch of WILPF, whilst composed of a relatively small membership, was recognised as being largely successful in sustaining local interest in its work, raising awareness of issues it regarded as important, and extending the influence of the League through all possible channels.<sup>22</sup> Activities of the Rockhampton branch were also recognised as promoting the more general aims of women's peace activism in the local community, where its pursuits were recognised in the WILPF Annual Report of 1922–3, which noted that the ability of Queensland WILPF members to 'get several articles dealing with peace matters into the local papers', represented a particular success.<sup>23</sup> The tangible achievements of WILPF were also notable, with the establishment of services and infrastructure aimed at assisting those afflicted by conflict and violence, providing necessary comfort to war victims of the time.

Hence, in looking back upon the work of such women as Felicia Hopkins and others who can be acknowledged as constituting the founding generation of WILPF and similar peace organisations in Queensland, their efforts can be recognised as sustaining the peace movement in Australia in gravely

difficult and trying times. Their devotion to the cause of peace and justice and efforts in establishing vital infrastructure assisted in laying the foundations for future challenges, as were to be faced once more through the onset of a second world war which was to shortly follow.

## **WILPF's Role During World War II**

As the global environment again descended into a period of violence and instability in 1939, women's peace organisations, equipped with the knowledge and experience gained through their efforts in World War I, once more provided vital support for those affected by conflict. Their role in voicing opposition to war prevailed as a significant force condemning the violence and atrocities which resulted from the battles being fought by all involved in the conflict. However, despite the sensed need to form a solid resistance effort against the violence being witnessed, World War II once more challenged the solidity of the women's peace movement and presented obstacles for organisations such as WILPF, who remained committed to the notion that war was an evil, representing 'a horror while in progress, and afterwards a curse equally to those who win and to those who lose'.<sup>24</sup>

In particular, as Malcolm Saunders has noted, the clashing philosophies between those considered advocates



of “apparent pacifism” and “absolute pacifism” (the philosophy to which WILPF members subscribed), represented a divide in the peace movement itself, wherein the perceived need by the former to advocate a limited amount of violence in eradicating the overtly aggressive and dangerous forces of Fascist Italy, Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany, was at odds with the position of the latter.<sup>25</sup> For peace activists, and more specifically, those advocating women’s peace activism, this clash of ideas and values took its toll upon the momentum of the peace movement, affecting the ability of groups and organisations to pursue peace activities and form a solid and united resistance against war and violence.<sup>26</sup> Remarkably, in this difficult environment, WILPF remained committed to its policy of condemning conflict in all forms, and as a result of this, found itself becoming increasingly isolated from other groups purportedly advocating peace activism in Queensland and throughout Australia.<sup>27</sup> Significantly however, WILPF’s steadfast devotion to the cause of peace and justice, both in Australia and abroad, enabled it to maintain its reputation as an organisation based upon strong morals and ideals — values which prevented the organisation from collapsing, like others in the peace activist movement, amid the turmoil and chaos of the wartime climate.

Its strong philosophical and idealistic foundations did not allow for WILPF

to be spared from the challenges the wider peace movement in Australia was facing, however. Indeed, by the cessation of World War II hostilities, membership in WILPF sections throughout Australia, including its branch in Rockhampton, had declined dramatically, bringing WILPF numbers to their lowest totals ever.<sup>28</sup> Despite the problem of dwindling membership however, a committed few maintained their devotion to the peace movement, continuing their activities to ensure the prevalence of renewed peace and social justice in response to the continually evolving social and political environment.

### **Membership Revives During Vietnam War**

The persistence of the peace movement’s devoted few throughout the difficult times was rewarded by a renewal in WILPF membership following the official formation of a Queensland branch of the organisation in Brisbane in 1963. Notably, the Section’s creation at this time can be attributed to an increased interest in peace activism generally, which was, in many respects, prompted by the escalating crisis of the Vietnam War, as well as resulting from the reintroduction of conscription policies for Australians serving in the conflict zone.<sup>2930</sup> The actions of peace organisations such as WILPF, as well as other groups including Save Our Sons (SOS)<sup>31</sup> and the Youth Campaign Against Conscription



(YCAC),<sup>32</sup> can be recognised as having significant impact upon the war effort, both in Australia and abroad at this time, through which such organisations were largely successful in rousing public opposition towards involvement in Vietnam and the Government's use of conscription as a means through which to supplement troop numbers. In particular, the achievements of peace organisations operating in Queensland at the time can be acknowledged as particularly significant in terms of the added difficulties faced by those

attempting to pursue peace activism under the repressive restrictions of the Queensland Government during power at that time (Ziesak 2008).

In addition to Vietnam's influence upon the peace movement, another significant force, which can be recognised as prompting increased membership in peace organisations such as WILPF, was the development and testing of nuclear weapons and other forms of advanced military technology. Indeed, the issue of nuclear weapons, which initially came



WILPF Qld re-enact their 1960s anti-Vietnam war vigil with members who were present at the original vigil. Photo from WILPF archives.

to the fore in the Cold War years, has become an important focus of WILPF in its pro-peace campaigns since that time, where subsequent efforts of the organisation have routinely been directed towards initiatives advocating disarmament and the eradication of nuclear weaponry.<sup>3334</sup>

### **WILPF's Role in Anti-nuclear and Environment Movements**

In Queensland, WILPF has played a particularly significant role in the anti-nuclear movement over the years, where it has joined forces with other peace organisations and environmental groups in an attempt to raise public awareness in regard to the harmful effects of nuclear testing and uranium mining in Queensland and throughout the world. This has been exemplified most recently by the concern WILPF has expressed over the 2007 agreement between the Governments of Australia and the Russian Federation regarding the use of Nuclear Energy for Peaceful Purposes, where it has cited the possible misuse of uranium sources, particularly through its use to fulfil potential military purposes, as a significant point of concern.<sup>35</sup> Citing diplomatic and environmental issues which may possibly stem from the 2007 Uranium Agreement, WILPF has been a forceful actor in voicing opposition to the arrangement between the Australian and Russian Governments, as a result of which it has sought to raise public awareness, through street

theatre performances and other public demonstration activities, with regards to the potential dangers of uranium mining and misuse globally.<sup>36</sup>

WILPF has also continued its role as an instrumental component of the peace movement in Queensland through its efforts in attempting to address other environmental issues of concern: namely those dealing with climate change and the more local challenge of water and resource scarcity in Queensland. Through collaboration with other organisations, WILPF has promoted the need for more effective management of water and resources in Queensland and throughout Australia, opposing the privatisation of water resources and advocating more effective future planning strategies to allow for greater justice and equity in the distribution of vital resources. The role of WILPF and other organisations in addressing such environmental issues demonstrates the ability of these groups to effectively tackle issues of concern in response to the evolving global environment, indicating their role as vital forces in working towards the creation of more peaceful and equitable societies worldwide.<sup>37</sup>

### **Power Through Collaboration**

As a result of its foundations upon feminism, WILPF has also sought to continue its work in advancing peace and justice through the empowerment of women in Queensland and throughout Australia. Indeed, despite the obvious



WILPF Qld promote UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (including women in post-conflict redevelopment) at the UN Association Conference in Brisbane in 2008. Photo from WILPF archives.

improvements for women in most aspects of Australian society, WILPF has sought to promote the need for continued and improved gender equality in all societies globally, to allow for a further departure from the detrimental effects of absolute patriarchy and, in particular, its propensity for war and violence.<sup>38</sup> As such, through its activities, WILPF has also worked to promote women to positions of social and political dominance in Australia and throughout the globe, through which it

is hoped that interest and involvement in peace activism may be enhanced, and subsequently, issues of concern pertaining to politics, economics and other social aspects may be brought to the fore in an effort to create a more just and equitable global society. In pursuing this end, WILPF has sought to nurture its associations with other organisations seeking similar objectives in Australia and worldwide, collaborating with such groups as the Revolutionary Association of the

Women of Afghanistan (RAWA),<sup>39</sup> as well as groups operating locally throughout Queensland, including the long-established Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Just Peace (Queensland),<sup>40</sup> Soroptimists International (Brisbane City)<sup>41</sup> and Believing Women for a Culture of Peace.<sup>42</sup> The work of such organisations has been vital in ensuring the continuation of the peace movement in Queensland, as well as allowing for the continued promotion of issues relating to gender equality and other matters regarding peace and justice more generally.

The contributions of peace activists and the organisations they represent have thus proved to be an integral part of Queensland society over the years. The efforts of such groups and individuals in raising awareness in regards to important issues, and acting to enable the emergence of a more just and fair society in Queensland and throughout the wider Australian (and global) community, can be acknowledged as a vital force in shaping the political, social and economic landscape of such societies since their earliest days. For organisations such as WILPF, their work is needed now as much as ever. The issues confronting today's society require the same degree of consideration and concern as has driven peace activists of bygone eras. Happily, empirical evidence suggests that despite the outlook of future challenges, peace activism will

continue to play an important role in shaping and influencing all aspects of society, both locally and in the wider global community. It is likely that the continuing role of organisations such as WILPF in this context will be to maintain a steadfast commitment to peace; always working towards the emergence of a just and equitable global society.

## Endnotes

- 1 Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom 1915–1965*, Oxford, 1980, p. 3.
- 2 Ibid, p. 3.
- 3 Hellen Cooke, 'A WILPF Story told to the Society for Women Writers Victoria', interview conducted 14 January 2009.
- 4 Betty Reardon, Sexism and the War System, In *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies*, David Barash (ed.), New York, p. 250.
- 5 Betty Reardon, Women and Peace: Feminist Visions of Global Security, New York, p. 24.
- 6 Ibid, pp. 22–23.
- 7 WILPF was part of the first group of non-governmental organisations to be awarded consultative status with the United Nations through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1948.
- 8 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), About WILPF, accessed 22 September 2008. Available at <http://www.wilpf.org.au/>.
- 9 The global Quaker movement emerged out of England in the 17th century in the wake of great religious restlessness in Britain. Its members subscribed to the notion of "faith in action", founded

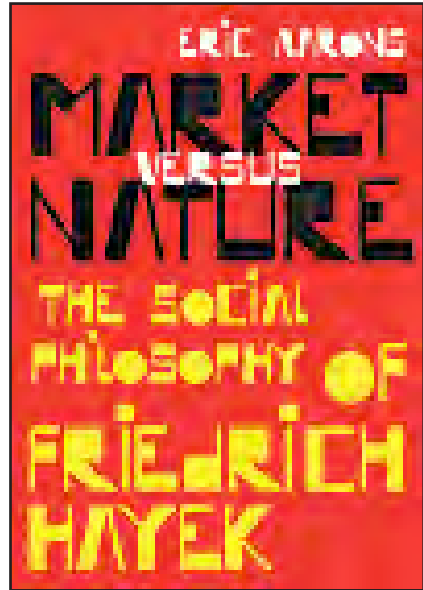
- upon the proposition that 'those who have deep concerns about the world can find support and sustenance in working towards improvements' (Quakers 2001: 1). Since the movement's introduction in Queensland in the 1860s, Quakers have remained active in the state, working in conjunction with other organisations to pursue peace, justice and equality.
- 10 The Sisterhood for Peace (SIP) was a women's peace organisation formed in Melbourne, Australia in 1915. In response to recurring instances of violence and conflict, it sought to achieve international disarmament and an end to all war. Following the participation of its key members in the *International Congress for Women* held in Zurich, Switzerland, after World War I, the organisation relinquished its former title, establishing instead an Australian branch of the newly-formed Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).
  - 11 The Women's Peace Army (WPA), establishing alongside the Sisterhood of International Peace (SIP) in 1915, was a proactive women's peace organisation which worked to mobilise Australian women to act in opposition to war and conflict. The organisation's political foundations can be recognised as emanating from socialist philosophy, wherein it attributed the onset of war to the rise of capitalism and imperialism. Despite its success and popularity throughout its early days, the WPA went into recess in 1919, following the cessation of World War I hostilities and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.
  - 12 Malcolm Saunders, 'The Early Years of the Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: 1915–49', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, vol. 82, 1996, p. 180.
  - 13 Hellen Cooke, 'A WILPF Story told to the Society for Women Writers Victoria', interview conducted 14 January 2009.
  - 14 Hellen Cooke, WILPF Australia: Heritage and History, In *A Festival of Peace: Celebrating 90 Years of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, M. Bearlin, H. Cooke and B. Meyer (eds.), Canberra, 2005, p. 3.
  - 15 Prior to her involvement with WILPF, Felicia Hopkins also played a crucial role in establishing the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Rockhampton, Queensland in 1888. The organisation aimed to create a fully inclusive world where peace, justice, freedom, human dignity, reconciliation and diversity were promoted and sustained through women's leadership. The YWCA continues to exist in Queensland and throughout Australia and the wider global community, where it liaises with other organisations to achieve its intended aims of global peace and justice.
  - 16 Ellen Jordan, 'Felicia Hopkins', accessed September 18, 2008. Available at <http://www.abd.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090364b.htm>.
  - 17 Aline Gillespie, *Widening Horizons: The YWCA in Queensland, 1888–1988*, Brisbane, 1995, p. 4.
  - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
  - 19 Cited in Hellen Cooke, WILPF Australia: Heritage and History, In *A Festival of Peace: Celebrating 90 Years of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*, M. Bearlin, H. Cooke and B. Meyer (eds.), Canberra, 2005, p. 3.
  - 20 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
  - 21 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Australian Section Report: 1919–1921, p. 1.



- 22 Ibid, p. 2.
- 23 International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Australian Section Report: 1922–1923, p. 3.
- 24 Malcolm Saunders, 'The Early Years of the Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: 1915–49', Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, vol. 82, 1996, p. 185.
- 25 Ibid, p. 185.
- 26 Ibid, p. 187.
- 27 Ibid, p. 187.
- 28 Ibid, p. 188.
- 29 Mary Ziesak, interview conducted on October 15, 2008.
- 30 Malcolm Saunders, 'The Early Years of the Australian Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: 1915–49', Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, vol. 82, 1996, p.188.
- 31 Save Our Sons (SOS) was a highly proactive anti-conscription organisation which emerged following the Australian Government's decision to re-introduce military conscription as a result of the Vietnam War in 1965. The group's activities involved staging vocal protests and demonstrations aimed at undermining support for the Government's conscription policy and raising awareness of the detrimental affects of war more generally.
- 32 The Youth Campaign Against Conscription (YCAC) was established in 1965 following the Australian Government's decision to introduce a ballot-selection conscription system to substantiate troop numbers in Vietnam. The Campaign organised protests and rallies aimed at voicing opposition to the Government's conscription policy and ultimately aimed to prompt Australia's withdrawal of forces from Vietnam.
- 33 Mary Ziesak, Interview conducted on October 15, 2008.
- 34 Brenda Lewis, Interview conducted on October 15, 2008.
- 35 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 'Submission from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Australian Section) Inc. concerning the Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Use of Nuclear Energy for Peaceful Purposes', Accessed January 17, 2009. Available at [http://www.wilpf.org.au/PDFs/WILPFsubmissiononRussianNuclear\\_Treaty2008.pdf](http://www.wilpf.org.au/PDFs/WILPFsubmissiononRussianNuclear_Treaty2008.pdf)
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Brenda Lewis, Interview conducted on October 15, 2008.
- 38 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), Section Report: Australia, Accessed January 17, 2009. Available at <http://www.wilpf.int.ch/events/2007Congress/reports/sections/Australia.html>
- 39 The Revolutionary Association for Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) was established in 1977 as a women's peace organisation opposing the oppressive regime implemented by the Taliban. It has gained increasing recognition and membership since its formation, making it today the oldest political and social organisation of Afghan women struggling for peace, freedom, democracy and women's rights in Afghanistan.
- 40 Founded in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks upon the US on September 11, 2001, Just Peace is a Brisbane-based organisation whose goal is to raise public awareness about alternatives to war and the necessity of justice in achieving lasting peace.

- 41 Soroptimist International Brisbane City (SIBC) emerged in 1994 as a women's peace organisation stemming from the wider movement of Soroptimists International (SI) which had been in operation since the 1920s. Working in partnership with other groups and organisations, SIBC aims to achieve the advancement of women and children through the undertaking of projects that engender equality, sustainability, peace and human rights for all.
- 42 Believing Women for a Culture of Peace emerged in Brisbane in the 2003 as the culmination of efforts, by a small group of women, to develop a vision for uniting women in the greater Brisbane area who shared an interest in building understanding and relationships across faiths and cultures.

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*Review of*

**Market versus Nature:  
The Social Philosophy of  
Friedrich Hayek**

**By Eric Aarons**

Australian Scholarly Publishing  
2008

\$34.95, paperback,  
ISBN 9781740971850, 150pp.

It is an irony that, in 1974, the Nobel Prize for Economics was granted to two economists. One was Gunnar Myrdal, the main architect of the Swedish welfare state, and the other



was Friedrich Hayek, champion of the free market system and avowed enemy of any government interference in the economy.

Eric Aarons' book, *Market versus Nature*, discusses Hayek's economic ideas, social and political philosophies in some depth. It then points out how these ideas have failed abysmally to help in the greatest challenge we face: climate change.

Aarons opens his book with an explanation of Hayek's "big idea". For this read "markets". Markets inform producers and consumers about making choices concerning consumption and production. According to Hayek, markets determine prices and, through this price mechanism, markets efficiently and seamlessly balance supply and demand. They therefore do a better job than any central planner can. Planners simply cannot have sufficient information to set prices so that production will equate with consumption.

Another major plank of Hayek's ideas is "spontaneous order". Again, read "markets". Markets, according to Hayek, produce a social order as a result of people acting within the rules of law and contract.

Social justice, or at least Hayek's view of it, is discussed in chapter five. Yet again, read "markets". As markets are impersonal processes, the results of

markets cannot be just or unjust. Hayek believed that a belief in social justice is 'the gravest threat to most other values of a free civilisation'.

Hayek also espoused the view that the unity of humanity was achieved by everyone striving for greater material satisfaction. How is this material satisfaction to be achieved? Through markets, of course.

However, any social or political philosophy needs to be compared with events on the ground in order to measure its validity. Even economists have to face reality. In Aarons' fourth chapter on democracy he cites Hayek's view on Chile under Pinochet's dictatorship. When asked his views on the country, Hayek noted that he was opposed to long-term dictatorship but as a transition to a stable liberal democracy 'clean of impurities' (Hayek's words) yes, it could be justified and recommended!

If Hayek's views on dictatorships (only temporary dictatorships of course) are less than palatable, then his ideas on the ideal democracy are nothing short of bizarre. His brand of democracy would have a legislature of 45-year-old men and women representing "general opinion" elected for a 15-year term, when they would retire on a pension. (But no pensions for those too old or ill to support themselves, one presumes.) All citizens would vote once in their lifetime at age 45 for a replacement in

the legislature. Hayek's credibility is severely stretched, I believe.

Hayek's influence on the neo-liberal agendas of Reagan and Thatcher is explored by Aarons in chapter nine entitled *TINA bites the dust* ('there is no alternative' – Thatcher's dictum). The application of free-market policies has led us up a blind alley, according to Aarons, and we need to rethink the efficacy of the system. As Stern noted in his report on climate change: 'our current crisis represents the greatest market failure we have ever seen'.

Needless to say, Aarons' book contains much more in scope and depth than I have briefly outlined here. However his book is not for the fainthearted. He has drawn from many sources and his bibliography reads like a Who's Who of the social sciences. His arguments are usually sound but sometimes subtle to the point of obscurity. I found myself struggling with his meaning and leaps of argument at a few points.

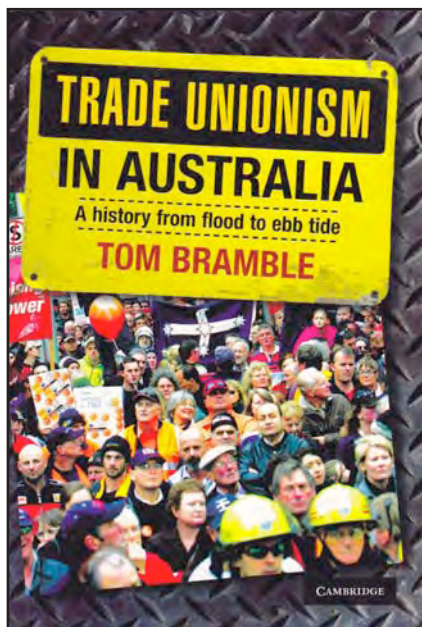
Unfortunately, Aarons doesn't mention other ideas of Hayek's which challenge Hayek's credibility. One of these is the issuing of currency. Hayek argued that government monopoly on the issue of currency leads to inflation as governments create money to pay their bills. Hayek proposed that private businesses be allowed to issue their own currency. Too bad if you have a wallet full of Coles' dollars and can find only a Woolworths open!

I would strongly advise the lay person to look at the entry on Hayek in the book quoted at the end of this review. This will then give the reader a general introduction to Hayek's ideas and better equip him or her to tackle Aarons' book. And finally, I would definitely prefer Myrdal to be treasurer.

Further reading: *Fifty Major Economists*  
Steven Pressman Routledge 1999

**Peter Riedlinger**

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*Reviews of*

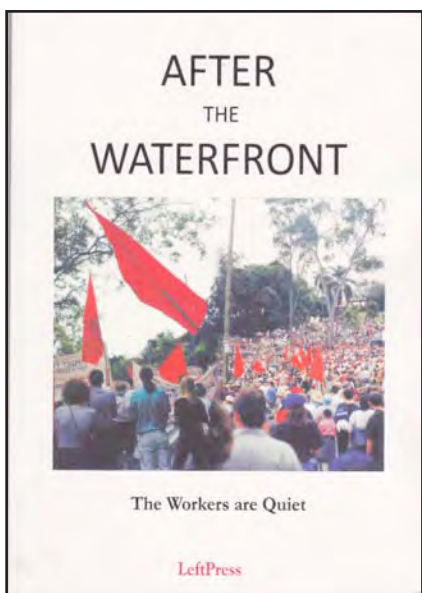
**Trade Unionism in  
Australia: A history from  
flood to ebb tide**

**By Tom Bramble**

Cambridge University Press,  
New York, 2008

\$49.95 (20% discount to BLHA  
members), paperback  
ISBN: 13:9780521716123., xv +  
293pp.

(Also available in hardback.)



**After the Waterfront: The  
Workers are Quiet**

**By LeftPress Collective**

LeftPress Printing Society,  
Brisbane, 2007

\$10, paperback, 144pp.

Both these books are important interpretations of recent Australian trade union history and should be read by those interested in this area. *Trade Unionism in Australia: A history from flood to ebb tide* is much more academic, but this is not taking anything away from LeftPress Collective's offering, *After the Waterfront: The Workers are Quiet*. The latter book is the result of ten years of research from a committed group of unionists.

Essentially, both books have a similar theme. Trade unionism in Australia in the past was militant in a number of areas, but recent years have seen a serious decline in militancy. Both authors are searching for reasons for this decline, and both suggest that if current leaders of trade unions were more militant this decline could be averted.

LeftPress proposes a variety of strategies which involve industrial militancy and a defiance of the “repressive” industrial laws in a concerted campaign. Bramble suggests what is needed is an organised socialist group that can initiate such militancy and uses the example of the Minority Movement of the 1930s as a model that could be followed. He also uses two other examples of mass mobilisation of workers defying their own union leadership. He is impressed with the broad union and community support for the MUA in 1998, but is unimpressed by what he sees as the union leadership “trading” away workers’ conditions. His other example is the Mt Isa dispute of 1964/65 in which workers defied their own union leadership and rallied behind the charismatic Pat Mackie, an IWW advocate.

Bramble’s book is divided into four sections, chronologically and thematically. He begins with the post-war boom, 1946–67 and argues that during this period, the trade union movement was gaining momentum through its various struggles. The next

period, 1968–74, is described as a “flood” as unions undertook a variety of activities, for example the 1969 O’Shea tramway strike, the Nymboida mine and Harco Steel work-ins, Green Bans and actions over the Vietnam War. He also sees this as a period when unions opened up to people not previously well represented: women, migrants and white-collar workers. During this time the Whitlam Labor Government was elected and this resulted in a range of changes in Australian society.

The next period, 1974–83, he sees as a stand off between organised labour and capital. It began with an economic crisis: the sacking of a Labor Government and the policies of Malcolm Fraser. He sees this period as the beginning of the decline in union membership and activism.

The next period is the ebb tide, 1983–2007, which begins with the Accord and is plagued by industrial disputes, initiated by right-wing forces, which weaken the position of the union movement: SEQEB, Mudginberri Abattoir, Dollar Sweets, the MUA dispute. The election of the Howard Government in 1996 and its subsequent introduction of the *Workplace Relations Act* and then *WorkChoices* are seen as examples of the erosion of union power.

As stated above, LeftPress Collective’s *After the Waterfront* is similar in its theme. Where LeftPress differs from Bramble is the way that the former

uses examples in a wider sense of how things “should be done now” from a perspective of the past. An example of this is the discussion of the 1954 Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) dispute and the 1949 gaoling of former WWF Assistant General-Secretary Ted Roach. One can only assume that the premise of this argument is what is needed to go back to this militancy. This does not take into account the fact that more than 50 years on, the industrial, political and technological landscape has changed dramatically and even though these are important examples, one should look at the comparative aspect in a wider context.

LeftPress provides a more detailed description of some disputes and there is an extensive summary of the 1998 MUA dispute. One of the highlights for me was the “oral history” description of the night at Swanston Dock (pp. 92–95) when the community joined the unionists in preventing police clearing the docks.

It is difficult to do justice to both these books’ work in a short review, particularly Bramble, as he touches on so many areas of trade union activity. One of the strengths of Bramble is his discussion of the immense social and political upheaval during his “1968–74 flood time” and how that linked with the changes in the communist parties and hence the union movement. The political protests against the Vietnam War by students, unionists and the general community had a major effect

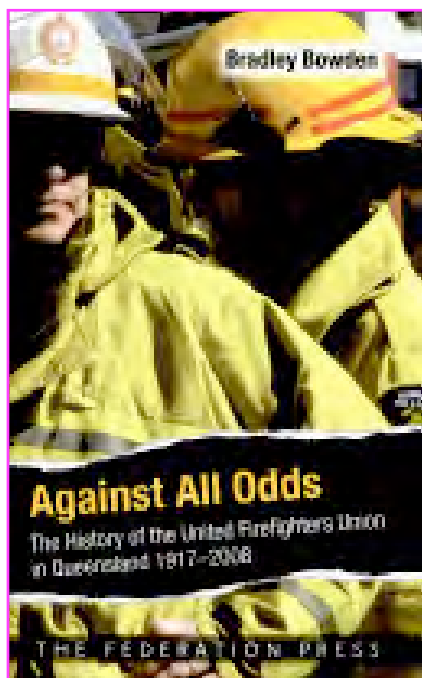
upon all major institutions of society. Certain sections of the union movement were at the forefront of this protest.

One of the fundamental propositions of the “young Marx” was the need to question the “end product of labour”. The NSW Builders Labourers’ Federation did this in the 1970s with Green Bans. There is a tendency in Bramble (and to a lesser extent in LeftPress) to accept a development model provided by technological change. One of the broad criticisms I would have of both books, but in particular Bramble, is the total non-questioning of the “end product of workers’ labour”. Bramble uses the car industry as an example of the lack of militancy when a car plant was shut down in 1981. However there is no questioning of ways in which workers’ labour could be used to produce socially useful products, such as directing production into public transport or clean energy. There is no proposition put forward of how unions could develop policies around environmental and other problems associated with the car industry.

As stated above, these are two important books that need detailed analysis by active trade unionists, academics and those interested in the “politics” and history of trade unions. Both these books go a long way towards helping the process of reflection and analysis about the trade union movement’s history and future.

**Greg Mallory**

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*Review of*

## **Against All Odds: The History of the United Firefighters Union in Queensland 1917-2008**

**By Bradley Bowden**

The Federation Press,  
Leichhardt, 2008

ISBN 978 186287 698 9 (hbk) \$49.95,  
176 pp.

ISBN 978 186 287 693 4 (pbk)  
\$29.95, 176 pp.

Firefighters are held with the highest community respect and trust for their courage in tackling fires, expertise in rescuing people and dedication to duty. Yet until the last decade or so low wages, long hours and potentially dangerous working conditions — sometimes lethal — were their meagre recompense in Queensland. In *Against All Odds, the History of the United Firefighters Union in Queensland 1917–2008*, Bradley Bowden reveals the protracted and dogged campaign fought by the state's firefighters not only to redress these injustices through trade unionism but to do so more effectively through their own industrial organisation. The book traces and analyses the turbulent history of the United Firefighters Union (UFU) in Queensland, with an underpinning thesis that, considering all the challenges confronting the union, the existence today of the Queensland branch of the UFU has indeed been against the odds.

Foremost of the forces arrayed against the UFU has been the powerful Australian Workers Union (AWU) in which firefighters placed their welfare in 1917. In 1949, and still working a 56-hour week and with poor remuneration and conditions, firefighters attempted to form their own union. The AWU crushed this and subsequent independence efforts until the firefighters succeeded in 1966. The new union then faced opposition to registration and legal challenge by the AWU, as well as a campaign to

force members back through threats and intimidation. The battle continued until 1994 when the then Queensland Industrial Relations Commission denied the AWU any further right to recruit full-time firefighters.

The Queensland Industrial Court, often taking the AWU side, then blocked UFU registration until 1976. Fire authorities similarly proved intransigent in not recognising the UFU while privileging the AWU. Board antipathy to the union was most clearly demonstrated in Rockhampton where, in 1970, most UFU firefighters were dismissed and the remaining few victimised. That treatment persisted even after the reinstatement of sacked workers in 1974. The existence of 81 separate boards prior to creation of the Queensland Fire Service in 1990 did little to assist union efforts; and the segregated nature of the fire service — officers, rank-and-file fighters, auxiliaries and volunteers — made unity difficult to achieve. The fundamental problem, however, has been reluctance by governments of both colours to recognise, and provide adequate funding for, a professional-standard fire service. Even within the UFU after 1976, a legacy of distrust of union officials, historic metropolitan-regional divisions and personality clashes brought internal disputes and “brutish” factional warfare (p. 94). Only as recently as 1996 did the UFU achieve the unity and stability necessary

for a focused campaign for better wages and safe working conditions.

As Bowden points out, with progressive amalgamations in recent decades and union density at an all-time low, the appearance of a small and independent body, now with almost total membership, certainly sets the UFU apart by running against historical trends. Indeed, the passion and commitment of the activist core are reminiscent of the formative years of Australian unionism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Where the Rockhampton dispute is concerned, families divided and union dirty tricks harks back to Grouper days and clandestine Movement activities which arguably raged more fiercely in that city in the 1950s than elsewhere in Queensland. Time warp aside, the AWU could not have chosen a worse place to wage war because, as the author accurately observes, ‘Rockhampton was [at least in those days] a “union” town’ (p. 58) where AWU firefighters who continued to work after the UFU dismissals were publicly reviled as “scabs”. Compounding those feelings was the local union movement’s general disdain for the AWU, due as much to the latter’s aloofness to Trades Hall affairs as to its long-standing reputation for body-snatching and bullying.

Writing a commissioned history is not an easy task at the best of times, with pressure often placed on the author to sanitise the past on the one hand and



to “get the facts right” on the other. This is more problematic in cases where factional strains remain fresh in the memory and those concerned will scrutinise the text for their own version of “the truth”. In this case, and as Bowden acknowledges, present UFU officials have allowed unrestricted access to union records and given the author freedom to construct a history based on his assessment of the evidence. Understandably, in this David-and-Goliath struggle between the UFU and the often combined forces of the AWU, fire authorities, the court and government, the UFU as a whole is portrayed in a favourable light and its foes left wanting. Yet Bowden supports his stance with cogent and well-referenced evidence drawn, in addition to oral testimony, from an extensive and diverse range of documentary sources.

But this book is more than just the struggle of a union for survival. The author sets this saga against a backdrop of changing firefighting organisation, methods and equipment to allow a better appreciation of both the occupational challenges faced by firefighters and the strong sense of mateship engendered by a dangerous working environment that underpinned activists’ persistence over the years. These elements are brought into sharper focus in a series of vignettes which set the scene for most chapters and are interspersed elsewhere in the text. By incorporating “real people in a real context”<sup>1</sup> in this way, in the vein of EP Thompson,

Bowden brings this history to life for the reader.

Two aspects of writing could do with closer editorial attention however. One is the at times lengthy and detailed chapter introductions and conclusions which can create the impression of repetition or out-of-sequence narrative. The second aspect relates to some typographical errors which the publishers should have detected and rectified. Notwithstanding those minor points, Bradley Bowden’s *Against All Odds: The History of the United Firefighters Union in Queensland 1917–2008* is a well researched and written work; a most worthy contribution to the labour history literature and an enjoyable and enlightening read.

**Barbara Webster**  
**CQUniversity Australia,**  
**Rockhampton campus**

#### **Endnote**

- 1 EP Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, Penguin, London, 1980, p. 8.

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*Review of*

## **ASIO: The Enemy Within**

**By Michael Tubbs**

Michael Tubbs 2008

\$35, 275pp.

*ASIO: The Enemy Within* (a) looks inside the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and its files in an attempt to analyse how and why ASIO was formed and its purpose and operation within the political and democratic processes of our society, (b) argues that ASIO was an illegal organisation for at least the first seven years of its existence and in the

subversive secret way it has functioned in Australian society, (c) argues that it has secretly engaged in anti-democratic and un-Australian political activities, and (d) concludes that ASIO has acted in such a way as to reduce our basic rights and freedoms, has improperly interfered with the democratic process, and is morally repugnant to the theory of an open liberal democracy. Tubbs also expresses forthright views on other topics such as the “War on Terror” and the Iraq War.

Tubbs argues that ASIO was not formed as a result of any parliamentary, cabinet or caucus decision but merely as a result of a decision of Prime Minister Chifley, issuing a directive on 16 March 1949, a directive that Tubbs argues had no constitutional force or legal standing. Six months after taking office, Prime Minister Menzies issued his own, more specific “directive” entitled *Charter of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation* which then operated for seven years without any parliamentary authority until the passage of the *Australian Security Intelligence Organisation Act 1956* (“the 1956 Act”) which, among other things, purported to legislate for ASIO to have a legitimate existence retrospective to 16 March 1949. Then, the *1959 Act* extended ASIO’s powers which led to a further erosion of our civil liberties.

Tubbs asserts that ASIO was established by Chifley for ulterior

domestic political processes of a non-constitutional nature, namely, to stem the perceived political influence of the left in Australia and to protect his leadership from the left within the ALP, and that Menzies knew he could continue it in the knowledge that the ALP opposition could not publicly object to its continuation because it had been created by Chifley.

Tubbs argues that within our society, ASIO is the most dangerous threat to our security, welfare, freedoms and rights — it is the “enemy within”. He argues that it has had a marked detrimental effect on our multi-party participatory form of liberal democracy by its general activities and its supreme say in combating any political party or set of values it perceives as subversive of the corporate socio-economic system. Further, he argues that ASIO has been, in a direct sense, a significant, if not major force in making Australia a “meaner” and more violent society. Further, Tubbs argues that one of ASIO’s flaws is that it was formed to meet perceived threats to vested private sectional interests, which are interests other than those of the public or national interest.

Tubbs notes that in ASIO’s 60 years of operation, it has never charged anyone with a single criminal act, whether for treason, spying, terrorism or sabotage, despite compiling millions of files on Australian citizens. Hence, he concludes that it does not have

a “*national security*” function but rather, further concludes that a major reason the Liberal Party was able to rule from 1949 (soon after ASIO was formed) until December 1972, was in part because of the assistance given to it by ASIO’s domestic spying on its political opposition, including all political parties to its left. Its alleged security role with the Department of Immigration was also significant because it gave ASIO a major say, if not ultimate control, over who entered Australia as migrants or otherwise, and thus, in the larger context, who would engage in politics in this country.

Tubbs acknowledges that he has relied heavily on the media of the day for his “facts”. He further acknowledges that the “standard of proof” he has relied upon is that of former Prime Minister Howard who, Tubbs argues, introduced a lower standard of proof than that used by our Courts, namely that “it was in the media”, which is just as high, if not higher, than the “proof” that Howard used to commit Australia to the war in Iraq.

Tubbs himself is a very interesting character in that he arrived in Australia from England in 1950 as a 15-year-old child migrant and worked as a labourer, trade union official, political activist, and organiser for the Communist Party of Australia before graduating in law with First Class Honours in 1979 when he commenced a 20-year career at the Sydney Bar. This background, together

with being watched and reported on by ASIO for almost a lifetime, being the subject of a substantial ASIO file which for the period from 1963 to 1974 (the only parts to which he has been granted access) constitutes over 1,500 pages, being a barrister who has appeared for people who had been the subject of adverse assessment by ASIO and someone who has had access to countless files held on citizens by ASIO, enables him to write with some authority on this very important subject.

Tubbs' writing style is that of a political commentator and/or activist rather than that of a lawyer, and this publication is neither a legal nor any other kind of text book on ASIO. While accepting that it is a work that relies upon limited sources (an understandable shortcoming), it is an interesting commentary on ASIO's birth and its clouded history. While it is somewhat repetitive in parts, it deals with a very serious topic and should be read by anyone with an interest in civil liberties in Australia.

**Dan O'Gorman**

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## **A Probe into Disturbing History**

**(A Report on Mick Tubbs' Book Launch)**

THE launch in Brisbane on 1 November last of a new book of Australian spy networks took many of those present on a trip down memory lane to dark days of Cold War confrontations between society's progressive activists and their oppressors.

*ASIO: The Enemy Within* by Mick Tubbs will be reviewed by another in this journal; my task here is to report on the extraordinary information which was provided to us who were privileged to be present at the Brisbane Workers Community Centre in Paddington for the launch; an event well compered by barrister Bob Reed and with an illuminating contribution from guest speaker Geoff Wilson, State Member for Ferny Grove.

Mick Tubbs, a 1950 child migrant from the UK, did labouring work, became a union activist and an organiser for the Communist Party of Australia and at the age of 44 graduated from Macquarie University with first class honours in a law degree, leading him to a successful career as a Sydney barrister until his 1998 retirement, when wine-making attracted his attention. Now he's just a remarkably energetic activist for sharing important knowledge.

To be in the same room as Mick Tubbs gives one the feeling of sharing space with a great, rippling source of energy, which radiates to touch everyone present. There's a mind ticking away in that head — held about six feet off the ground by a solidly-framed body — that never stops the process of evaluating and correlating wisps of information to create a clearly comprehensible episode in his life's narrative.

His decades of union and political activism drew him to the attention of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). Years later Mick turned the tables on that spooky organisation: he conducted his own investigation into the history and shady activities of the internal intelligence body that was created without legal sanction and has continued to exist as a lie: it has *never* been about "safeguarding the security of all Australians", but rather a source of intrusion and intimidation against all Australians who dare to speak out against the "status quo" of our nation's politics.

Mick's many anecdotes, based on his years of the most intricate research, informed and re-affirmed the views that not only has ASIO been an enemy of the people, but also that there was an act of political treachery in the fact it was established by Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley. To reveal more of Mick's lengthy and fascinating address would reveal material that undoubtedly will be covered in the forthcoming review

of *ASIO: The Enemy Within*. This commentator strongly recommends the book to all who are interested in those increasingly remote concepts (to many Australian politicians) of civil liberties, our right to know and our right to disagree.

Equally disturbing was the revelation by guest speaker Geoff Wilson of the absolute powers exercised by another organisation charged with spying on individuals: the Australian Building and Construction Commission. Established by the Howard Government in a blatant attack on the rights of building industry unions and individuals working in the trade, the ABCC has powers (like ASIO and the Federal police) to interrogate and demand answers — under a threat of imprisonment for refusal to co-operate — from any one it chooses. People targeted by ABCC can also be jailed for telling any other person of their experience. And the ABCC is answerable to no one: Geoff Wilson pointed out that it is not required to report to Parliament on its activities. Those interested should contact <http://www.worklife.org.au/> or the ETU or CFMEU for more information.

Mick Tubbs' powerful book — and Geoff's timely reminder — provided this participant at the launch (and, I'm sure, many others) with the need to DO something; to not allow complacency to distract from the need for some political activism. A study of the similarities between the draconian "anti-terrorist" laws passed by Howard and the

legislation empowering the ABCC is a starting point for me. Knowledge is power!

These fascist-type organisations that have grown in our midst have no place in a decent, law-abiding social democracy, and Mick and Geoff convinced me that only our silence will guarantee their continued survival.

For copies of *ASIO: The Enemy Within* contact Greg Mallory, BLHA, <gmallory@vtown.com.au>

**Tony Reeves**

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At the launch of Mick Tubb's book 1 November at BWCC: L-R Greg Mallory, Jack Saunders, Peter Fleming, Doug Devonshire, John Spreckley, Bob Reed, Mick Tubbs.



## The Flames of Discontent Rekindled at Woodford Folk Festival (A Review of Two Concerts)



Alistair Hulett performing at the Concert Stage before the CFMEU slide show.  
Photo Doug Eaton.



Dale and Greg at the Concert Stage.  
Photo Shelly Greer.



Martin Pearson performing at The Muse.  
Photo Doug Eaton.



“To fan the flames of discontent” — that was the defiant banner of *The Little Red Songbook* published for 50 years by The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In 1979, during the Utah Dispute, the Seamen’s Union of Australia put their case in song in an album produced by Don Henderson called *Flames of Discontent*. It wasn’t all political. Many songs were written for no other reason than to sing about the jobs of the labour force.

Then, in 1992/93, Don Henderson brought the *Flames of Discontent* to the Union Stage at the Maleny Folk Festival.

Most readers of this Journal will be aware of the *Flames of Discontent* concerts that the BLHA has staged over the past couple of years in an attempt to rekindle and celebrate the strong bond between the folk movement and the labour movement. Last year, BLHA members Dale Jacobsen and Doug Eaton held discussions with Woodford Folk Festival Director, Bill Hauritz, with a view to bringing the concerts to the Festival — in part, to replace the Union Stage that was once a strong feature of the Maleny and Woodford Festivals.

These discussions resulted in two hugely successful concerts being staged at the Woodford Folk Festival. *Rekindling the Flames of Discontent*, held at “The Muse” on the first day of the festival, featured: Helen

Rowe, whose repertoire of Australian and Celtic music often has a strong political edge; troubadour Tommy Leonard who travels widely gathering material for his own song writing and performing (in 1997 he released his CD, *A Gentle Breeze*, featuring 18 of Don Henderson’s ballads); and Martin Pearson, always a festival favourite. The full house of folkies and unionists listened intently and sang along with many familiar songs. It was a warm and wonderful concert which included, amongst other songs: Alistair Hulett’s *He Fades Away*, sung with much sentiment by Helen; *Ho Chi Min* by Tommy; and *The Tolpuddle Martyrs* by Martin.

The following evening at the Concert Stage, *The Flames of Discontent* attracted an audience of 800. It was quite a production, including a slide show of historical photos from CFMEU Construction and General Division by BLHA treasurer Jason Stein. Alistair Hulett and Dave Rovics, two powerful voices from Scotland and the US, began the concert with *The Internationale*, successfully fanning the flames of discontent. Alistair is one of the defining voices in Scottish folk music, with a sense of social awareness and the belief that the way forward in society is for the working class to take political and economic power.

One of Australia’s pre-eminent folk music families, The Fagans, has fanned the flames for many years around folk

clubs and festivals. They delighted the crowd, particularly with Margaret's rendition of Dorothy Hewett's *Weevils in the Flour*. The concert concluded with the powerful voice of Leah Cotterell accompanied by Jamie Clark on guitar. The full cast joined Leah and Jamie for her song, *Worth Fighting For*; a powerful end to a powerful concert.



Helen Rowe performing at The Muse before the BLHA banner. Photo Doug Eaton.

A magnificent hand-sewn silk backdrop, created by Annette Hood for the original *Flames of Discontent* event in 1992, was on display at both concerts.

The enthusiasm with which these two concerts was received proves there is a need for such content at this (and other) festivals, and it is great news that they will become a regular feature at Woodford.

**Dale Lorna Jacobsen**

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The Fagans performing at the Concert Stage. Photo Doug Eaton.



Tommy Leonard performing at The Muse. Photo Doug Eaton.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Barbara Webster** is a senior lecturer in History at CQUniversity, Rockhampton campus, and completed her doctorate in trade union history. She has published in labour and local history in the Rockhampton context and is now working on a history of working life at Gladstone Power Station.

**Bob Reed** currently practices as a barrister in Brisbane, principally in the areas of industrial and employment law, human rights law and criminal law. From 1977 to 1988 he worked as a painter and docker in the ports of Brisbane and Sydney and from 1995 to 1999 as a research officer for the Liquor Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union.

**Connie Healy** worked in trade union offices and at The University of Queensland. Twice married: first husband, an air force navigator, killed in World War II; second was QTLC Secretary 1942-52. Connie was widowed 1988. Awards — 1992: The Denis J. Murphy Memorial Scholarship UofQ; for academic merit to a postgraduate student intending to undertake research into the history of the labour movement in Australia; 1994 MA (History/English) at the UofQ; 2001 the Centenary Medal: 'For distinguished service to industrial relations'. Publications include: *Defiance: Political Theatre in Brisbane 1930-1962* (Based on her research for MA thesis) (2000); five articles for *Radical Brisbane an unruly history* (2004); two entries for supplement to Australian Dictionary of Biography:

Jim Crawford (playwright) and George Eaton (teacher, actor, producer) (2005)

**Dale Lorna Jacobsen** is a freelance writer living in the mountains of Maleny in south-east Queensland, prior to which she was an environmental scientist at Griffith University and a luthier. Dale is Secretary of the Brisbane Labour History Association. She is currently working on a book on the ARU and the ALP in Queensland during the 1920s.

**Dan O'Gorman S.C.** has been Lecturer and Facilitator at the Legal Practice Course and Bar Practice Course, QUT, since 1989. Legal adviser to Federal Ministers / Shadow Ministers 1981-1984; Solicitor and Barrister, Australian Government Solicitor's Office, 1985-1988; appointed senior counsel in 2006. His main areas of practice are: Administrative Law; Human Rights/Discrimination Law/Equal Opportunities Law; Employment Law and Criminal Law. He was a member of Security Legislation Review Committee reviewing Australia's terrorism laws, 2005-2006; instructor with the Australian Advocacy Institute; Member of Equalising Opportunities in the Law Committee, Law Council of Australia; Joint Convenor of Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Committee, Queensland Bar Association. He travelled to Bangladesh from 1996-2004 and 2006 as a member of the Australian Bar Association's delegation to conduct Intensive Trial Advocacy Workshops.

**Greg Mallory** is an Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Employment

Relations at Griffith University. His book, *Uncharted Waters: Social Responsibility in Australian Trade Unions*, was published in 2005. He has co-authored *The Coalminers of Queensland, Vol 2: The Pete Thomas Essays* with Pete Thomas, published in December 2007. Greg is currently working on a book which is a series of oral histories of some of the leading identities in the Brisbane Rugby League competition. It is to be launched in May 2009. He is also working on conference papers and a book on leadership and its relationship with rank and file activism in left-wing trade unions.

**Katrina Barben** was a member of the Women's Liberation Movement at the time of the *Education and Sexuality* pamphlet, although she was not one of the women who distributed it. She did, however, attempt to challenge Gabby Horan on talkback radio.

**Peter Riedlinger** works in education and has been a member of the Queensland Teachers' union for more than three decades.

**Sheryl Gwyther** is the Brisbane author of children's novel, *Secrets of Eromanga* (Lothian Books). She's the recipient of an Australian Society of Authors Mentorship, and in 2008 was awarded a May Gibbs Children's Literature Trust Fellowship to work on her current project, *The Mountain*, a Young Adult novel based on the Mt Mulligan coalmine disaster in 1921. As well as writing stories and articles for young people Sheryl keeps a blog <http://sherylgwyther.wordpress.com/> that focuses on the writing-life; her

passion to bring Australian pre-history and history alive in children's books, and, because she can't help herself, politics.

**Tanya Negerevich** is a student of Political Science and International Studies at the UofQ. Her areas of interest in this field of study have included issues relating to non-governmental organisations, ethics and the study of conflict resolution. In 2008, Tanya undertook an internship with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), deepening her interest in gender issues and exploring the role of women's peace activism in global society. Currently, Tanya is completing a Master of International Studies at the UofQ, specialising in the field of Peace and Conflict Resolution.

**Tony Reeves** is a member of the BLHA and is author of two non-fiction books: (*Mr Big, Lennie McPherson and his life of crime*, 2005, and *Mr Sin, the Abe Saffron Dossier*, 2007; both Allen & Unwin). The former won the Crime Writers Association 2005 Ned Kelly Prize for true crime. He is currently researching the extent and influence of Nazism in Australia from the beginnings of that movement in Germany to the present time.

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# Noticeboard

The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Perth Branch,  
is hosting  
The Eleventh National Labour History Conference



8–10 July 2009  
The State School Teachers Union of WA [Inc],  
150–152 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, WA.

**Convenor:**

Dr Bobbie Oliver, Department of Social Sciences,  
Curtin University of Technology,  
GPO BOX U1987, PERTH WA 6845.

**phone:** +61 8 9266 3215 **Fax:** +61 8 9266 3166

**Email:** bobbie.oliver@curtin.edu.au **Website:** [www/asslh.org.au/perth](http://www/asslh.org.au/perth)

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BLHA proudly brings to Brisbane  
**The Inaugural Alex Macdonald Memorial Lecture**

To be presented by

**Professor Margaret Levi**

Joint Professor of Politics, United States Study Centre, Sydney University  
Bacharach Professor of International Studies, University of Washington  
Former Harry Bridges Chair in the Harry Bridges Centre for Labor Studies  
(HBCLS), UW



Professor Margaret Levi

For full CV, see <http://faculty.washington.edu/mlevi/>

With introductory talks by: Manfred Cross, Alan Anderson, Hughie Hamilton  
Chaired by Ron Monaghan (QCU General Secretary)

**Alex Macdonald (1910 – 1969)** was many things: ironworker, trade union official, Communist, Secretary of T.L.C., negotiator, promoter of youth education and employment, historian, pacifist...To commemorate this remarkable man, the BLHA will hold an annual lecture in his honour.

Thursday 14 May 2009, 6.00pm for 6.30pm, **William Gallagher Auditorium,**  
QCU, 16 Peel Street

Enquiries: Greg Mallory: 0407 692 377 [gmallory@vtown.com.au](mailto:gmallory@vtown.com.au).

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Brisbane Labour History Association

in association with

The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History

and

The Department of Employment Relations, Griffith University  
is hosting a special conference and thematic section for the national journal  
Labour History

## **Red, Green and In-between: Reviewing Labour and the Environment in Historical Context**

6 February 2010, Griffith University (South Bank campus), Brisbane, Australia

Convenors/Guest Editors: Janis Bailey, Dale Jacobsen and Greg Mallory

This conference will highlight the interface of two of the most significant social movements of modern times: the labour movement and the environmental movement. The title chosen, 'Red, Green and In-between', emphasises the tensions and the possible productive alliances between 'older' movements of working class people and 'new' social movements such as the environmental movement, and research that explores these issues.

Examples of topics include:

- (1) The Red in the Green: Involvement of the organised labour movement and individual unions in environmental issues
- (2) The Red and the Green: Coalitions and alliances between the labour movement and the environmental movement
- (3) People in Place: The role of grassroots environmental activism outside the formal labour movement
- (4) Never the Twain: Tensions and contradictions at the interface of labour and the environment
- (5) Boundaries and Borders: Theoretical concerns regarding the intersection of labour history and environmental history
- (6) Land and Livelihood: Indigenous takes on labour and the environment

Intending contributors should electronically submit an abstract (500-1000 words) to the editors by 30 October 2009 for consideration. Full papers (6,000-8,000 words) for the conference will be due on 22 January 2010.

Intending contributors will then participate in the conference, and submit their revised papers by 5 March 2010 for blind refereeing for the special thematic section of Labour History, which will appear in the November 2010 issue.

There is no financial assistance available for travel to the conference. However, BLHA members are willing to billet regional, interstate and overseas paper presenters, and there is no conference charge for presenters.



Full details of the conference, including program and keynote speakers, will be circulated to potential attendees in November 2009. Music, dinner and fabulous keynote speakers are promised.

All enquiries about the conference and special thematic section should be addressed to:

Janis Bailey, [j.bailey@griffith.edu.au](mailto:j.bailey@griffith.edu.au), Dale Jacobsen, [sr.music@bigpond.com](mailto:sr.music@bigpond.com) or Greg Mallory, [gmallory@vtown.com.au](mailto:gmallory@vtown.com.au).

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## **FORTHCOMING BLHA & ASSLH EVENTS**

### **14 May 2009**

The Inaugural Alex Macdonald Memorial Lecture

To be presented by Professor Margaret Levi

Thursday 14 May 2009, 6.00pm for 6.30pm, William Gallagher Auditorium, QCU, 16 Peel Street

Enquiries: Greg Mallory: 0407 692 377 [gmallory@vtown.com.au](mailto:gmallory@vtown.com.au).

### **8–10 July 2009**

Labour in History Conference

The State School Teachers Union of WA [Inc],

150–152 Adelaide Terrace, Perth, WA.

Enquiries – Email: Bobbie Oliver, [bobbie.oliver@curtin.edu.au](mailto:bobbie.oliver@curtin.edu.au) Website: [www/asslh.org.au/perth](http://www/asslh.org.au/perth)

### **6 February 2010**

BLHA Conference Red, Green and In-between: Reviewing Labour and the Environment in Historical Context

6 February 2010, Griffith University (South Bank campus), Brisbane, Australia

Enquiries – Email: Janis Bailey, [j.bailey@griffith.edu.au](mailto:j.bailey@griffith.edu.au)