

RECORDER

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Melbourne Branch AGM

Melbourne Branch AGM

5:30 - 7:00 pm

Thursday 15 December

Meeting Room 1

Victorian Trades Hall

Agenda

Reports: President, Secretary,
Treasurer.

Election of Office Bearers and
General Business.

***Please also note that your 2017
membership renewal is now due.***

Opposing War and Conscription

Peter Love

As most *Recorder* readers will recall, the Labour History Society was quick off the mark in commemorating opposition to the First World War with the National Labour History Conference in February 2015. The book associated with that conference, *Fighting Against War*, edited by Phillip Deery and Julie Kimber, sold out. Although the Melbourne Branch has not hosted such significant events this year, there have been numerous occasions where Branch members and comradely collaborators have been involved in remembering how the labour movement and peace activists had a leading role in opposing the war and defeating Billy Hughes's 1916 conscription plebiscite.

This year, Labour History comrades have been participants rather than organisers. By far the most active group of organisers has been the Brunswick-Coburg Anti-Conscription Commemoration Campaign. Google them and you can see what an energetic and imaginative lot they are. Labour History members were delighted to contribute to their program. Judith Smart, a member of the Melbourne Branch executive, gave a lecture at the St Ambrose Community Centre on Sydney Road, on Tuesday 3 May. She spoke about Women and Protest in World War I. It was a very informative and utterly engaging account of the range of women's oppositional activism. In fact, we've prevailed on Judy to allow us to post the text of the lecture on our webpage at labourhistorymelbourne.org

A week later, David Cragg, Assistant Secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, conducted a commemoration of the All-Australian Trade Union Anti-Conscription Congress that met on 11-12 May 1916 in the very council chamber (albeit renovated) where we sat on 11 May 2016. He spoke about the event and the

broader role of the VTHC and its predecessors in leading campaigns for just and progressive causes. I followed on with an introductory talk about the 1916 Congress, its composition, deliberations and significance before we watched a 20-minute video clip from a dramatised documentary on the 1916-17 anti-conscription campaigns. The occasion concluded with a lively discussion of the 1916-17 campaigns, opportunities for further commemorative events, and their relevance to contemporary mobilisation of the labour and social movements.

In the build up to the 28 October centenary of the 1916 plebiscite Trades Hall staff, including Edwina Byrne as history co-ordinator, mounted copies of the 1916 banners on the Victoria Parade and Lygon Street frontages of Trades Hall. They provide a very impressive declaration of the Hall's historic role in resisting tyranny and defending the rights and freedom of all Australians, not just workers.



Victorian Trades Hall. Photograph by Peter Love.

The Brunswick-Coburg mob invited me to give a talk about one of their most prominent local opponents of conscription, Frank Anstey who was their MHR at the time, mentor to young Frank Hyett and John Curtin, and a leading ALP opponent of W.M. Hughes in the Federal Parliament. Many of those in the good crowd who attended the St Ambrose Centre on 22 August were also interested to hear about the man whose name was on the railway station that they regularly used to get in and out of the city. Only a few knew that their local member was not only a prominent anti-conscriptionist but was also the author of an internationally known account of the Russian Revolution, *Red Europe*. An extended version of the talk was subsequently recorded and broadcast in separate episodes on 3CR.

Val Noone, well known as an expert on Irish-Australian history, is also a long-term member and supporter of the Labour History Society. On 16 September he organised an interesting and very well-attended event at the St John's Parish Hall in Clifton Hill to commemorate the centenary of Archbishop Daniel Mannix's first speech against conscription. While it was not as astringent as some of his pronouncements in the 1917 campaign, it was a significant occasion in the steady alienation of sections of the Catholic community from the patriotic cause. Rod Quantock delivered the speech with his

customary verve but there were some of us who were disappointed that, given his physical similarity to Mannix, he did not "frock up" for the occasion. Val led an engaging and well-informed discussion of the speech's context and significance.

On 27 October, the day before the actual centenary of the plebiscite, the Victorian Trades Hall Council Secretary Luke Hilakari hosted a book launch at the Hall. Edited by Robin Archer, Joy Damousi, Murray Goot and Sean Scalmer, *The Conscription Conflict and the Great War* is published by Monash University Publishing. In eight chapters written by people who are either members or friends of the Labour History Society the book explores how "The conscription conflict tested the forms of debate, the limits of tolerance, the power of organised labour, the significance of gendered appeals, the structure of the party system and the possibility of democratic deliberation in a time of war." (6) The audience filled to overflowing Room 1 to hear Bill Shorten's remarkably well-crafted speech on how many of the issues at stake during the conscription conflict go to the heart of what the labour movement is about and why it remains the primary defender of the people's freedom and bearer of their hopes for a better future. Robin Archer, responding on behalf of the editors, addressed some of the book's main themes, suggesting that it represents a fresh assessment of this deeply significant conflict.

Meanwhile, our Brunswick-Coburg friends continue with their very engaging program of diverse activities. Check their Facebook page at Brunswick Coburg Anti Conscription Commemoration Campaign <https://www.facebook.com/BrunswickCoburgAntiConscription>

The First World War began as a war between nations and ended as a conflict between classes. Some international dimensions of that grew out of the 1917 Russian Revolution. The Red Dawn that followed that seismic event reached Australia toward the end of the war. The 15th Biennial National Labour History Conference: Workers of the World to be held in Brisbane on 23-25 September 2017 will provide an opportunity to consider the global context of our labour movement in its multitude of historical iterations. See page 11 for further information on the conference and its Call for Papers.

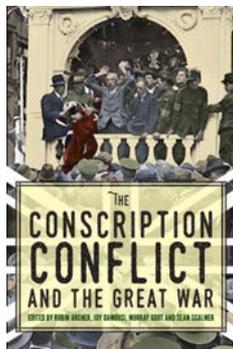


Victorian Trades Hall. Photograph by Peter Love.

The Conscription Conflict and the Great War

Michael Hamel-Green

Review of *The Conscription Conflict and the Great War*, edited by Robin Archer, Joy Damousi, Murray Goot and Sean Scalmer (Monash University Publishing: Clayton, 2016), paper \$29.95.



The First World War was to take the lives of eleven million soldiers on both sides, seven million civilians, and, as a further consequence, the loss of some 50-100 million lives worldwide from the Spanish Flu pandemic which began in the troop staging camps and hospitals in Étaples, France, and which returning troops brought home with them. Australia itself lost 61,524

soldiers, one in 80 of the Australian population at the time, not counting those who died from the influenza pandemic.

A war on such a scale was not conducted without much anguish, debate, and conflict on conscription issues within the affected democracies. Yet, as Robin Archer and Sean Scalmer note, the conscription issue and associated anti-conscription movements in Australia, England and other English-speaking parties to the war, have received relatively little analysis: “while the centenary [of the war] has generated much discussion about those who fought the war, those who sought to prevent it or contain its effects have received far less attention”. This new book on WWI conscription issues, “aims to offer new interpretations” of the conscription issues, conflicts and policies in the English-speaking countries involved in the war, with a particular focus on Australia as the one country to decide against conscription by popular vote.

The book was launched, fittingly enough, by the Labor Opposition Leader, Bill Shorten, at the Victorian Trades Hall, on the eve of the 100-year anniversary of the first 28 October 1916 Conscription Referendum that saw a majority of Australians vote against Prime Minister William Hughes’ proposal to introduce conscription in Australia. A year later, on 20 December 1917, a second referendum was lost by an even greater majority. The Trades Hall location for the launch was particularly appropriate given the central role that trade unions and the Interstate Trade Union Congress played in successfully galvanising opposition to the proposed conscription scheme, both within the labour movement and more broadly.

The book most certainly delivers on its promise of offering many new interpretations and fresh insights into the conscription issues and dilemmas of the day. This is particularly the case in looking at Australia’s unique decision to let Australians vote directly on the

matter in the two plebiscites, but the book also throws much light on conscription policies and decision-making in Britain, New Zealand, the US, and Canada.

While all the chapters have much to offer in relation to specific aspects of the conscription issue, Frank Bongiorno’s chapter on “Anti-Conscriptionism in Australia” is an exceptionally insightful overview of the whole Australian anti-conscription movement at the time. Within the necessary constraints of a single chapter, Bongiorno does justice to the main strands of the movement (socialist, unionist, labor, women’s, Irish-Catholic, Quaker and pacifists) who joined together in opposition to conscription. He not only succinctly explains the roles of the various strands at key moments in the course of the 1916-17 anti-conscription campaigns but also makes very effective use of the actual words of key protagonists. Of all the contributions to the book, Bongiorno’s comes closest to capturing and portraying the dynamics of the anti-conscription campaigns and the passions of its participants. As he memorably concludes: “The campaigns over conscription were imbued with the grief and anxiety of a society at war, yet they were also colourful and exciting, occasions for marching and singing, for rallies, concerts and torchlight processions, for compelling oratory.”

Several of the chapters deal with the conscription issue in other English-speaking countries. Douglas Newton provides detailed insights into Liberal thinking on conscription in England before and during the war, and explains how the change from anti-conscription to pro-conscription positions occurred in the Liberal leadership. John Connor offers an analysis of the reasons for the implementation of conscription in some English-speaking countries but not in others. Ross McKibbin provides a detailed comparison between the British and Australian experiences of conscription. All three of these contributions tend to focus on parliamentary and political party leaderships without providing much detail on what was happening in terms of grass roots opposition to conscription. In noting that “16,500 British men claimed exemption from conscription as Conscientious Objectors”, Connor asserts: “Overall, most British people seem to have accepted military compulsion”. Since there were no opinion polls in this period, and since using electoral data on who voted for anti-conscriptionist candidates only involved male voters (as women could not vote in Britain at that time), it seems a somewhat questionable claim for Connor to make. Presumably, the fact that only 16,500 sought CO status is supposed to indicate that all the other conscripts, and the majority of the British population, supported conscription. Yet anyone at the time who sought CO status faced gaol or even being shot (if their application failed), or at the very least being vilified as “shirkers”, so it may be surmised that there were many who did not actually “accept” conscription but were intimidated into not applying for exemption.

McKibbin makes a more nuanced and evidenced case for arguing for widespread acceptance of conscription

in England but is careful to limit his generalisation to males, saying that if a plebiscite had been held, “the majority of men would have voted Yes”.



COs in a hard labour camp in Scotland. <https://goo.gl/js5HJ9>

It was a little disappointing that all three commentaries on the British conscription issue seemed to neglect David Boulton’s seminal study of the WWI British anti-conscription movement (*Objection Overruled*, 1967) which is the English parallel to Leslie Jauncey’s study of the Australian anti-conscription movement (frequently referred to in the chapters on Australia). In particular, at the grassroots level, the No-Conscription Fellowship of conscientious objectors in Britain both preceded and helped inspire the comparable Australian WWI No-Conscription Fellowship, which in turn partly inspired the establishment of the Draft Resisters Union during the Vietnam War (not, as Scalmer suggests elsewhere, inspired solely or even mainly by “the draft dodgers of America”, itself a pejorative way of describing those who in conscience could not participate in the unjust and genocidal war against the Vietnamese).

The 1916-17 Conscription Referenda in Australia are unique in how they show how Australians at that time viewed the specific issue of conscription, or rather conscription for overseas service as distinct from Australia’s “boy conscription” scheme for home defence only. Murray Goot’s chapter provides a perceptive detailed analysis of the voting patterns in the two referenda and relevant elections, and very effectively counters a number of previous interpretations of the voting outcomes, particularly the widely cited notion that the vote of farmers concerned about losing farm labour was the decisive factor in the No vote.

In analysing the origins and actual debates involved in the Australian referenda, Robin Archer, makes a persuasive case for the importance of liberal concepts of freedom and liberty in the anti-conscription campaigns as against other more class-based or economic interpretations, and suggestions that liberal references were mere rhetoric. This focus on the importance of liberal concepts was shared by a number of the book’s contributors. However, one aspect that continues to be neglected in the relevant scholarly discourse – yet is abundantly evident in the words, songs, poetry and

posters of the anti-conscriptionists – is the simple moral and emotional impact of the enormous slaughter that was occurring during the war, and associated efforts of anti-conscriptionists at the time to seek a negotiated end to the war and the slaughter. This humanitarian aspect is not necessarily limited to a particular framework, such as liberalism. As official histories of the war have now shown, there were a number of key moments when the German side was ready for negotiation, yet ignored by the British side. It is likely that the ready availability of “cannon fodder” through conscription pipelines prolonged the war by making leaders more inclined to continue fighting than negotiate peace.

Joy Damousi’s chapter on Melbourne University’s support for the “Yes” campaigns is a more micro-analytical account of one particular section of the more general “establishment” support for the war and conscription. It demonstrates well the complexity of views amongst leading academics who shared some of the values of liberty and freedom with those in the anti-conscription cause, yet often responded in very intolerant and illiberal ways. Oddly, in her discussion of Alexander Leeper, warden of Trinity College and founder of the collegiate system at the university, Damousi does not mention Leeper’s key role in seeking to have the radical anti-conscription student (and later a founder of the Australian Communist Party), Guido Baracchi, expelled by the Academic Board for an article in the Melbourne University Magazine that merely said “The war, whatever the jingoes and junkers may tell us, is not primarily our affair” (for details of this episode, see Jeff Sparrow’s biography of Baracchi, *Communism: a Love Affair*, 2007). Even more surprisingly, Leeper appeared to be more zealous in seeking sanctions against Baracchi than Melbourne’s own military censor, Lieutenant Francis S. Newell, who had already cleared Baracchi’s article for publication. In the same chapter, Joy Damousi discusses the extraordinary argument of the contemporary medical fraternity that conscription was needed to replace men at the front falling victim to “infectious and exhausting diseases”. In the context of the Spanish Flu pandemic that was to emerge in the war zone, it would be useful to explore how the medical fraternity of the day later viewed the whole question of the war following the enormous loss of life resulting from the war-generated pandemic.

Sean Scalmer’s final chapter rounds out the book by surveying Australian processes of remembering conscription issues dating back to the First World War, and argues for the need to acknowledge the positive democratic aspects of the conscription conflict at the time, and the role of the popular vote in limiting state powers. The whole book, with its wealth of new insights into the extraordinary and highly successful efforts of the anti-conscription movement in winning the 1916-17 referenda, will be an important resource for students and researchers studying this period, and a very necessary complement to the abundant literature focussing solely on WWI military activities and service.

Jack's War

Kevin Peoples

The following is a speech given by Kevin at the launch of his book From the Top of the Hill at the Bentleigh RSL earlier this year.

Sometimes, if we are to understand highly complex human tragedies like WWI, we begin by reducing them to the personal. And sometimes, because of our interest in a single person, we are driven to discover a bigger and more abstract context; one that helps us understand what happened and why. So I start with Jack. My father's older brother. Because of the story my father told us as small children, about the day Jack, aged 18, enlisted in the AIF, I have been drawn into the bigger context.

The photograph of Jack, above my father's chair in our kitchen in Terang, was a constant reminder of the war. When our young friends asked us, "Who's that?," we replied, "That's Jack, he died in the war. He was nineteen." That's all we knew. We never asked what war. For us there was only one war and that war was Jack's war. Like many Australians of our generation, we grew up with the dark presence of WWI sitting on our mantelpieces and hanging on our walls.

Because of my father's story, WWI became personal. On the Saturday morning that Jack enlisted, he asked my father, aged 11, to accompany him to the top of the nearest hill. My father sat on the hill and watched Jack walk across the paddocks to Mortlake – never to return. All my life I have harboured safely that image. It's that image that brings us together tonight.

It would be fair to say that I have come to abhor Jack's war. In particular, I abhor the actions of those heads of state who initiated it, and the actions of their military leaders for the manner in which they conducted it. Perhaps because of this passion, I have developed something of an obsession with it.

I still remember the first serious history examination I sat for as an adult student. It was in 1963. The only essay I remember writing on that day was the one on Jack's war. I even remember the question. It involved a quote from the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. In 1917, Mannix said that the war was nothing more than a trade war. *The Bulletin* magazine had said much the same in 1914. Being who I was, I naturally agreed. Ironically, I got it right or nearly right. I knew little in 1963. There was no one simple answer to explain the causes of WWI, but economic and political power was at the heart of it.

The war was not fought over any great general principles. There was no great moral cause. This view is not shared by a recent Prime Minister. In writing in *The Age* (28 July 2016, p. 18) he claimed that Jack and his cobbles were fighting for things worthy of sacrifice: the right of all countries to live in peace and

the right of small countries not to be bullied. That is what the political class told Jack in 1915. To hear that argument repeated again, one hundred years on, beggars belief.

By 1914, a general unease and an atmosphere of fear permeated European nations. Failing to recognise the signs, Europe's leaders sleepwalked into war. The hard-nosed men, those who had more to lose than most, thought war was inevitable. Economic gains had to be protected. Colonies had to be protected. Profits had to be protected. But what would my Uncle Jack, a station-hand mustering cattle and fixing fences on the flat grassy plains around Mt Emu Creek between Terang and Mortlake, have known about such things?

Australia entered the war with all the joy and enthusiasm of a young boy flying a kite. But when the war turned sour in 1916, the kite broke away and Australia broke its heart. For many people, life would never be the same. The magnitude of the tragedy made it difficult for people to comprehend. How could such a thing happen? It was the efficiency, the scope and the industrial scale of the killing that shocked Australia and the world. Approximately eleven million soldiers and seven million civilians were to die in the war. Total casualties equalled around 38 million.

In the battles around the River Somme in northern France in 1916, the British military elite, incompetent nineteenth century men, all born in the decade 1860-1870, rarely endured the smell of death. These men, isolated in their chateaux miles behind the trenches and the mud, the rats and the lice, the machine guns and the barbed wire, the gas and the putrid decaying bodies, these same men could have been fighting Napoleon at Waterloo. That these men fought the war without counting the human cost says little for their humanity. In later life, these same men became Knights and Lords. These men, callous and reckless, offered up their men as sacrificial lambs to the new mechanised gods of war.

In Australia, the fun went out of the war in 1916. In the final six months of 1916, Australia suffered just over 40,000 casualties. 12,000 were killed. Australian towns and regions were devastated. Families struggled to pronounce the names of unknown French villages where their loved ones had died or were missing: Fromelles, Pozieres, Gueudecourt. It was as if in naming them some meaning could be found. Jack was just one of the 12,000. He was killed at Gueudecourt in his first visit to the front line.

In 1916, many men in the trenches came to believe that life had lost purpose and meaning, but their sardonic humour never deserted them: We're here, because we're here because we're here because we're here... For those reflective men in the trenches, the idea of a loving God, guiding and controlling earthly events, fell and died somewhere in the mud in no man's land. If there was a God new definitions had to be found. After 1916, if the men in the trenches believed in anything, it was in each other.

In 1916, the war took on a life of its own. It broke free from those supposedly in control and became an alien thing, gathering up men and hurling them into a giant mincing machine, much larger than my mother's small silver one, which I screwed tightly onto the kitchen table and then slowly turned its handle as she fed in the cold meat left over from Sunday's roast.

Jack died in possibly the worst conditions experienced by Australians in the war. Standing in mud over their knees in the freezing cold, their senses assaulted by screaming shells and decaying bodies, unable to sleep and lacking warm food, suffering trench feet and drinking water tasting of kerosene, the Australians cut niches into the sides of their trenches to escape the mud. Jack was lucky to escape death when his trench caved in on him and two of his mates. He was dug out in time only to be hit by a shell some weeks later.

Jack is one of us. He belongs to all of us. He is representative of a generation. He is one of the 62,000 Australians who died in the war. He is one of 11,000 Australians who died without a grave and is remembered at the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux. Australia lost 38 dead for every day of the war. In the decade after the war another 60,000 soldiers died. Proportionally, Australia had one of the highest casualty rates of all participating nations. Some two out of three of all Australians who went to the war became casualties.



The Australian War Memorial at Villers Bretonneux. Photographer unknown.

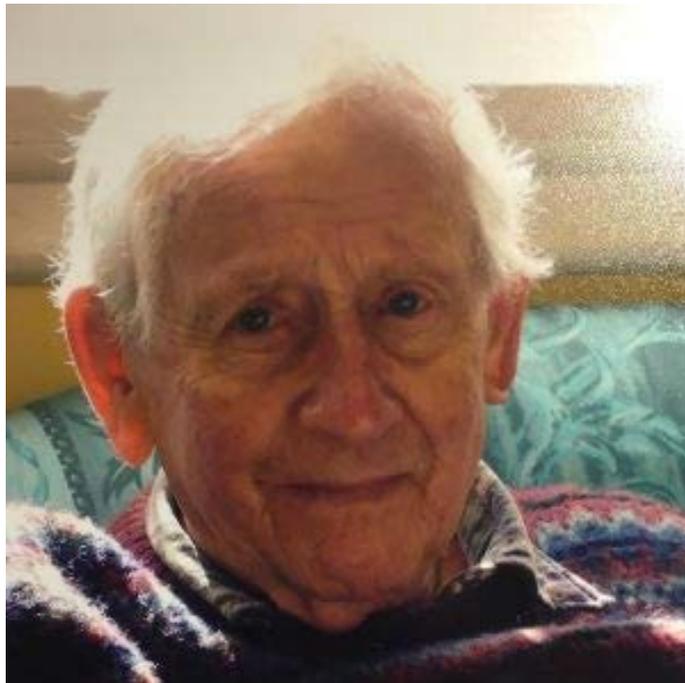
So read about Jack. Take him to your hearts, along with your own loved ones who have died in all the unnecessary wars this nation has raced to embrace. In the eyes of the world Jack was just an ordinary boy. He was unexceptional, but then, he never had the opportunities in life that his nephew had. One hundred years on his death still rests uncomfortably with me. Remember him in this the centenary of his death.

Kevin Peoples, *From the Top of the Hill: Finding Private Jack Peoples* (The Author: Brighton, 2016). Paper, \$19.95 available from <http://www.bookstore.bookpod.com.au/p/9165643/from-the-top-of-the-hill.html> The book was shortlisted in the recent Victorian Community History Awards. The author received a framed commendation in the Centenary of WWI category.

Vale Ray Collins

Brian Smiddy

A widely respected Trade Union official, Ray Collins, died recently in Ballarat. Ray was active in the trade union movement for over sixty years. He served an apprenticeship as a carpenter and became a delegate in the Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU). He went on to become Secretary of the BWIU in Victoria and President of the Victorian Trades Hall Council.



Ray Collins. Photographer unknown.

A quietly spoken man, Ray was held in high esteem by members of his union and many officials within the broad Trade Union movement. To his family we extend our deepest sympathy at his passing.

Rescuing the message of *The Communist Manifesto*

Barry York

Is communism really as dead as people think? A sixteen page pamphlet, "Rescuing the message of *The Communist Manifesto*: the revolutionary role of capitalism", argues that the anti-communist hegemony needs challenging – but in ways that acknowledge the reasons for previous failure and based on what Marx was really on about.

The principal author is David McMullen (dfmcmullen@gmail.com), a retired economist living in Melbourne. He is a longstanding advocate of the orthodox Marxist view that capitalist affluence and automation are excellent things, and are preparing the ground for a revolutionary transformation of society. See <https://sites.google.com/site/communistmanifestoproject/july30>

Three Meetings

Humphrey McQueen

As the temper of the arguments around Vietnam and conscription rose during 1966, opponents organised meetings, protested outside Liberal Party rallies, held Teach-Ins and emulated Jim Cairns' tireless carrying of the facts about the 1954 Geneva Accords to any audience we could contact. The use of mounted police against street protesters gave rise to debates about whether horses were class conscious. Trained to shepherd AFL crowds, the horses seemed reluctant to trample on our feet. Were we, therefore, justified in throwing marbles under theirs? Looking back, it seems that many of us spent every second night either at a public meeting, or organising one. Three stand out – if I remember rightly.

Among our betters

Somehow Monash Labor Club secretary Ian Morgan and I found out about a public meeting called by the Camberwell Anglican Men's Society to hear the Attorney-General Billy "The Goat" Snedden speak on Vietnam. We took ourselves along, confident that we would be the only dissenters present. The proceedings started as expected with the vicar's welcome and Snedden's rehearsal of the government's argument that we were facing a thrust by Red China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It was a Friday evening. Snedden had flown in from Canberra without a prepared speech. Neither he, nor Ian and I, was prepared for what happened next.

The questions from the floor were polite but firm. One after another, these be-suited businessmen challenged this or that aspect of the party line. Our nervousness about asking a question flew out the window and we left it up to the bourgeois masses. Then the vicar had a go.

The father of one of the local parishioners who was visiting from his Wimmera wheat farm asked, "What I and all my fellow farmers want to know is when is the government going to stop killing our customers." Much laughter and Billy let that one go through to the keeper. Snedden's sole supporter in the audience could take no more of it. Getting the call, he asked: "Can the Attorney-General inform the meeting, without revealing any intelligence ...?" Snedden roared along with the rest of us.

Ian and I drove away confident that Calwell was going to win. If that were the temper of Camberwell Anglicans and the Wimmera, the Coalition had Buckleys.

A surprise conscriptionist

As the elections came closer, anti-conscription meetings were held in every available venue. Fifty years on, I can't remember whether this one was at the Trades Hall but one speech is, as Harold Macmillan is made to say in *Beyond the Fringe*, "indelibly printed on my memory."

On the platform was the secretary of one of the more militant unions. When his turn came, he wanted us to know that he was in favour of conscription. "Yes," he declaimed, "first we nationalise the oil companies, and then we conscript all the Young Libs to fight the Marines when they land." Much as we welcomed both legs of this policy, many of us knew that those Young Liberals would have been followed into battle by politically reliable officers with sub-machine guns to make sure that the conscripts did not follow their treasonable principles and defect to the invaders.

Geopolitics in Richmond

Cairns had taken Yarra from the rat Standish Michael Keon at the 1955 post-split election, on a trickle of preferences. He held it in the next three polls with absolute majorities rising to four per cent by 1963. 1966 was going to be different. Cairns was now the best hated man in Australia. The combined forces of clerical fascism and the Coalition mounted an intense campaign to keep him from carrying the fight around the country against what his leader, Calwell, was labelling "the dirty little Asian war", while Whitlam sabotaged their call for immediate and total withdrawal.

It behooved us, therefore, to get along to a rally in the Richmond Town Hall. The upstairs room was packed. A handful of Young Liberals arrived too late to get inside. It hardly mattered, since no sooner had they started to interject than those of us inside could hear the sound of bodies being hauled down the stairs.

The real entertainment was on the platform. Cairns was losing his voice, which was never powerful or energised. His lack of charisma was more than compensated for by Giuseppe DiSalvo. This former naval captain began by assuring his fellow Italians, mostly women, that Santamaria and Keon were "multo fascisti". "*Multo facisti*", he repeated, and the phrase was taken up around the room.

With that bit of history now settled, the Captain could attend to geo-politics. The very notion that the war in Vietnam was a fight between China and the United States was impossible. To make sure that there could be no dissent from his strategic doctrine, he held up a metre-square picture of an elephant. "This is China. China is an elephant." It took somewhat longer for this point to gain general approval than had the fact that Santamaria was "*multo fascisti*". Waverers were about to get a second shot across their bows. The Captain held up another metre-square picture, this time of a whale. "The United States is a whale." More mutterings, and not all in Italian.

With the elephant in one hand above his head and the other holding up the whale, we were assured that Australians had nothing to fear from China. "Whales and elephants cannot fight each other."

Who would disagree with that?

Sigrig McCausland

It is with sadness that we note the death of Dr Sigrig McCausland. For many years Sigrig has been an active member of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, most recently as a member of the federal executive of the ASSLH, and as past President of the Canberra Branch.

Many of us were grateful recipients of Sigrig's warm welcome to the tea room at the Noel Butlin Archives, and also of Sigrig's prodigious knowledge of the archives. For those who don't yet know, the Society awarded Sigrig its inaugural Labour History Medal for her enormous contributions to Labour History earlier this year.

This year Sigrig was also made a Fellow of the Australian Society of Archivists. That citation noted Sigrig's leadership in, and significant contribution to, the "international community of archival educators". For labour historians, Sigrig will be remembered as a dear friend, and valued colleague. As an Australian National University Archivist, Sigrig did much to promote and develop the Noel Butlin Archives during and after the period in which their existence was imperilled. In the months before her death Sigrig was involved with the Brisbane Branch organising committee for the forthcoming 15th Biennial Labour History Conference.

To her partner Phil Griffiths, to her family and friends, and to the members of the Brisbane Branch, we extend our sincere condolences.



Releasing the 'Palace letters'

Professor Jenny Hocking, Whitlam biographer, and Monash University academic has launched "an historic action against the National Archives of Australia to release the 'Palace letters' relating to the dismissal of the Whitlam government, withheld from the Australian people at the behest of the Queen." You can support Jenny's case by visiting the fundraising page: <https://chuffed.org/project/release-the-palace-letters> Already over half of the \$60,000 needed has been donated.

As Jenny explains "The Palace letters, secret correspondence between the Governor-General Sir John Kerr and the Queen at the time of the dismissal, are the final missing piece in the puzzle on the most controversial episode in Australia's political history."



Copyright: National Library of Australia

Tom Rigg

In 1984, Tom Rigg, then stationmaster at St Albans, today a long term member of the Melbourne Branch, put forward a radical redevelopment proposal for St Albans: an underground rail station with a shopping precinct above. Rejected at the time, this plan is being partially realised with recent approval for the precinct. The rail line now runs under Main Road. In marking this development, which Tom said was "the biggest thing that's happened in St Albans", part of Tom's life has been featured in the *Brimbank & North West Star Weekly* newspaper.

Tom was instrumental in establishing the St Albans Historical Society. And, after 40 years on the railways, Tom has become an expert on rail history and has written several books, including *Sunshine Railway Disaster: A Railwayman's Perspective*, an excellent account of the tragic rail accident in 1908, involving the Ballarat and Bendigo trains. Forty-four people died, and around 500 were injured in the collision.

Tom's life, scholarship, and activism deserves recognition.

Evatt: A Life

Laurence Maher

John Murphy, *Evatt: A Life* (Sydney: New South, 2016). i-x + 451 pp. Hardback \$49.95.

By the end of 1954, there was a clear and convincing case that the Leader of the ALP Opposition in the Commonwealth Parliament, Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, QC (1894-1965), was gripped by a specific debilitating madness. The proximate cause of what would soon become Evatt's Petrovian denouement was the defection and request for political asylum on 2 April 1954 of Vladimir Petrov, the Third Secretary (and MVD man) at the Soviet Embassy in Canberra.



One way of testing the first sentence is to ask the following questions. First, what is the supporting evidence, expert (medical and legal) and lay, direct and circumstantial? Secondly, what can be said about the aetiology of Evatt's mental illness? Finally, to what extent, if any, can a gauge of moral culpability be reliably used to stand in historical judgment of the relevant conduct of Evatt?

In this, the fifth biography since Evatt died, John Murphy focusses on the second question, which he calls "the madness question" (361). The stimulus was Evatt's long speech in the House of Representatives on the evening of 19 October 1955 responding to the tabling of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage (RCE). The RCE, constituted by three State Supreme Court judges, had been established by the Menzies Government to inquire into and report upon Petrov's defection. Among the words the author applies to Evatt in examining his question, are "quite obsessed" (2), "delusional" (367) and "slightly unhinged" (368).

Early in his 1955 speech, Evatt revealed that he had written to the Soviet foreign minister, Vlachesav Molotov, to "ascertain the truth of these grave matters" and that Molotov had duly replied. The *Hansard* record is interrupted by the words "Honourable members injecting" and resumes: "DR EVATT - Honourable members may laugh, but they have to face some facts tonight." The reporter's notation fails altogether to capture the intensity of the hatred, contempt and ridicule which erupted from the government and breakaway ALP (Anti- Communist) benches.

Among the contextual considerations which are central to understanding Evatt's behaviour in 1954, at least four are important. First, the notification of the Australian Government in early 1948 that copies of two top secret UK government documents had been

leaked from the Department of External Affairs in Canberra to Moscow in early 1945. That led directly to the establishment of ASIO in March 1949. Secondly, the worsening international and domestic Cold War politics in the immediate post-World War II years. Thirdly, the ALP's defeat at the federal election held on May 1954 and, finally, Evatt's public announcement in 5 October 1954 attacking elements in the Victorian branch of the ALP associated with Mr B.A. ("Bob") Santamaria which led directly to the catastrophic split at the ALP federal conference in February 1955.

It seems to this (lawyer) reviewer that, insofar as Murphy deals with the first aspect of the "madness" question, he understates the case that Evatt's Petrov-related conduct in 1954 (and by necessary inference, 1955) was that of a person with a severe psychological disorder. The full force of Evatt's mental impairment does not emerge because the author has eschewed applying what, in the law of evidence, is called the best evidence rule. In my view, apart from Evatt's words, the best evidence about Evatt's impairment and what was at work in his mind when he delivered the 1955 Molotov letter speech was, and mostly remains, the Interim Report of the RCE delivered on 21 October 1954. But it is not mentioned by Murphy.



Outside the Petrov Royal Commission. Photograph by Jack Hickson.

The subject matter of the Interim Report is the grandiose, entirely artificial, and comprehensively self-destructive fuss which Evatt made about the provenance of the two anonymous English language documents, Document H and Document J, which Petrov handed to the Australian government. The former Document H, which had been prepared in 1951 by a journalist Fergal O'Sullivan and handed to an official at the Soviet Embassy, had no potential whatsoever to embarrass Evatt, who in 1953 had employed O'Sullivan as his press secretary.

It was Document J that brought out the worst in the fragile Evatt psyche. When pressed by the judges to formulate with precision the conspiracy he was alleging, Evatt's specification (in the context of what had happened in the years 1945-1954) was so breathtakingly bizarre that it could only be the

product of madness: Document J had, he stated, been fabricated by the Petrovs in part by blackmailing O'Sullivan into falsely inserting his own name and the names of two of Evatt's staff members as sources of gossip so as to enable the Petrovs to have the document published on the eve of the 1954 election.

The question, not capable of being answered here is: should/will history pity or blame Evatt for his fantastic conduct regarding Document J? It is sufficient to suggest that the uncontested evidence before the RCE (none of it evidence from the Petrovs) makes an unassailable case for the following. First, it was authored and typed at the Soviet Embassy in Canberra in May 1953 by a journalist, Rupert Ernest Lockwood. Secondly, the description applied to its scandalous contents on the second day of the RCE hearing (18 May 1954) by leading counsel assisting the RCE, W.J.V. Windeyer QC of the New South Wales Bar, a work of "bestly cowardice" buttressed in that enduring alliteration (TR, 26) – "a farrago of facts, falsity and filth", is unlikely ever to be bettered.

Although this review has focused on one aspect, albeit pivotal, of Evatt's crowded life, it needs to be emphasised that Murphy's biography will have great appeal to both the general as well as the academic reader. Murphy's judgements are balanced and his prose is clear and fluent. Recommended.

Donald Grant: from gaol to Senator

Barry York

Of the twelve members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) sentenced in Sydney in 1916 to five to 15 years' gaol for conspiracy, none is more fascinating than Donald MacLellan Grant. Grant's words in the Sydney Domain following the imprisonment of IWW leader, Tom Barker, that it would cost the capitalists £10,000 for each day served by Barker, had been seen by the state as evidence that he, and other Wobblies (as the IWW were known), were behind a series of arson attacks on business premises in Sydney. The Twelve were gaol for conspiracy to commit arson and to incite sedition and pervert justice. Grant was sentenced to 15 years' gaol.

According to the *Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, Grant was "spare of build with flaming red hair and a striking appearance ... a gifted mob orator able to captivate, inspire and arouse his audiences". When the Twelve were released early, following a New South Wales Royal Commission in 1920, Grant's revolutionary enthusiasm was undiminished. A celebration of their release filled the Sydney Town Hall. Women distributed red camellias and the proceedings concluded with a rousing version of "The Red Flag". Federal MP Frank Anstey and NSW MLA Jack Brookfield shared the platform and Grant, with typical passion and in his Scottish brogue, made it clear he was unbowed. He said: "If it is a crime to raise one's voice against the taking of

men from this country to be slaughtered in Europe, we are proud of being called seditious conspirators."

Yet five years later, he was standing for the Senate for the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the party the Wobblies had condemned as "fakers" and the parliament they had seen as a dead-end in the struggle to overthrow capitalism. According to Ian Turner in his meticulous account, *Sydney's Burning* (1969), most of the Twelve "had had their fill of notoriety and were happy to abandon public life". Not so Grant and two others, Tom Glynn and J. B. King. The latter two joined the new Communist Party of Australia while Grant backed the Industrial Socialist Party (ISP), unsuccessfully standing as a candidate in the federal election of 1922.

The ISP had been established by radical socialist ALP members but after Labor adopted the Socialist Objective in 1921, ISP members gradually moved back to the party. Grant joined the ALP in 1923 and remained active on the militant left. In 1927, he was again gaol, for a week, over an unauthorised street demonstration protesting the execution of anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, in Massachusetts. In 1931, he was arrested once more, this time for using insulting words to a policeman in the Sydney Domain.

Grant's acceptance of the "parliamentary road" may also have been influenced by the fact that it was a Labor State government which called the Royal Commission leading to the release of the Twelve. Grant's candidature for the Senate in 1925 was highly controversial within the ALP and he was unsuccessful in the Senate election but, in 1931, he was elected to Sydney Municipal Council and also appointed to the NSW Legislative Council by Premier Jack Lang. He served as an Alderman for 13 years but declined to seek re-election for the Legislative Council in 1940, condemning it as "even worse than the House of Lords" in its representation of privileged interests.

He worked as a dental mechanic in Sydney – the job he had been trained for in his youth in Scotland prior to migrating in 1910 – and again sought ALP Senate endorsement in 1943. This time he was successful. Senator Don Grant served in the Senate, representing NSW, from July 1944 to June 1959. During that time he was an adviser to the Minister for External Affairs, Dr H. V. Evatt, and attended the Paris Peace Conference in 1946. While on overseas parliamentary duties he was able to make a visit to Inverness, Scotland, where he was born in 1888. Grant had moved well away from the politics that led to the gaoling of the Sydney Twelve and was basically a Keynesian anti-communist 'socialist'. His main interest in the Senate was foreign affairs. He was hostile to the Soviet Union, supported recognition of the Peoples Republic of China, opposed apartheid in South Africa and expressed the view that Australia's future was bound up with the Asian region. It's a pity that an oral history interview was never recorded with him. He died in 1970.

This first appeared in <http://moadoph.gov.au/blog/donald-grant-from-gaol-to-elected-senator/>

15th Biennial Labour History Conference

The Last Innocents

Call for Papers: Notice from the Brisbane Branch

Brisbane, 23-25 September 2017

Convened by the Brisbane Labour History Association (BLHA) on behalf of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH).

Today, the Australian working class are workers of the world: in the sense that we are a predominantly immigrant working class (or the descendants of relatively recent immigrants); and in the sense that workers from so many of the world's nations, languages and cultures have made their homes here.

How did we become workers of the world? How has the labour movement dealt with immigration and the politics around immigration? How has it created a movement of immigrants and locally born? How have immigrants experienced and changed the labour movement? What challenges did we face in the process? These are compelling questions in the era of Donald Trump and Brexit.

Australians are workers of the world in a second sense, as globalisation and the liberalisation of international trade and commerce has made more of our daily work part of an international division of labour. A large number of Australian citizens now work overseas, some temporarily, some permanently; making us both an immigrant and an emigrant people. What challenges has globalisation posed for workers and the labour movement? How have we dealt with them?

The year 2017 also marks the centenary of the Russian Revolution, which had such a profound impact on the labour movement in every country, not least as a result of its internationalism.

The 2017 Labour History conference also invites academic papers and presentations by labour activists around the broader agenda of labour history.

Submission deadlines

The deadline for submitting proposals for an oral presentation or non-refereed paper is Monday 14 July 2017.

Selected papers from the conference will be peer-reviewed and published in special editions of *Labour History* and *Economic and Labour Relations Review* in 2018. The deadline for submitting papers for peer review and possible publication in these journals is Monday 1 May 2017. Full details on paper submission are on the conference website: www.blha.com.au

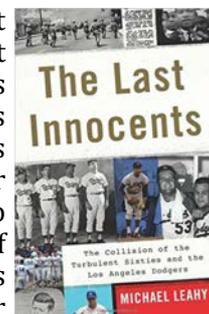
Queries about the conference can be sent to 2017conference@blha.com.au

Keynote speakers: Ruth Milkman and John Maynard.

Braham Dabscheck

Michael Leahy, *The Last Innocents: The Collision of the Turbulent Sixties and the Los Angeles Dodgers* (HarperCollins: New York, 2016), pp. xx + 473, cloth US \$26.99.

There is something sublime about developing an interest in top level sport in one's youth. At a time when life is simple, simpler than it will ever be, it is easy to become absorbed in the doings of a favourite team and players and their exploits on the field of play. It is easier to recall games and deeds witnessed of one's youth than it is to recall games played a decade ago, or five years ago, or last year, or even this year.



This sense of nostalgia has motivated Michael Leahy to write *The Last Innocents: The Collision of the Turbulent Sixties and the Los Angeles Dodgers*. His childhood was one of following the Los Angeles Dodgers during the late 1950s and 1960s; possibly the club's greatest period where it competed in four World Series, winning three in 1959, 1963 and 1965. He was twelve years old when a friend's sister convinced her father to take them to a night game when Sandy Koufax pitched the fourth of his perfect games in 1965.

But there is more to life than sport and the ups and downs of a favourite team. The 1960s was a turbulent decade in America, if not the world. Leahy paints a picture of America being in equilibrium at the end of the 1950s/early 1960s. As the decade unfolded it was challenged and shattered as America lost any clear sense of itself. There was the Civil Rights movement and the counter revolution it generated, the Watts riots in 1965 only miles from the Dodgers' stadium, the Vietnam war and its rejection by the young, the slayings of President Kennedy in 1963, and then of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy in 1968; not to mention broader developments in music, the arts and flower power.

Leahy has set himself the task of linking these broader societal developments to the operation of Major League Baseball (MLB), in general, and the Dodgers and the inner lives of seven of its players, in particular. He states that his book "is a story about the odyssey of seven players during the turbulent 1960s ... They were ballplayers not crusaders ... as they starred in games watched by millions, they coped with anxieties and indignities their fans knew nothing about" (3-4).

The seven were Maury Wills, an African American, a base stealing wizard short stop; Wes Parker, from a privileged WASP background and one of the game's greatest defensive first basemen; the Jewish American Hall of Fame pitcher, Sandy Koufax; Tommy Davis, an African American outfielder; Jeff Torborg, a Danish American

back up catcher who caught Sandy Koufax's perfect game in 1965; Dick Tracewski, a Polish American back up infielder; and Lou Johnson, an African American outfielder.

Leahy's methodology is based on extensive interviews with all of these protagonists, other than Sandy Koufax who spoke to him over the phone for 40 minutes to talk about his former team mate Maury Wills. He and Mills, the Jew and the black man, used to open the others' mail to insulate each other from racist abuse (2). In addition, Leahy conducted interviews with 47 other persons connected with the Dodgers orbit and made assiduous use of newspaper records and other secondary sources. The only weakness of the book is that limited information is provided concerning such material.

While Leahy says the book examines the odyssey of seven players it mainly focuses on three: Wills, Parker and Koufax. Wills, and for that matter other African American players, resented the racism that he encountered in the minors, in the broader vicinities of the Dodgers' spring training camps, being refused entry to hotels and other establishments and, allowed entry to a hotel, eating his meals alone in his room. Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act 1964, little seemed to change in the way in which Dodger African American players were treated in the 1960s. As was true elsewhere in America, it only served to fuel anger concerning the hollowness of the American dream.

Mills also resented, and this is true of most players, the high handed way they were treated by Dodgers' management in salary negotiations and being coerced into taking on extra duties such as an eighteen game "good will" tour at the end of the 1966 season. After a long season, which included World Series games, players were exhausted and wanted to give their tired and injured bodies a rest before they started the grind of a new season.

Players were subject to the reserve or option system whereby they were bound to their clubs for life. They could not move to another club without the permission of their current club, and could be traded to other clubs whether they liked it or not. To the extent that the Civil Rights struggle had any impact, it awakened players, both black and white, to the prospect of lifting themselves from their hitherto "chattel" status. Mills, like so many other players in the Dodgers and MLB, simply fell into the lap of Marvin Miller, the former steel union official, who, upon assuming leadership of the Major League Baseball Players' Association in 1966, quietly educated them to their rights. Within a decade he had dismantled the reserve system.

Wes Parker was born of rich and well connected parents. He suffered physical and emotional abuse as a child, especially from his mother. At college he displayed talent as a baseball player. Following college, he holidayed in Paris and one night he tried to work out what to do with his life, free from his stifling parents. Baseball was the only thing he was "good" at. He contacted the Dodgers

who took a long shot and provided him with a chance in a low level club in its farm system. Through hard work he pushed himself upwards and had a productive career with the Dodgers.

Sandy Koufax is an enigma. One of the greatest pitchers of all time, he jealously guarded his privacy. Leahy casts Koufax as the ultimate pitching technician, who devoted himself to perfecting his craft. In addition, he wanted to be afforded the appropriate level of respect for what he achieved. He never forgave the Dodgers for leaking a false story that he was after more money in one of his annual wage negotiations. It besmirched his character, his devotion to his craft. At the end of the 1965 season, he and fellow ace pitcher Don Drysdale jointly held out for increases in their salaries for the 1966 season.

The great strength of *The Last Innocents* is how Leahy provides readers with insights into the minds, if not souls of players. The skill of his narrative is that he enables one to feel that they are there witnessing events as they unfold and understanding the motivations of various protagonists.

This is not really a book about baseball as sport; it is about baseball as work, the constant pressure on players as they battle against their demons, how they cope or don't with the rigours of a long season, forcing themselves to play when injured either because of fears of losing their place in the team or because of management insistence, with attendant longer term consequences for their careers and health, and the uncertainties of annual contract negotiations and being diddled by management.

Leahy takes readers into the inner workings of the dynamic that unites and divides players in their struggles with and against each other for dominance on the diamond, how they spend much of their time away from the game alone and disoriented, being anxious about what fate has in store for them when their careers come to an end. In the final analysis, *The Last Innocents* is about how tough and demanding professional sport is; how it shapes and in some cases destroys those who find themselves in its orbit. Michael Leahy has written a classic in revisiting and never letting go of events that fascinated him in his youth.

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