

RECORDER

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Port Adelaide Workers' Memorial

By Humphrey McQueen

This is an edited version of a speech made by Humphrey McQueen at the Port Adelaide May Day celebrations. It centres on the Port Adelaide Workers' Memorial.

One does good, neither from fear of punishment nor promise of reward, but because good is good to do. These were the sentiments of the nineteenth-century American Rationalist, Colonel Robert Ingersoll, whose writings would have been popular with some of the people whose names went onto the Workers' memorial. We can be certain that all of them had lived according to that point of view. None of them behaved as they did with any thought that they might be honoured in any way other than through the respect of their friends, neighbours and workmates.

That is why it is an honour to be at the Port as your guest on May Day to reflect on their lives and the importance of this monument.

We gather in the shadow of Anzac Day and of International Workers' Memorial Day. This event brings the two commemorations together. Looking back to the establishment of this memorial between 1917 and 1921 we see a period of intense propaganda in support of King and Empire.

It is often forgotten that war is work for capital. Slogging in the trenches for the capitalist state is as much a form of wage-slavery as is labouring on sites for a particular capitalist. Eight of the forty-one original names were of local workers who had been killed in the war. In one sense then, this workers' memorial is also a war memorial. But I suggest that all the war memorials are also memorials to the working people whose lives and limbs were lost in the service of capital. Those monuments are ours too. We must reclaim them from the warmongers.

During the 1971 Moratorium March in Newcastle, the thousands of workers paused at the small war

memorial outside the Post Office in Hunter Street. An elderly miner spoke: 'When I was a lad I was silly enough to volunteer to fight for the British Imperialists. I'm proud to say that my son fought in the anti-fascist war. We're both here today to make sure that my grandson is not conscripted for the imperialist war in Vietnam'. As anti-imperialists, part of our task is to make the experiences of these generations part of every Anzac Day.



Adding the statue of 'Justice' with her scales of equality in 1921 was another call to arms. Those scales can never be balanced in a class society. We have a horrible reminder of the law as a regime of injustice in the death of Daniel Madeley in 2004. Madeley was a young apprentice toolmaker crushed by an unguarded, unsafe and antiquated machine. The State Coroner's scathing report, released in February 2011, found that this industrial accident was 'entirely preventable'.

The bias built into bourgeois law is written all over the persecution of Ark Tribe by the Building and Construction Commission. It pursues workers trying to enforce Health and Safety regulations but turns a

blind eye to the violators. To make matters worse, the anti-labour party government is harmonising OH&S down to the weakest common denominator.

Hence, the necessity for Justice to have a sword. Under the rule of capital, that defensive weapon is a militant union movement. The significance of organised labour was voiced in 1916 by a Hobart labourer, Samuel Champ:

Our liberties were not won by mining magnates or stock-exchange jobbers, but by genuine men of the working-class movement who had died on the gallows and rotted in dungeons and were buried in nameless graves. These were the men to whom we owed the liberties we enjoyed today. Eight hours and other privileges in Australia had been won by men who suffered gaol and persecution.

Shortly after Champ's speech, our liberties were protected by the defeat of the two plebiscites to impose conscription for overseas military service. The labour movement knew that industrial conscription would follow. According to the Solicitor-General, the War Precautions Act already meant 'that John Citizen was hardly able to lift a finger without coming under the penumbra of some technical offence'. How appropriate then that we are meeting in the courtyard to the prison cells where militants were held.

Among the victims of this repression were 'the IWW twelve' jailed for arson. All but two got early release after a Royal Commission. That investigation was one achievement of the Industrial Socialist Labor member for Broken Hill, Percy Brookfield. Brookfield held the balance of power in the NSW parliament. To cling to office, the Labor cabinet gave way on the IWW and on OH&S for Barrier miners.

Percy was on his way to Sydney via the Port when 'he died for his people' at Riverton in March 1921, ninety years ago. He had often passed through here and no doubt many locals wanted to add his name to their memorial. He has his own in the Broken Hill cemetery and now Paul Adams's biography is available with that stunning title - *The Best Hated Man in Australia*.

Percy Brookfield was special. However, until 1915, he was just another miner and unionist. Similarly, Ark Tribe had been an everyday builders' labourer for twenty-three years before he took his stand. The same is true of the Eureka rebels. They were not saints or angels before November 1854. People rose to the call in 1929 here and again in 1998 against Patricks. Stories about past struggles encouraged them to say: 'We could do that!'

And they did.

Women have always done so too. Yet only one out of the forty-one names in the first listing was of a woman, Christina Fox. More have been added, for example, the Aboriginal activist, Ruby Hammond. Yet

there were many, many more who were busy behind the scenes - 'Because that's what women do', to quote a line from the 2004 musical *Eureka!* They 'did good because good is good to do'. Researchers are finding more of their names for you to consider adding.

Why are there not more memorials to workers? There is a marble statue of a cane-cutter at Innisfail. And there are memorials to a few of the tens of thousands killed on the job, for instance, to the truckies at Tarcutta. And as we saw earlier there are the war memorials for the tens of thousands slaughtered to make the world safe for big capital.

However, we need to remember that we are surrounded by memorials to working people wherever we go. A plaque to the architect of St Paul's cathedral in London, Christopher Wren, reads 'If you seek his memorial, look about you'. An avalanche of capitalist propaganda makes it hard for us to recognise the memorials to workers that are all around us. The first ticket-holder in the Shearers' Union in Wagga Wagga in 1886, Charlie Sullivan, knew the truth when he wrote his memoirs forty years later:

Not one word is written of the thousands of workers who toiled in the heat, in the cold, and in the rain, who cut through rock and blasted channels, who reared great walls and buildings, not a word of the lives lost, of those who toiled with the crushed fingers of their calloused hands, dripping blood into the concrete, or staining steel. It has been thus from the time millions of straining naked slaves built that magnificence which was Babylon, and those monuments which are known as the Pyramids.

The names of kings and warlords are handed down in manuscripts and in books to after generations, but few ever think of the great and humble army whose sweat and blood are mingled in the concrete and bricks as surely as if the walls were built over a framework of human flesh.

They will remain unhonoured and unsung till workers write the histories that are taught in our schools.

Gathering here today we take a stand to inscribe Charlie's longing for a red armband account of Australia's past.

Although I have dwelt in the past, you would not have come out this morning if you did not know in your hearts that this is a monument to the living. When you lay your flowers you commit to a future where any murder for profit is outlawed, where class bias is no more, and where every human being flourishes through social equality. Until then, organised labour as the embodiment of Justice dare not lay down our sword.

Vale Alton Walker

By Brian Smiddy

With the recent death of Alton Walker, the ranks of former officials of the Printing & Kindred Industries Union (PKIU) are diminishing.

Alton was a bookbinder by trade, prior to being elected as Union Organiser, a position which he held for over 25 years.

Alton was a highly respected official.

We mourn the death of a colleague and we extend our deep sympathies to his family.

Vic Williams: a life as an activist

By Sam Wainwright

Long-time Perth activist, Communist Party of Australia leader, World War II veteran and retired waterside worker Vic Williams died on 19 April 2011, aged 96.

Born on 28 June 1914, Vic joined the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in 1939 and was one of its leading members in Western Australia until it split over the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968.



With others, Vic formed the pro-Soviet Socialist Party of Australia which took up the Communist Party name after the original CPA dissolved in the early 1990s. He remained with it for the rest of his life, and was also a founding member of the WA Greens.

He worked on the Fremantle waterfront for many years and was involved in some of the big strikes by the wharfies in 1954 and 1956. At the time he was Secretary of the CPA's wharf branch and produced its regular waterfront bulletin *Smoko*.

In 1956, Vic became the Secretary of the Waterside Workers Federation (WWF) publicity committee. Also in the 1950s, Vic and the WWF helped restart the annual Fremantle May Day parade. He marched in every one since, except last year when ill health prevented him. After retirement he was awarded life membership of the WWF, now part of the Maritime Union of Australia.

Joan Williams, who died in June 2008, was Vic's wife for 63 years. They met in the 1940s while he was in the army and she was a journalist for the *West Australian* newspaper. They were an activist couple and Joan was as busy as Vic, among many other things becoming the only woman to sit on the Melville City Council in the 1970s.

Especially interested in poetry, creative writing and the arts; they were instrumental in the re-establishment of the WA branch of the Children's Book Council of Australia which had lapsed before World War II. The WA branch is today one of the organisation's most active; fulfilling Vic and Joan's vision.

They were also regular faces at *Green Left Weekly's* fundraising events and those of other organisations, never limiting their circle of friendship and activism to those from the same tradition in the socialist movement.

Many Perth activists have remarked how right into his late 80s, Vic would not just attend the big protests of the day; but all the smaller pickets, vigils and meetings that take place in between. His long stints at the Workers' Embassy in front of the WA Parliament in the 1990s, support for the struggle over the Swan Brewery site and locking arms with young comrades during the 2001 M1 blockade of the stock exchange were some of the highlights of his activism in these later years. Let's honour Vic's contribution to our movement by continuing the struggle for a world based on social justice and human dignity.

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Green Left Weekly

Obituaries Australia

The National Centre of Biography at the Australian National University (producer of the ADB) has launched *Obituaries Australia*, 'a digital repository of obituaries published in newspapers, journals, magazines and bulletins'.

Its focus is on ordinary Australians who have contributed, in small ways and large, to the history of the country. Go to <http://oa.anu.edu.au> to search for and submit published obituaries, and to fill in 'Life Summary Forms'.

So Much For Compulsory Arbitration

By Keith Harvey

26 March 2011 was a milestone in Australia's social and industrial history. On this date, Australia's industrial relations legislation was no longer based on the power given by section 51 (35) of the Constitution to the Australian Parliament to make laws for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes by the means of conciliation and (compulsory) arbitration. It might sound obscure but it's an important change in industrial relations in this country.

First proposed by South Australian Charles Kingston in 1890, a dedicated power for conciliation and arbitration was an antipodean innovation. The power was included in the Australian Constitution at the suggestion of Henry Bournes Higgins, Australia's pre-eminent labour relations jurist. It was the basis of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act in 1904, one of the few pieces of early Australian legislation not drawn from a UK or US precedent. In those societies, collective bargaining ruled, meaning that the state had little role in establishing standards for wages and conditions.

Australia was different.

As a response to the great disputes of the 1890s in the pastoral and maritime industries, Australia shunned strikes and lockouts in favour of state intervention and compulsory binding arbitration when workers and employers could not reach agreement. While the state had a significant role to play, the legislation also encouraged the formation of representative bodies of employers and employees who became the driving forces of industrial relations.

The Conciliation and Arbitration Act was repealed in 1988 and successive governments began to vary the constitutional basis of industrial legislation.

The Howard government's 2005 WorkChoices laws were based on the Commonwealth's power to legislate with respect to corporations — rather than the conciliation and arbitration power. By this means, the government was able to put into effect its radical conservative program which took much of the initiative in the system out of the hands of the industrial parties — except with respect to collective bargaining.

For example, before 2005 a national wage case commenced only when the ACTU made an application for an increase in minimum and award wages. Awards were created and varied on application by unions or sometimes by employers.

WorkChoices took these roles from the industrial parties and gave them to government agencies such as the former Fair Pay Commission. All existing industrial awards and agreements based on the old conciliation and arbitration power were given a five year sunset clause from the date of proclamation of the WorkChoices laws: 26 March 2006.

The Rudd/Gillard Government's 2009 Fair Work Act also placed its eggs in the corporations basket — albeit with some continuing reliance on the external affairs power and referral of State IR powers to the Commonwealth. Thus on 26 March 2011 all instruments based on the conciliation and arbitration power ceased to have effect.

In an immediate practical sense, this will have little impact since all states other than WA have already referred their IR powers to the Commonwealth. But down the track, the new reliance on the corporations power may have significant consequences. This is because the idea — and the practice — of compulsory arbitration is fading away. Fair Work Australia still acts as an arbitral tribunal but the emphasis has changed.

Employers and employees are consulted by Fair Work Australia as it goes about its work of award making and wage setting, but they do not drive the process in the way they used to: Fair Work Australia operates on its own motion, so to speak. The Rudd/Gillard government abolished the Fair Pay Commission and gave the job of annual wage reviews back to the new Fair Work tribunal. The timing of the reviews is now set by legislation, not by the parties.

Similarly, the "modern" awards created by the former Industrial Relations Commission were created by the tribunal at the direction of then Workplace Relations Act Minister Julia Gillard in accordance with terms dictated by her and the Workplace Relations Act. Employers and unions were consulted but did not really own the outcome.

The one area in which the parties can still operate largely independently is bargaining for enterprise agreements. Here, the state has stepped back and allows the parties to slug it out while tribunal members are forced by law sit on their hands.

Certainly enterprise agreements must meet certain minimum requirements, but in normal circumstances, the parties can resort to the old methods of strikes and lockouts to pressure each other into agreement — and the State is legislatively powerless.

The Fair Work Act requires parties to bargain with each other in good faith, but does not require them to reach agreement. If they do not reach agreement, Fair Work Australia will not arbitrate any outcome, other than in certain relatively narrow circumstances. If they do reach agreement, agreements must include a

dispute settling clause — but this does not have to include binding arbitration as a last resort.

In adopting this course of legislative policy, the Australian Government is now imitating the American model of collective bargaining whereby the state and the process of arbitration have no place in negotiating an agreement — and where strikes, lockouts and striker replacement by non-union workers are common.

Under the Fair Work Act there is really only one form of enterprise agreement — one made between an employer and his or her employees. Unions can play a role as bargaining agents if they have members. This is a significant right but it is also the nub of the problem. The Conciliation and Arbitration Act of 1904 had as one of its fundamental objects: "To facilitate and encourage the organisation of representative bodies of employers and employees." That's gone out the window. You won't find this object in the Fair Work Act — the current system is totally agnostic as to whether unions are to be encouraged or not.

Under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, unions flourished, representing at their peak in 1962 more than 60 per cent of all Australian workers. Today, unions represent just 20 per cent of all workers and in the private sector the figure is closer to 14 per cent.

This means that 80 to 86 per cent of workers are not organised and really have no collective strength. Non union workers can appoint bargaining representatives to negotiate an agreement but their ability to pressure an employer is — for all practical purposes — non-existent. Most non-union workers will ultimately be forced to make an agreement with their employer if they want a pay increase above the minimum rates set by awards.

Non-union agreements are unlikely to contain dispute settling procedures which contain binding arbitration clauses. Awards do not have them. National Employment Standards rights would have to be enforced by the courts if there is no enterprise agreement with a binding arbitration clause.

Awards will continue to be set by a tribunal — but not as the result of arbitration of claims by employees or employers. Disputes arising from awards cannot be arbitrated. Thus only if the parties to an enterprise agreement actually agree to include a binding arbitration clause in an agreement will they have any access to state imposed arbitration — and even this is called "private arbitration".

And thus the unique Australian vision of access to conciliation and binding arbitration as the bedrock of a fair and equitable industrial relations system was laid to rest on 26 March 2011.

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The Petrov Affair Lingers on

By Brian Smiddy

From recently released British Intelligence files, it is revealed that both British and Australian Intelligence organisations co-operated in the defection of Vladimir Petrov in 1954.

Details of this co-operation are reported both in the Melbourne *Herald Sun* and *The Age* of 4 April 2011. The real reason for this co-operation was the reported concern of Prime Minister Menzies about the prospects of Labor Opposition Leader, Dr H. V. Evatt winning the next election and becoming Prime Minister.

It is further stated that the head of ASIO, Charles Spry, supported Menzies' stand. What right under Australian law gave Spry the authority to interfere in the democratic process? Evatt was a controversial figure and it was up to the Australian people to decide their national government.

Dr Evatt was a great Australian, a fighter for free speech and a world visionary. How could anyone forget the great campaign Evatt led in opposition to Menzies' attempt to ban the Communist Party. The High Court ruled that Menzies' legislation to ban the Communist Party was unconstitutional. Menzies then attempted by referendum to impose these draconian laws. This was, as we know, rejected by the Australian people.

The Truth About Spooks Revealed

By Brian Smiddy

It is interesting to read about the activities of ASIO during the visit to Australia by noted American singer, Paul Robeson in 1960.

The Melbourne *Herald Sun* of 4 March 2011 revealed from declassified documents that ASIO undertook eaves-dropping of Robeson during his visit. The purpose of this surveillance was to enhance the political standing of the Liberal Menzies Government in the eyes of the USA. ASIO was assisted by the CIA and MI5 in undertaking this dubious activity.

Paul Robeson was a great humanitarian and used music and his singing in attempting to make the world a more peaceful and equitable place. Today, as in 1960, it is believed by many people that ASIO and like agencies are undertaking activities against Australian citizens who stand up for free speech and liberty. It is important that we learn from history and stand up for our legal rights. People such as Julian Burnside are to be admired for speaking out on many public issues.

Historical parallels: ALP preferences and the resurgent DLP

The election of Peter Kavanagh to the Victorian Parliament in 2006 and Jack Kane's election to the Senate from New South Wales in 1970.

By Lyle Allan

The Democratic Labor Party (DLP) has recently undergone a resurgence, with a presence now in every state. The original DLP in Victoria, its last bastion of support, voted itself out of existence in 1978. However, a rump of the DLP continued to exist after that date, maintained by the minority who voted against the motion to wind the party up. The party continued to operate for just under thirty years only in Victoria, its interstate expansion being very recent. For the most part DLP membership remained small and its prospects limited. This has now changed.

A Preference Deal and Re-birth

A key to this resurgence was an Australian Labor Party (ALP) preference deal for the Victorian Legislative Council in 2006 at the first election for that chamber by proportional representation. The ALP, desperate to elect the highly regarded Nazih Elasmr to the third spot on its ticket in Northern Metropolitan Region, agreed to a preference deal with the DLP. The ALP recommended that its voters direct preferences to DLP candidates in several Regions and, in return, the DLP directed preferences to Elasmr in Northern Metropolitan Region. The tactic worked, with Elasmr elected for Northern Metropolitan, and Peter Kavanagh, with ALP preferences, was elected as a DLP candidate for Western Victoria Region. Kavanagh has good DLP credentials, and is the grandson of original DLP leader William (Bill) Barry. He is the first DLP Member to serve in the Victorian Parliament since 1958.

In 2010 the DLP gained a federal Senator, its first for 37 years. From 1 July 2011, when he begins his six year term, Ballarat blacksmith John Madigan will represent the DLP, to become the first DLP Senator since 1974. One success in 2006 was followed by another success in 2010, but also a defeat. The decision of the ALP to preference the Greens in the Victorian upper house 2010 poll prevented Kavanagh's re-election.

The DLP in New South Wales and Senator Kane

On 22 July 2011 the New South Wales Branch of the DLP will celebrate its re-birth with an inaugural Jack Kane dinner at the up-market North Ryde RSL, and Senator Madigan will give the address. This is certainly appropriate, to have a new DLP Senator speak about an old one. Kane's history, unlike our own late DLP Senators McManus and Little, is not well known to people in Victoria, yet he does have considerable historical importance.

Jack Kane died at the age of 80 in 1988, a man with a devout Catholic faith and probably the greatest

stalwart for the DLP in a state where it was always historically weak. The Catholic Hierarchy in New South Wales, unlike that in Victoria, took the attitude that it was better for Catholics to stay in and fight Communism within the ALP rather than outside it. Kane was always a supporter of the Industrial Groups in New South Wales, anti-Communist ALP-member trade unionists who contested trade union elections as ALP Industrial Group candidates.

Kane was a life-long supporter of B.A. Santamaria, the President of the National Civic Council that provided much of the the DLP's ideology, although Santamaria was never a DLP member. There was a feeling among many in the DLP leadership that the public perception of Santamaria, that he was close to the DLP, was not an electoral advantage. Frank McManus, the late DLP Senator and party Leader, told the writer in 1976 that within half an hour of its meeting Kane leaked anything important that was talked about in the five-Senator DLP Parliamentary Party, or Caucus, to Santamaria.

Kane will probably be remembered most by historians for an event that happened in his closing days as a federal Senator. He was sued by Wilfred Burchett, the left wing journalist and author, over claims made in the DLP journal *Focus* that Burchett was a Soviet agent. Burchett had written extensively about Eastern European affairs, and had reported the trials of Cardinal Mindszenty and Lazlo Rajk in Hungary, as well as reporting from China, North Korea during the Korean War, and later from Cambodia and North Vietnam. Kane defended the action, and the New South Wales Supreme Court found in favour of Kane. (Kane 1989, p. 213; Heenan 2006, p. 295- 96)

The Importance of ALP Preferences: Kane's election in 1970

Jack Kane, like Peter Kavanagh more recently, was a beneficiary of ALP preferences when he was elected in 1970 to the Senate in the federal parliament. The only distinguishing feature was the lack of a deal, or "horse-trading," as preference negotiations between political parties is now called.

It is a party legend that the New South Wales ALP, in preferencing Kane, prevented the election of Diana Ward from the Australia Party, a more left wing party that later merged with the Australian Democrats. This is wrong. An analysis of the figures and preference distribution suggests that the New South Wales ALP decision was a correct one. There were six candidates to be elected in that year, one being for a short term vacancy, by a quirk of the Constitution that Malcolm Fraser had amended in 1977. Kane was elected to the last vacancy.

At that election in 1970 the quota was 294,924 and there were 2,064,466 valid votes. Three ALP candidates (Mulvihill, McClelland and Gietzelt) and two Liberals (Anderson and Carrick) were elected

from each of first preferences and after the distribution of surpluses from the top two ALP candidates and the lead Liberal.

Gietzeld (ALP) was the fifth candidate elected and 46,520 votes from his surplus of 51,414 went directly to Jack Kane, the lead DLP candidate who, after that distribution, had 191,116 votes.

At the point of final exclusion three candidates remained, and their votes were: Kane (DLP) 203,977; Bull (Country Party) 202,355 and Ward (Australia Party) 183,514. Kane was now elected on preferences from Ward at her exclusion. These went to Kane 131,836 and Bull 51,678. The final count was Kane 335,813; Bull 254,033.

Had the ALP preference been directed to Ward, Kane would have been excluded before Bull and Ward. The almost certain outcome would have been the Bull's election on Kane's preferences, as Kane would have been in third place at the final exclusion if Gietzelt's 46,520 surplus votes went to Ward instead of Kane.

The ALP decision to preference Kane was ostensibly made in the interests of ease of marking. In this case what we now call proximity voting may have resulted in the DLP win. The DLP were no doubt reminded of this many times in the Senate. This had consequences for the Whitlam government, and the DLP in the period they held the balance of power in the Senate during that government from 1972 until 1974 at least supported Labor most of the time. The Coalition after 1974 certainly did not and the result is history.

I think the lesson of 1970 is that the correct allocation of preferences is crucial. The ALP in Victoria were pragmatically correct, whatever some ALP members think of the DLP, in the deal of 2006. The Victorian ALP made a mistake in directing preferences to Steve Fielding of Family First rather than the excellent Greens candidate, former Melbourne City Councillor David Risstrom.

The principal lesson ought to be learned by voters. This is especially important both for the Senate and for the Victorian Legislative Council, elected by proportional representation, where they have the opportunity to vote according to their own wishes and not those of their preferred political party. If voters do not like the way a political party allocates preferences above the line they should not accept that and should vote below the line with their own order of preferences.

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Tom Heenan (2006), *From Traveller to Traitor. The Life of Wilfred Burchett*, Carlton, Victoria, Melbourne University Press.

Jack Kane (1989), *Exploding the Myths. The political memoirs of Jack Kane*, North Ryde, NSW, Angus and Robertson.

Notices

Democracy vs Communism: Remembering the 1951 Referendum on the Banning of the Communist Party.

From Joy Damousi and Ann Curthoys: 'A conference to commemorate this historic event will be held in Melbourne on Thursday 22nd September 2011. A wide variety of perspectives will be covered, including legal, political, social, cultural, transnational and autobiographical. We also hope to have an oral history section. While the "call for papers" is closed, if you have personal memories of these events and would like to talk about them briefly, or if you know of someone else who fits in this category, please let us know.' For more information, contact Joy Damousi (j.damousi@unimelb.edu.au) or Ann Curthoys (Ann.Curthoys@sydney.edu.au).

Labour History and Its People: 12th National Labour History Conference

The National Centre of Biography, in association with the Canberra branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, is organising the Twelfth Biennial Labour History Conference, *Labour History & Its People*, to be held at the Manning Clark Centre, Australian National University, on 15-17 September 2011.

Cost: \$300 full, \$200 students and concession.



SPEAKERS INCLUDE

History Professors Stuart Macintyre and Patricia Grimshaw (Melbourne); Kim Sattler, UnionsACT secretary and Chair of Board, National

Museum of Labour archivists Sigrid McCausland and Maggie Shapley; activist Jack Munday, and overseas guests Professors Don MacRaild and Neville Kirk. Register online at:

<http://ncb.anu.edu.au/labour-history-conference>

Also at the conference will be the launch of '**Working Lives**', the new, online Biographical Register of the Australian Labour Movement. This is the culmination of years of work by John Shields and Andrew Moore.



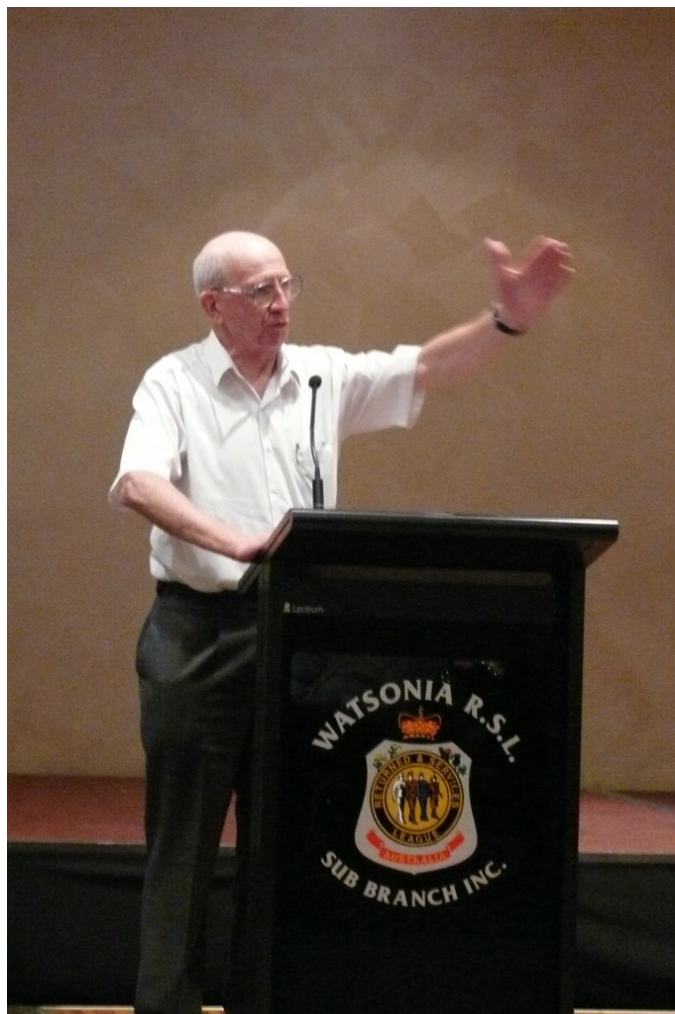
Nick Dyrenfurth and Frank Bongiorno's latest book, *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party* was launched in June by the Hon. Steve Bracks. It offers Labor faithful both a history and a promise of Party renewal and resilience. It's published by UNSW Press and is available at most surviving bookstores.

An ALP Honour for 'our' Brian: 'Brother' Smiddy

It will come as no surprise to *Recorder* readers to learn that on 28 April 2011 a large crowd of people, young and old, gathered to celebrate and honour the work of Brian 'Brother' Smiddy. Colin Brooks, the State Member for Bundoora hosted the award ceremony to honour Brian's tireless activism and work for the Australian Labor Party. As an indication of the high esteem in which Brian is held, the Honourable John Cain presented the award.

Brian, an indomitably active branch member (Bundoora) of the ALP, joined the Party in 1966. In addition to Brian's work for the Party, and his dedication to our society as Secretary, he was also the President of the Printing and Kindred Industries Union and was a union delegate to State Conference for over three decades. In a fitting tribute, Mr Brooks stated in Parliament a few days later: 'I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Brian Smiddy to the community, particularly through his involvement in the labour movement, and commend his hard work, selflessness and generosity as fine examples.' This is a sentiment with which we overwhelmingly concur.

Congratulations, Brother. Long may that booming voice of yours, and ability to organise everything from a fellow traveller to a train ticket, reign.



Photographs by Peter Love



Working Class Studies Association

By Peter Love

The Melbourne Branch was represented at the Working Class Studies Association conference in Chicago on 22-25 June 2011. Some 200 papers were presented to more than 700 participants with 6 simultaneous sessions running for 3 of the 4 days. The program also provided a number of plenary sessions, including one about the Wisconsin Governor's attack on public sector workers, and a Labour History tour of significant sites in what is one of America's most self-consciously working class cities.

Recorder will publish a more detailed report on the proceedings and the apparent vibrancy of labour history in regions most devastated by the current economic crisis and industrial decline in the United States. It is clear, however, that despite rising levels of community activism, the more disparate organisation of the American labour movement would make a campaign like 'Your Rights at Work' much more difficult to organise. Nevertheless, in Wisconsin there are signs of a broadly based movement to combat their Governor's neoliberal assault on the very idea of a public sector.

Melbourne Branch ASSLH Contacts

President

Peter Love, 51 Blanche Street, St Kilda 3182.

Tel: 9534 2445

Secretary

Brian Smiddy, 7 The Crest, Watsonia 3087.

Tel: 9435 5145

Treasurer

Phillip Deery, 85 Little Page Street, Albert Park 3206.

Tel: 9690 2184

Website: <http://www.asslh.org.au/melbourne>

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