

Recorder

Official organ of the Melbourne Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History

Issue No 252—November 2006

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MELBOURNE BRANCH NOTICE OF AGM

MELBOURNE BRANCH,
ASSLH

ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING

November 27 at 5.30 pm

Melbourne Trades Hall
Meeting room 1

Agenda

Reports: President, Secretary,
Treasurer.

Election of Office Bearers and
General Business.

(map on page 8)

CANADA OF TODAY

Many people know Canada as a peace loving country whose population over the last fifty years has helped to make the world a safer place, in particular their efforts in International Peace Keeping.

A recent visit to the country makes me question that assumption. The present minority Tory Government of Stephen Harper recently announced that it had a budget surplus of thirteen billion dollars and at the same time announced a one billion cut in programs.

Amongst the areas of cutbacks are literacy programs, women's affairs, the arts, legal aid and indigenous programs. Also the Government's attitude to Climate Change has many people questioning its policies on the environment.

However, one of the most notable news items was of Justice Dennis O'Connor's Inquiry into the Maher Arar affair. Maher Arar, a Syrian Canadian was on his way home to Canada in September 2002 when he was detained at the JFK Airport in New York. The Americans had been advised by Canadian officials that Arar was a suspected terrorist. He was then told by the American officials that he was being deported to Syria on suspicion of terrorist activities. A plane took him to Jordan, then he was transported to Syria. He was detained in Syria for over twelve months and during that time he was tortured. He was freed on October 5, 2003.

A campaign was then launched demanding a Public Inquiry into his detention. An Inquiry was set up by the then Liberal Government and a report was handed down on September 18, 2006 by Justice O'Connor. The report has cleared Maher Arar's name and restored his reputation. Solicitors acting on behalf of Arar are seeking compensation for his wrongful detention.

Civil liberties and free speech are sacred and it is important that in any democracy that people be on guard to defend these great values at all times.

BRIAN SMIDDY

ACTIVIST LIVES : WENDY JENKINS

Not many people can claim to have taken on Gough Whitlam. But Wendy Jenkins remembers doing just that at a party conference after he had boasted, in his opening speech, of the might of the NSW branch and of how Sydney was the best city. Gough was filling in for Arthur Calwell, the then federal party leader, and Wendy was designated to give the vote of thanks. As a Victorian she was, understandably for most readers of *Recorder!*, peeved. Wendy related that everyone could see that she was fuming and when she got up to move the vote of thanks, she lashed out. Whilst she can't remember what she said Gough didn't speak to her for a long time after that. Some years later her husband Harry Jenkins (State Member for Reservoir 1961-69 and Federal Member for Scullin 1969-85) asked Gough whether he knew Wendy and the answer was "oh yes". Later Wendy and Gough became, and remain, good friends but the incident remains firmly entrenched.

Wendy and Harry joined the ALP together at a time when the DLP was most active. Harry was a medical student when they married and was in general practice in Thornbury when they joined. It wasn't difficult to join the party, Harry's father had worked in a factory and Harry and his family had always had a view that about, what we would now call, social justice. Harry had virtually worked his way through his medical degree, he had not come from a privileged background.

Wendy's own family, on the other hand, were not politically active. In later years however, after her own politicisation, her mother helped with letterboxing, no matter the weather, in what were then the new suburbs in the northern region of Melbourne, with no footpaths and unmade roads.

Wendy was a committed campaigner who with her young children would letterbox and undertake other political activities. She remembers being asked to do very peculiar things such as being sent to do the postal votes—which in those days was cut throat, not knowing who you were going to meet or whether you would run into people from other parties. She was thrown into handing out how to votes cards at polling booths, a difficult job in the Thornbury area in the 1950s and into checking the death notices in the daily papers and marking them off against the electoral roll.

Wendy was also an active member of the State Women's Central Organising Committee as a representative of her local branch. She later became Vice President of the Federal Women's Committee. The issues for the Women's Committee were pretty much as they are today: children, housing, roads and health. The Committee sent numerous resolutions—many successful—from their conference to the State Branch Conference where Wendy was a delegate.

Wendy had four children and along with other women party members, in between going to meetings and conferences, made the cups of tea. The men didn't assist with that task but she believes that they always appreciated the support and the teamwork.

Along with Harry, Wendy was also a member of the Victorian Branch Central Executive Committee. They were both members at the time of federal intervention. As Wendy relates, it was traumatic, a very unpleasant time and something that she would never want repeated. Being representatives of the wrong faction at the time meant coping political and personal abuse.

After intervention Wendy remained 'just' a branch member. In the late sixties however people were needed at head office to help, just for six weeks. Wendy volunteered and stayed for eighteen months in a paid position as administrative support. Whilst she enjoyed earning her own money there was some resentment that a federal member's wife was working.

Wendy was then asked to stand for a Senate position and whilst it was expected that the answer would be yes she declined, saying that one member of parliament in the family was quite sufficient. She later stood for council knowing that she couldn't win it but having the satisfaction of reducing the conservative councillors vote on election day. Then in 1980 Wendy became a councillor in the Whittlesea Shire, the first woman elected.

Political activity was broader than the party though and Wendy and her family were involved in local and national campaigns. The anti-vietnam war campaign being one. Wendy was one of the marshals at the very early demonstrations and she remembers getting a shock when she looked up and there were three little boys in uniform joining in. Her three sons, who hadn't been told about the demonstration, had turned up. She says that she was very proud that they were there. Her daughter was born later.

And there were many other campaigns. Wendy joined with others to protest against the hanging of Ronald Ryan in 1967. They had eggs thrown at them as they walked behind the trams down Sydney Road as part of a rally to try to stop Ryan being hanged. Later when the Fairlea Five were gaoled Wendy took part in the sit-ins outside the gaol.

As an active ALP member Wendy has held almost every position within the party structure and was, until very recently, a delegate to state conference. Whilst employed at the state office Wendy was also a member of the Federated Clerks Union.

Wendy vividly remembers the excitement and possibilities of the Whitlam Government days and the disappointment of the dismissal on November 11th 1975. Visiting her daughter's school, St Michaels, to which her daughter had won a scholarship, she was called to the Principal's Office with the suggestion that they go home and make a phone call. Wendy has 'maintained her rage' and still can't forgive Malcolm Fraser for his part in it.

Wendy now lives in a retirement village where her political experience and skills continue to be drawn on. The residents have taken over the place she says, forming a Board of Management of which she is a member and there is now pressure on her to take the position of the Chair.

RENNIS WITHAM

VALE COMRADES

It with great sadness that we record the recent untimely deaths of three people who made different but significant contributions to the broad labour movement.

Neil Trezise, a State Member of Parliament for Geelong and a Cabinet Minister in the John Cain / Joan Kirner Labor Governments. He was Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation during the period of both Labor Governments. Neil was a lone voice as a State Member representing Geelong, in the lean days of the 60's and 70's. He was well known in Geelong particularly playing Australian Rules Football for the Geelong Club.

Fred Van Buren, a long time member of the Printing & Kindred Industries Union and the National Union of Workers and a member of State Parliament from 1985 – 1992. Fred was a rank and file trade unionist who used his talents to become a state organiser for the Labor Party and a successful politician.

John Kevin Burns, a long time member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, (Printing Division) and Retired Members Association. John was a rank and file unionist and job delegate. He was a long term resident of Richmond and was involved in numerous community groups for over sixty years, including the Richmond Harriers, ALP and the Richmond Historical Society. John was a special person, he did not own a motor car, never had a telephone and if you wanted to see him, his office was a 4x3' porch at the front door.

To the families and friends of our three late esteemed comrades we say thank you for their great contributions to helping to make a better society.

BRIAN SMIDDY

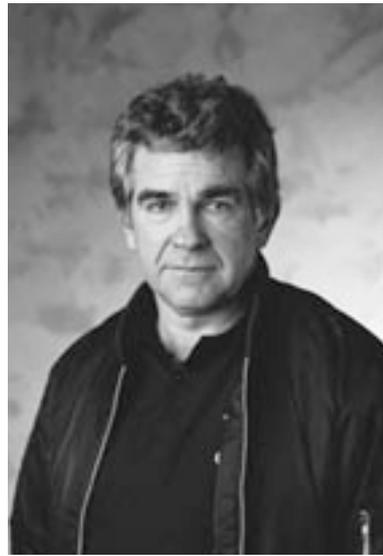
VALE JOHN CUMMINS (26 August 1948 – 29 August 2006)

With the death John 'Commo' Cummins the Victorian labour movement lost one of its most resolute and canny militants. His funeral, which packed the Regent Theatre, the mass march through the city, and the wake at Trades Hall were eloquent testimony to the affection and respect he commanded as a union leader.

Raised in Melbourne's inner north and educated at Parade College, he was a passionate supporter of the Fitzroy Football Club. A handy player in his own right, he remained a loyal supporter of the game and a great encourager of younger players. He attended La Trobe University in the early 1970s, where student campaigns around the Vietnam War and on the job industrial experience combined to forge his distinctive combination of political radicalism and industrial militancy. He joined the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) and when he began work in the building industry in 1972, he joined Norm Gallagher's Victorian Branch of the Builders' Labourers Federation and became an organiser with the union. The mining boom in Western Australia drew him and his family to the Pilbara in 1980, where he honed his tactical skills in tough and challenging conditions. When he returned to Melbourne the

building unions were embroiled in a desperate struggle with the Fraser government's anti-union offensive, resulting in factional squabbles within the labour movement. During the Hawke Labor years, the BLF was deregistered by the Commission and formally de-recognised by the Cain Government in 1986.

Defying official censure, Commo breached Court orders banning BLF officials from building sites, and was jailed for trespass on more than one occasion. He told his young son, 'I didn't tell the judge how to do his job. I don't see why he should tell me how to do mine.' Throughout these rough times his wife Di was an indefatigable supporter, throwing herself into leadership of the 'Free Cummo' campaign. Under siege from all sides, Gallagher's leadership unravelled and in the early 1990s John saw that building union solidarity was the only way forward. He supported the



contentious merger of the BLF with what became the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union in the ACTU-sponsored amalgamations. In 1994 the BLF became part of the CFMEU and in 1996 John was elected Victorian President of the Building and Construction Division of the CFMEU. With Secretary Martin Kingham, he

dedicated himself to consolidating the new union and defending it against the new Howard government's anti-union offensive. He appeared before the Cole Royal Commission where he was dignified but firmly defiant of the Commission's obvious political purpose. He fought the Building Industry Taskforce's union-busting campaign so effectively that even as he lay dying of a brain tumour, they continued to prosecute him.

During industrial and factional battles unionists as passionately militant as John Cummins are bound to make enemies and inflict wounds, but they were not in the back. Commo was a resolute leader who campaigned, and won significant victories, for rank-and-file building workers who, with tears in their eyes as they proudly marched him through the city they built, raised the defiant chant he had helped popularise, 'Dare to Struggle. Dare to Win. If You Don't Fight, You Lose.'

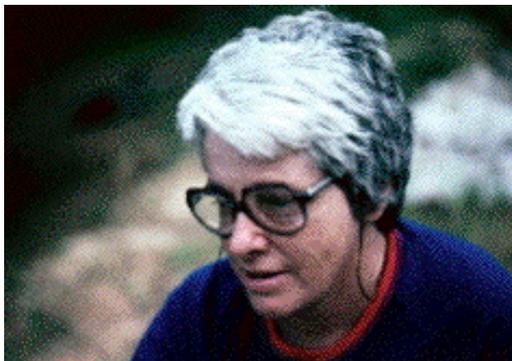
The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Melbourne Branch, offers sincere condolences to John's steadfast wife Di, their sons Mick and Shane, and family.

PETER LOVE

VALE WENDY LOWENSTEIN (25 June 1927 – 16 October 2006)

On 11 November 2006 friends, comrades and admirers of Wendy Lowenstein packed the Old Ballroom at Melbourne Trades Hall to celebrate the life of this legendary campaigner who sought to preserve the common culture of ordinary working people. The wake, chaired by her daughter Marti, with film clips from her son Richard, watched by her now frail husband Werner, marked the end of a prodigiously productive radical life. There was a haunting poignancy in the songs performed by Margaret Roadknight and Danny Spooner, and in the music of the Bohemian Nights. In an adjoining room there was a display of documents and photographs by people such as her old friend John Ellis who dutifully recorded Wendy's last formal gig for posterity.

Katherin Wendy Robertson was born in Kew on 25 June 1927, the fourth child of Douglas and Rita Robertson. Beginning school in 1932, one of the worst years of the Great Depression, she won a scholarship to Box Hill Grammar in 1939, by which time she had already taken an interest in politics. Following her older brother and sister, she worked as a volunteer in the New Theatre, joined the Eureka Youth League and immersed herself in the left-wing causes of the period. Along the way she joined the Communist Party of Australia. After leaving Box Hill Grammar she edited the Eureka Youth League's *Youth Voice*, quickly moved on to write for the *Radio Times* and began a part-time journalism course at Melbourne University. She relinquished this partly at Communist Party behest, and embraced proletarianisation by taking a job in a battery factory. In 1947 Werner Lowenstein, a Dunera boy who she met through the New Theatre, became her devoted lifelong partner, with whom she had three children Peter, Martie and Richard.



Wendy's interest in Australian popular culture was strengthened by the revival of interest in folk culture in the United States and Britain. In 1952 she co-founded the Victorian Folklore Society with Ian Turner and for fifteen years edited its journal, initially the *Gumsucker's Gazette*, later *Australian Tradition*. She was also an organiser of the first Port Phillip Folk Festival in 1965.

While working as a school librarian she completed an Arts degree at Melbourne University, with graduate certificates in teaching and librarianship. For several years teaching was her occupational bedrock, but she maintained her cultural and political interests in addition to raising her family through a combination of discipline and prodigious energy. The small family house in then working class Prahran became the centre of her bustling, productive activities that extended into wide network of cultural and political groups, even after she

left the Communist Party following the crises of 1956.

Inspired by Studs Terkel's oral history of American workers, Wendy set off in 1969 with Werner and the kids on a tour of Australia to record folklore and memoirs of working life. This provided most of the material for her most famous book, *Weevils in the Flour*. Having decided that her life's work would be as a writer, she self-published a collection of children's vulgar rhymes, engaging her children as research assistants, to their occasional embarrassment at school. It was published in 1975 as *Shocking, Shocking: the improper play rhymes of Australian Children*. Two years later she co-authored *The Immigrants*, with Morag Loh a book based on interviews with non-Anglophone migrants. In 1980 she joined Ian Turner and June Factor as co-author of a revised edition of *Cinderella Dressed in Yella*. But by far her most successful project was the collection of oral testimony about ordinary Australians' experience of the Great Depression of the 1930s, *Weevils in the Flour*, published in 1978 by Hyland House. This became a classic work of Australian oral history, and is still in print. Wendy now decided to become a full-time writer, 'to hell with a safe job and superannuation'.

However, Australian publishers had little interest in left-wing writing at this time. As a result her manuscript on South Gippsland coal miners remained unpublished, despite its incorporation into her son Richard's film *Strikebound*. With customary resolution, she set about doing it herself and set up Bookworkers Press in 1982 to publish an oral history account, with Tom Hills, of the Melbourne waterfront *Under the Hook: Melbourne waterside workers remember, 1900-1980*. A revised edition, updated after the 1998 Maritime Dispute was published that year. Alarmed at the direction of labour market restructuring and workplace reform in the 1980s, she produced a more contemporary version of her earlier success, *Weevils at Work: what's happening to work in Australia – an oral record*, published in 1997. As one of her 'victims' for that book, I had first hand experience of what others had told me about being interviewed by Wendy: that it was an active, engaging conversation rather than the conventional question and answer routine. In light of the energy and imagination that she brought to the business of getting left-wing books published it was significant that her last book, written in 1999, was *Self-Publishing without pain*. Unfortunately, thereafter Wendy and Werner's health and energy started to decline. She began the steady slide into the fog of Alzheimer's disease, which finally took her life.

A list of Wendy's books disguises the breadth and depth of her activity. She wrote innumerable articles, broadcast many interviews and was a hyperactive urger on numerous causes to do with peace and social justice. We were all moved by her sincerity, impressed by her energy and prodded by her enthusiasms. She personified so much that was admirable about her generation of left activists. The old cliché tells us that you're never dead until you're forgotten. The memory of Wendy Lowenstein will be with us for many years yet.

The Melbourne Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History offers our sympathy to the Lowenstein family over Wendy's death and congratulates them for helping sustain such a legendary comrade, to whom we're all indebted.

PETER LOVE

RESEARCH NOTE

In August and September 1917 Australian soldiers were stuck in the mud of Passchendaele. Ten thousand were to die in what many consider to be the most pointless and horrific of battles in a pointless and horrific war. On the home front the eastern states were in the grip of the biggest strike movement in Australian history, as 100,000 workers, mostly in NSW and Victoria, struck in solidarity with Sydney railway workers for five tumultuous weeks.

What was Prime Minister Billy Hughes doing during all of this? Many things is of course the answer. But one could be forgiven for thinking otherwise if his 1917 pocket diary is any guide. Researching the great strike, I was pleased to find that the diary is available amongst Hughes' papers at the National Library. After my initial disappointment at the seeming absence of any entries, I was excited to notice, while flicking through the blank pages, an entry in August 1917.

The result will not doubt turn the historiography of the Great War on its head. We now know that in August 1917, Billy Hughes felt compelled to make a note:

"Remind Mabel about the sandwiches."

ROBERT BOLLARD

EVENTS OF INTEREST

Fill the 'G'

A National Day of Protest, organized by the ACTU against John Howard's unfair and unjust Industrial Laws will be held on Thursday, 30 November at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The MCG gates will open at 7.00am and people are asked to be seated by no later than 8.55am. From 9.00am-10.00am Sky Channel will broadcast across Australia. At 10.30am there will be a March back to the City.

Be there and help to fill the 'G.'

John Wren 1871 – 1953, Glory Glory Glory, Exhibition

For people who may be interested, the John Wren 1871 – 1953, Glory Glory Glory Exhibition, at the Australian Racing Museum & Hall of Fame, Federation Square could be a worthwhile experience. There are many items on display which will bring back fond memories to many diehard Labourites about the life of John Wren. The display is on until January 31, 2007.

After Image: Social Documentary Photography in the 20th century

4 November 2006–1 April 2007
 NGV International, 180 St Kilda Road, Melbourne.
 Photography Gallery, Level 3 (Admission free)

'After Image: Social Documentary Photography in the 20th century brings together a selection of thirty-eight images by American, Australian, British, European and South African photographers active from the 1870s to the early 1980s. Each of the photographs presented in this exhibition possess a memorable quality, something thought-provoking that lingers in our consciousness.' Information: Tel: 8620 2222 Email: enquiries@ngv.vic.gov.au

WHAT'S NEW IN BOOKS

Paul Strangio and Brian Costar (eds), *The Premiers of Victoria, 1856–2006*, Federation Press, Annandale 2006. RRP \$59.95

'In the century and a half since Victoria was granted responsible government in 1856, 44 premiers have presided over the state and colony, from 'Honest' William Haines to Steve Bracks. This book tells their stories. A cast of fascinating characters is brought to life—the mercurial Graham Berry; the roguish Tommy Bent; the bohemian Tom Hollway; and the 'accidental' leader Henry Bolte.'

Sean Scalmer, *The Little History of Australian Unionism*, Vulgar Press, Melbourne, 2006. RRP \$9.95

'A compact, complete and up-to-date history, The Little History of Australian Unionism tells the story of the development of Australian unions over the past 200 years. Scalmer provides a history of trade unions that is clear, accurate and engaging. He records their achievements, explains how they were won, and provides an invaluable context for the urgent defence of the union movement.'

Barbara Pocock, *The Labour Market Ate My Babies: Work, children and a sustainable future*, Federation Press, Annandale, 2006. RRP \$44.95

'In this book, young Australians from all over the country, city and the bush, rich and poor, talk about the good and bad of parental work - the trade off between money and time, consumer riches versus time for each other. Pocock argues that the modern labour market is having a huge impact on today's youth and eating into our capacity to care.'

Peter Cochrane, *Colonial Ambition, Foundations of Australian Democracy*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2006. RRP \$39.95

'Colonial Ambition tells the story of the politicians and would-be politicians of Sydney, who were driven by a determination to lift themselves and their new colony to a higher level. Peter Cochrane tells of the fight for responsible government and democracy through a memorable cast of characters: W.C. Wentworth, Sir George Gipps, Robert Lowe, Lord Howick (Earl Grey), Henry Parkes, Charles Cowper, Lord John Russell and more, all of whom speak for themselves, in the robust language of the day.'

BRANCH NEWS from Peter Love

In 2006, facing the prospect of a return to nineteenth century working conditions, the Victorian labour movement, with State Government sponsorship, organised an impressive range of activities to commemorate and contemplate the significance of the 150th anniversary. The Melbourne Branch of the ASSLH was part of the planning process, with representatives on the co-ordinating committee. Beginning in March, a series of public events explored aspects of how working people in Victoria had campaigned to civilize the relationship between work and life.

In late June the Melbourne Branch of the ASSLH, in conjunction with the Australian Centre at the University of Melbourne organised a conference on 'Working to Live: Histories of the Eight Hour Day and Working Life'. The keynote addresses and papers concentrated on the campaign for shorter hours, the complexities of agreeing on what constituted a fair and reasonable wage, how people managed their domestic and public working lives in specific communities and how justice for some workers has been long denied. There were also some international studies that provided an interesting comparative context to the Australian experience. There is no need for a detailed commentary on the proceedings here since a special issue of this journal, in addition to the normal two, will appear next year with most of the papers from the conference included. At the end of that conference Belinda Probert delivered a robust plenary address entitled 'Would you like choices with that?' Women, work and family under Howard. Copies can be downloaded from the University of Melbourne website as a .pdf. This was immediately followed by a more contemporary conference, *New Standards for New Times: The Eight Hour Day and Beyond*, organised by a team from RMIT associated with the *Labour and Industry* journal. Participants at that conference addressed a range of issues associated with how Australia and other countries define and manage working-time problems that confront us all. Those papers will also be published soon.

Publications

In addition to the conference papers above, numerous individual pieces already published in journals and other periodicals, radio broadcasts and video productions, a book of essays on aspects of Victorian trade unionism is also being prepared for publication next year and may be available at the 10th National Labour History Conference that will be held at the University of Melbourne and the Melbourne Trades Hall on 4-6 July 2007.



CALL FOR PAPERS

The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Melbourne Branch in association with the University of Melbourne and Swinburne University of Technology are hosting the

Tenth National Labour History Conference

LABOUR TRADITIONS

4-6 July 2007

at

The University of Melbourne and the historic Melbourne Trades Hall, Australia.

Labour Traditions: As the labour movement in Australia is resisting a sustained attack from a hostile Federal Government, it is time to explore the resilience and fragility of labour traditions. They have tended to sustain a culture of collectivism, mutuality and sociability. We interpret our theme generously and will welcome papers that broaden our understanding, deepen our knowledge and enlarge our sympathies for the shared experience of working people, their communities and common culture.

How to contribute: Papers, (no more than 10 pages long), submitted for formal, academic refereeing must reach us by 16 February 2007. Abstracts for non-refereed papers to be considered for publication in the conference proceedings must reach us by 23 February 2007, and the full written versions by 30 March. Presentations will be limited to 15-20 minutes each. People wishing to offer a display, film, DVD, performance or other contribution should send a brief proposal as soon as possible, and certainly no later than 23 February 2007. We welcome proposals for specialist panels or streams of papers. As always, overseas contributions, especially comparative ones, are welcome. For more information see the Labour History website at: <http://www.asslh.org.au/>

Themes include (but are not restricted to):

- * Mobilising: initiative or resistance?;
- * Working-class culture;
- * Workplace safety;
- * The centenary anniversary of the founding of the IWW in Australia;
- * The Spanish Civil War debate 70 years on;
- * The centenary anniversary of the Harvester decision; and
- * The Waterfront Dispute 9 years on.

How to contact the conference organisers

Post: Julie Kimber or Peter Love, Politics, Faculty of Life & Social Sciences, Swinburne University of Technology, PO Box 218, Hawthorn, 3122, Australia.

Telephone: Julie Kimber +61 3 9214 8103
or Peter Love +61 3 9214 8038

Fax: Julie Kimber or Peter Love +61 3 9819 0574

Email: jkimber@swin.edu.au or plove@swin.edu.au

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

In the next few months the Cole Inquiry is due to release its report and its findings—which are now likely to implicate at least two Government officials—are certain to be explosive. In an article in the *Age* earlier this year Dan Silkstone revealed BHP's role in the AWB affair. The following is an extract of his article ('Wheat and eggs scrambled as BHP sought Italian wax', 10/3, p.1)

Documents tendered to the Cole inquiry yesterday revealed a bizarre, childish code language used by senior executives of Australia's largest company to secretly discuss plans to get access to Iraqi oilfields by funding wheat shipments to Saddam and then trying to reclaim the cost as a debt. As corporate communications go it reads more like the summer camp scribbles of mischievous teenagers; a bizarre game of word substitution played out across the emails and memos exchanged by those in the gang. There was no mention of Iraq - it was known as "Italy". Neither was there any oil in the Italian desert - it was "wax". The United Nations was "the League of Nations" and wheat shipments were "eggs". The AWB was transmogrified into the "Austrian Egg Board".

We should be grateful to the Cole inquiry for its exposure of a distinct genre of corporate 'double-speak'. However, BHP-Billiton executives' penchant for using 'code' words is—as readers will know—nothing new. That 'the Big Australian' seems to have involved itself in such dubious dealings is intriguing if unsurprising. That it did so using 'a bizarre, childish code language' suggests a case of all-too-familiar corporate amnesia.

The Melbourne based 'Collins House Group', which in the inter-war years controlled mining in Broken Hill, routinely used code—as many individuals and organisations did—for both brevity and for local reasons. Nothing that went through the Broken Hill post-office was missed by the eyes of postal workers, all of whom were dedicated union members and committed to informing the Barrier Industrial Council (BIC) of relevant company communication.

An example of one such use of code is the following: KAMLU KEPYH VINDE EQUUJ ATNAM DYHOV LOSNY WEKGI TYNMY HESEV NIGEK HEFEH IXSYZ DYHOV. This was the content of an urgent telegram sent to the Collins House Group in Little Collins Street, Melbourne. It can be found in the Secretary's files of the North Broken Hill mining company archives. The telegram alerted the managers to the fact that unionists on the mines were about to establish job committees. The managers, not without some justification, feared that a radicalisation of the 'rank and file' would undermine the relatively harmonious relationship that they had formed with the BIC. Insofar as the Collins House mandarins were concerned, this particular version of workplace bargaining was nothing short of an industrial calamity. Incidentally, the global mining giant Rio Tinto is in direct line of descent from the Collins House conglomerate.

At least the corporate bosses of the 1930s didn't end up with 'Austrian eggs' on their faces.

JULIE KIMBER

SLUOC, an association of users of the State Library, has started a campaign—aimed at parliamentarians—calling for improvements to the State Library of Victoria.

As part of this campaign SLUOC has called for action in the following areas:

FINISH THE JOB OF LIBRARY REFURBISHMENT

During the last two decades the State Library of Victoria has taken over the whole of the Swanston Street complex it once shared with the National Gallery of Victoria and Museum Victoria. But the current Government appears to have lost impetus in pressing on with the completion of the refurbishment.

RETURN THE YET TO BE REFURBISHED AREAS FOR LIBRARY USE

The Library Board and management are seeking paying tenants for Barry Hall and paying users for Queen's Hall. Library Users oppose the commercialisation and privatisation of the Library, and call on the Library to return these historic areas to library use.

MAKE THE STATE LIBRARY A FREE LIBRARY

Library Users call on the Library to abolish this de facto entrance charge of a locker fee, and reintroduce either a free cloakroom service or coin return lockers.

RESTORE LIBRARY HOURS

The State Library of Victoria has reduced access to most of the Library's books by ten hours a week, and closed its Australiana reference desk and reference collection from 6.00 pm. Most books are in the closed stacks, and books cannot be retrieved from these stacks after 6.00 pm, although the Library closes at 9.00 pm. During these hours the Australian history reference collection is locked away.

A more detailed 'report card' on the State Library's services can be found at <<http://www.vicnet.net.au/~sluoc>>

SOLUTION TO NO. 251



CRYPTOGRAM

CLUE: Author of *Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?*

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SOLUTION

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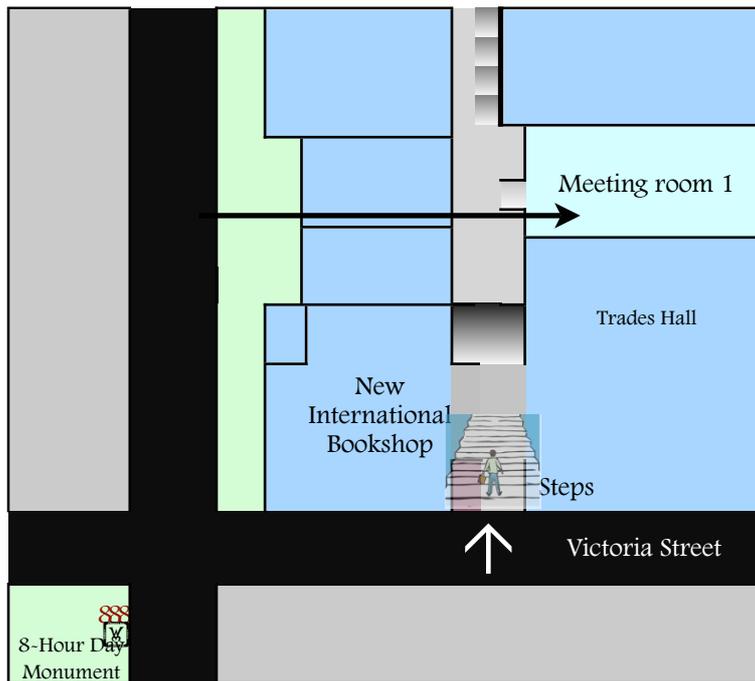
Solution: No. 251

Instrumental in Petrov's defection in 1954.

B I A L O G U S K I
4 9 13 10 15 1 17 21 3 9

MEETING PLACE

Meetings of the society are held in Meeting Room 1 in the Trades Hall
Enter the Trades Hall through the Victoria Street entrance



Labour History Society — Melbourne Branch 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

Julie Kimber
232 Stokes Street
Port Melbourne 3207
Tel: 9636 3238

Please send all submissions and research questions/notes for inclusion in Recorder to the editor, Julie Kimber (juliekimber@unswalumni.com)

MEMBERSHIP OF THE MELBOURNE BRANCH, ASSLH

For more than thirty years the Melbourne Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (Incorporated) has published its newsletter Recorder, held regular meetings with guest speakers or seminar discussions and organised events to commemorate important anniversaries. We have published special issues of Recorder and played a part in restoring the public profile of Labour Day in Victoria. We have restored historic memorials and given assistance to the Labour Historical Graves Committee. Our members continue to write labour history, assist researchers, unions and other interested people. We have also organised one of the biennial national Labour History conferences.

If you would like to support our work we would be very pleased to receive your application to join or renew your membership of the Branch. It only costs \$10 per year. Please make cheques payable to ASSLH. Send subscriptions (together with your email and postal details) to the ASSLH Melbourne Branch Treasurer. Electronic direct deposits can also be made: contact the treasurer for details.

I, _____ of _____
[Name - in block letters please] [Address for posting of the newsletter Recorder]

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