

RECORDER

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IN THIS EDITION:

- Vale John Ellis, by Peter Love, p. 1
- *The Blackburns: Private Lives, Public Ambition*, by Paul Rodan, pp. 2-3
- Call for Participants: FCU/AMIEU, p. 3
- The Labor History Foundation, by Peter Love, p. 4
- Vietnam Moratorium: 50th Anniversary Planning, by Brian Boyd, p. 4
- Book Launch: *Being Left Wing*, by Geoff Robinson, p. 4
- *Winning for Women: A Personal Story*, by Karen Throssell, p. 5

- Arthur Calwell and Conscription in Australia, by M.E. Calwell, pp. 6-7
- RTBU Commemorations, by Peter Love, p. 7
- Longford Dispute Settled, by Peter Love, p. 7
- Vale Giovanni Sgro, by Anne Sgro, p. 7
- Vale Darce Cassidy, by Ken Mansell, p. 8
- *Not Just Profs & Toffs*, by James Waghorne, p. 9
- Labor and Working-Class History Association, by Ron Lambert, p. 10
- Labour History Notices, p. 10
- Melbourne Branch Contacts, p. 10

Vale John Ellis

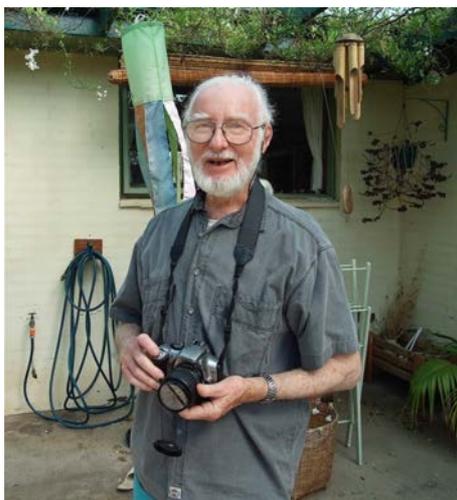
Peter Love

Our long-time comrade and radical activist John Ellis has died at home with Dianne by his side.

It's said that you're not dead 'til you're forgotten. If so, it'll take a long time for John to go. We remember his memoirs of a busy life as a PKIU workplace activist in Flinders Street and later at Hawthorn where he printed many "foreigners" for anti-war and other campaigns. Like many printers he was fiercely proud of the skills his trade conferred and the dignity that accompanied it, all of which was embodied in their union and all that it stood for.

John was associated with CICD in Melbourne from its earliest years. He attended many of its demonstrations and functions, camera in hand, capturing the event for us all. Political activism and photography were bound together in John's life. When recruiting me as his apprentice for labour movement photography he told me how he came to it. He and his comrades at anti-war marches were irritated by ASIO agents taking photographs of all their activity so John decided to turn the tide and photograph them. Apparently ASIO was annoyed.

For most of his industrial and political activism, John always carried his camera. Over the years he amassed a remarkable collection of images and, to his enduring credit, kept them in reasonable order. It is through John's work that we have clear, engaging shots of demonstrations, marches, speeches and songs, sometimes by very famous singers. John's sense of history, which



attracted him to the Labour History Society where he maintained long-term membership, encouraged him to accept the offer from Melbourne University Archives to take his collection into their archives. They also helped him to arrange the photos into a coherent order with John's comments on the images. As such, they are now the best collection of radical and labour movement photographs in the country. They stand as an enduring testimony of his devotion to the movement as well as a legacy for us all to embrace.

In his youth, John took an interest in music, toying with various instruments, as many of us do, until he eventually settled for choral singing with the Victorian Trade Union Choir. Before that, he was already very keen on political music. He was captivated by Paul Robeson and all that he represented. Pete Seeger was another of his favourites who he sought out on a trip to the USA, along with other campaigners for peace. He enjoyed both the singing and the comradeship of the choir, where he made several deep and enduring friendships. I recall one occasion where he collapsed during a choir performance at Trades Hall and as the Ambos wheeled him out of the lift on a gurney, he handed me his camera and commanded me to get the "decisive moment" as he was carried off. I obeyed and still have the image.

There's a lot to be said about John Brant Ellis but one thing stands out. He was a thoroughly decent, interesting and engaging comrade. It was always good to be in his company and, now, to rejoice in the memory of it. Details of John's photographic collection are available at <http://johnbrantellis.weebly.com>.

The Blackburns: Private Lives, Public Ambition**Paul Rodan**

Book Review: Carolyn Rasmussen, *The Blackburns: Private Lives, Public Ambition* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2019), 400pp, \$44.99 (Hardcover).

This is a love story—not just of Maurice and Doris Blackburn for each other, but of their shared affection for socialist ideals, the labour movement and the cause of international peace and solidarity. Effectively more than forty years in the making, the book probably benefits from the author’s opportunity for long-term reflection in that period and certainly from her ease of access to documentary records and the ability to tap the memories and insights of family members.

Maurice (yet another son of a formidable mother certain that he was special and potentially great) combined law studies with work as a teacher and librarian, but while his upbringing initially saw him conservative in outlook, his distaste for savage public spending cuts by the incumbent state government in 1902 “set him on the road to the left” and by 1904, he had “converted” to socialism. (32) Voracious reading and immersion in university debates, plus exposure to visiting socialist figures continued the moulding of the young Maurice, who joined the Victorian Socialist Party in 1911, after admission to the bar. His legal work would focus mostly on union work and civil liberties issues and he also developed a reputation as a master legal draftsman. 1911 also saw his active participation in the referendum on commonwealth powers that gave him his first, but far from last, taste of political defeat.

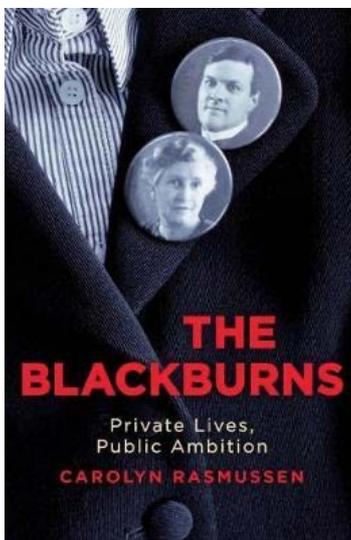
Her gender denied the equally bookish Doris a chance at a comparable education, but her school experience had “affirmed her tendency to question and challenge”. (41) She took out her Teachers’ Registration Certificate in 1909 and attended her first meeting of the Women’s Political Association (WPA) two years later, the same year as Maurice had joined the VSP. They met in 1913 and married the following year.

There followed an extraordinary personal and political partnership, the essence of which Rasmussen captures with great skill: the personal through the couple’s letters (including Doris’ poetry) and the political through locating Maurice and Doris in the political dramas of war and peace, including the most divisive issue in Australia’s political history—the proposal for conscription for military service in World War I. This involves detailed treatment of internal Labor Party machinations and also of the WPA, from

which Doris would break over her dissatisfaction with aspects of its approach to the War.

By 1914, Maurice was a member of the Political Labor Council, as the Victorian ALP was then known, and secured endorsement for the state seat of Essendon, which he won in a by-election in July that year. However, the onset of war in August overshadowed consideration of local matters and his socialist-based opposition to militarism and consequential unwillingness to encourage recruitment, would see him lose his seat in 1917, despite being on the winning side in the conscription referenda.

After this loss, Maurice resumed legal practice, but remained active in organisational Labor politics, including national conferences and in 1921, was responsible for the interpretation of party policy which would ensure him a permanent place in Australian politics textbooks—the “Blackburn interpretation” (later “declaration”) which modified any full blooded version of the party’s commitment to socialism.



By this stage, the Maurice Blackburn depicted by Rasmussen is that familiar figure of political drama—the man of principle, ill at ease with the pragmatism and discipline of party politics, passionately supported by his wife, but prone to test the patience of colleagues of more collectivist outlook. This would be demonstrated anew when after re-election to state parliament (which culminated in his election as Speaker), he then entered federal politics in 1934 as the member for Bourke. In December 1935, he was expelled from the party for his connection with what was regarded as a Communist front group, but was re-admitted some fifteen months later after severing the link.

Blackburn entered Federal Parliament with a focus on foreign affairs, disturbed by world events and convinced of the need for international action to avert another war. He was not alone in his early awareness of the danger of Hitler, but he joined a caucus which mostly reflected the national lack of interest in overseas developments and which took refuge in “pacifist isolationism, combined with acceptance of Marxist theories on the economic causes of wars.” (233)

By the time the Pacific War came, Maurice had been expelled from the ALP again, this time over his association with the Australia-Soviet Friendship League. In this context, Rasmussen emphasises Blackburn’s recurring “lapse of strategic judgement about the power of small, single-purpose groups.” Perhaps, she adds, “there was an element of seeking martyrdom” (263)—a telling observation. However, Maurice’s position was consistent: he had long

advocated the maximum cooperation between progressive interests and was not comfortable with bans on dual memberships and consequential proscription. He was not in the ranks of those demonising the Communist Party or the USSR.

Freed from party discipline, Maurice was at greater liberty to make life more difficult for Prime Minister John Curtin than might otherwise have been the case, notably over the looming about-face that the party would implement on conscription for overseas service. But, what to make of a federal MP, who after Pearl Harbor, maintained “there are certain things that we would not do even in order to win a war”. (263-264) Rasmussen gently chides him as “unable to quite grasp the seriousness of the international situation”. (263) His last hurrah (also well covered in volume two of John Edwards’ *John Curtin’s War*) was a failed attempt to inflict on Curtin a parliamentary defeat on conscription on the floor of the House. In the author’s eyes, “Blackburn had lost his political compass” over conscription. (266) Given the course of events, his re-election in 1943 was no sure thing, and he was narrowly defeated.

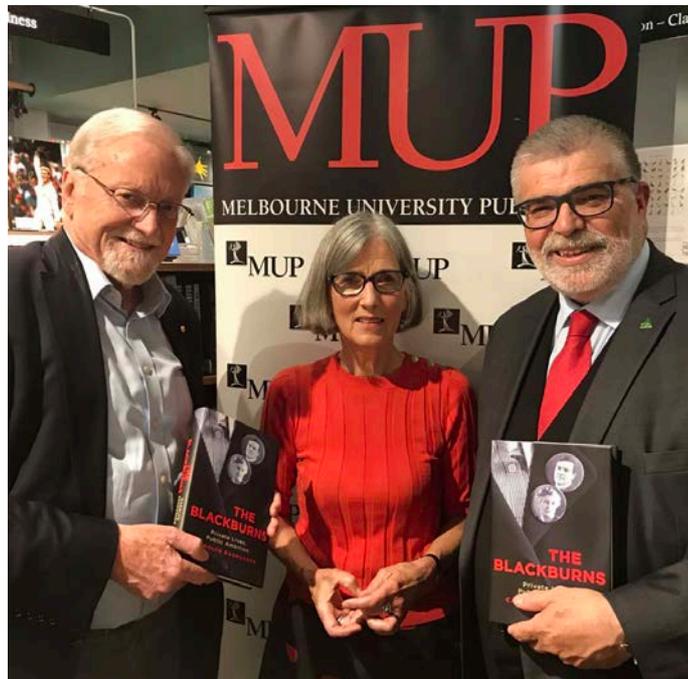
Maurice died of a cerebral tumour in 1944. Rasmussen notes that at his funeral, Doris declined the handshake proffered by Curtin, but this did not affect Curtin’s glowing parliamentary eulogy, stressing Maurice’s commitment to follow what was right whatever the cost. Menzies and others concurred, also stressing his charm, fairness and civility in expressing political differences (how out of place he would seem today).

Doris, who had spent the previous several years in a range of causes (notably children’s education), nominated as an Independent Labor candidate for Bourke in the 1946 election, and was elected on Liberal Party preferences. Running on Maurice’s legacy, she concentrated on women’s and children’s welfare, housing, civil rights and education. She opposed rocket testing at Woomera and was also a critic of the White Australia Policy. Her narrow victory of 1946 could not be replicated in 1949 in the new seat of Wills, and a final attempt in 1951 was also unsuccessful.

Post-parliament, she maintained a life of vigorous advocacy in (inter alia) women’s rights, child welfare, penal reform, the peace movement and Aboriginal welfare, involving extensive travel within Australia and internationally. She died in 1970. Initially less honoured in death than Maurice, the author contends that Doris is now the better known, due to this first wave feminist’s achievements being brought to the attention of her modern successors. But, Maurice’s name is often in the public eye: the law firm he founded—the well-known Maurice Blackburn Lawyers—celebrates its centenary this year.

Referring to one of Doris’ poems which warns against “sitting in contentment”, Rasmussen writes that

“Neither of them could ‘sit in contentment’ as long as they felt there was something they could do to bring a greater measure of social and economic justice—and peace—to the world.” (310) The Blackburns have been well served by this affectionate but balanced account of two lives dedicated to principled political activism.



Gareth Evans AC QC, Dr Carolyn Rasmussen and Sen Hon Kim Carr at the Readings launch of *The Blackburns*. Photo: MUP.

Call for Participants

Women in the Federated Clerks Union and Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union (1969-1983)

Freya Willis is seeking participants (men and women) who worked at or were members of the Federated Clerks Union or Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union for any period of time between 1969 and 1983 who would be willing to be interviewed for an Honours thesis examining the role of women in the trade union movement.

Freya is interested in speaking to participants about union campaigns on matters affecting women (e.g. equal pay, maternity leave and social security), the problems facing women workers in the meat and clerical industries and the experiences of female unionists.

If you are interested in participating or would like to learn more, please contact Freya Willis at u5784374@anu.edu.au This project has ANU Ethics Clearance. Protocol Number: 2019/171.

Labor History Foundation

Peter Love

We're very pleased to welcome a new fraternal history group in Victoria. As the spelling suggests, it is principally concerned with the ALP and related entities, their activities and influence on our politics.

With assistance from the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Victorian Government, the Foundation was launched at Trades Hall on Thursday 27 June with David Cragg in the chair and Rennis Witham, the ALP Heritage officer, announcing the Safe House Project as the Foundation's first event. A series of small, standing displays in the Victoria Street foyer show documents relating to the people and places involved in providing safe houses for draft resisters during Vietnam's American War. The launch got under way with a welcome from David Cragg, followed by an overview of the project by Rennis Witham. The Hon Gavin Jennings gave a short speech about the importance of capturing Victorian history and heritage.

Ann Sgro recalled what it was like as a child to have a stranger staying with the family who appeared to be secretive but happy to engage with everyday family activities. Bob Muntz gave a detailed account of his life on the run, the people he encountered and the places where he found refuge. Ken Mansell, an activist who was not balloted to be conscripted but was very active in the anti-war movement, captured the character of the public sphere and the political culture of the period. Joan Coxsedge described how she and other mothers founded the very effective Save Our Sons movement that added a distinct dimension to the debates over conscription and the war. Rennis Witham outlined the nature of trade union involvement, while Mary Elizabeth Calwell described the complex role of the ALP with special reference to her father, Arthur Calwell (see page 6).

There was a lively and interesting question and answer period before the good sized audience broke into small groups chatting about the period as they left the Hall. It was a thoroughly engaging and promising start for the Foundation. We wish it well.



The Hon. Gavin Jennings with David Cragg and Rennis Witham in the background. Photo: Peter Love.

Vietnam Moratorium: 8 May 1970 50th Anniversary Planning

Brian Boyd

An ad hoc "Vietnam moratorium 50th anniversary committee" began regular meetings in May, with the purpose of preparing a celebration for 8 May 2020. This date marks the 50th anniversary of the first of three moratoria that occurred on 8 May 1970, then the largest anti-Vietnam War march in Australia.

It is proposed to hold a major political and social event on Friday 8 May 2020 between 6 PM and 10 PM in the Ballroom on the first floor of the Victorian Trades Hall, Lygon Street, Carlton. The initial broad theme is "8th of May 1970—stop the Vietnam War = 8th of May 2020—stop all wars".

The committee is beginning to start work with unions, ALP branches, churches and the broader public to make the celebration event a major contribution to encouraging wider public discussion on the ongoing threats to world peace. It is also hoped that bodies like the Victorian State Library and Melbourne University Archives will join in to set up retrospective displays concerning the anti-Vietnam War period in Australia. For more information contact Rennis on 0438 375 841.

Being Left Wing

Geoff Robinson

In the last three decades the Australian left has shaped national life. The collapse of the socialist project in the 1980s enabled the rebirth of the Australian left as a force of government. The Left of the Labor Party has moved from its fringes to a central position while the Greens have built an electoral basis outside Labor. Questions of legal liberalism, Indigenous rights and sexual identity have become central to Left politics. This new Left has grappled with the remnant past radicalisms, such as revolutionary Marxism and radical feminism, but also new challenges: religious fundamentalism, right-wing populism, the Rudd-Gillard years, the failure of self-determination, Paul Keating's progressive neoliberalism, and a crisis of global capitalism. This new Left has been underpinned by the rise of intellectual celebrities (often from outside the ranks of the traditional left), from Robert Manne and Noel Pearson to Judith Brett and Gillian Triggs, institutional practices such as human rights law and a left-wing way of everyday life from Fitzroy to writers' festivals, book tours and social media. The left's institutional and cultural strength has been the obverse of its economic and political failures. My book, *Being Left-Wing*, is a study in dreams lost and found.

[*Being Left Wing* is published by ASP. It will be launched by Professor Stuart Macintyre at the University of Melbourne, Tuesday 20 August 2019, from 7:00-8:30pm. Geoff will speak on the left's future in light of its past.]

Winning for Women: A Personal Story

Karen Throssell

Review: Iola Mathews, *Winning for Women: A Personal Story* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2019). 328pp. \$29.95 paper.

This is a very important book. Especially for all those who “don’t believe in feminism” and don’t know that they are reaping the benefits from all the achievements for women covered in this book; for all those second-wave feminists who fought for the changes during the 1970s and 1980s and have forgotten just how much was actually achieved; for all those seduced by the current wave of anti-union propaganda and have no idea of the vital role the trade union movement played in achieving these huge gains for working women; and lastly for the people who have forgotten the labour movement has two arms—parliamentary and industrial. *Winning for Women* documents how powerful the labour movement can be when the two arms work together.

I have a particular interest in this book as I was also an activist at that time—albeit in another faction, and at the grass-roots practice level rather than the theory/ policy/ negotiation level. I have also written about the interface between the feminist and union movements with the same emphasis on the home work balance, part-time work, equal pay and child-care. So it was with great interest that I read about the backroom work involved before we, the ground troops, attempted to put theory into practice.

As one of Premier John Cain’s first Equal Employment Opportunity Officers (some of the TAFE boys called me one of “Cain’s KGB”), I was involved in trying to implement the affirmative action plans that Iola was designing, first at TAFE, then at V-Line, the Port of Melbourne Authority and at RMIT. *Winning for Women* documents the backroom process in detail—winning over reluctant male politicians and unionists, juggling the demands and priorities of the different women’s groups, as well as preparing and arguing for motions to ALP Conference and, later, legal battles in the industrial courts.

Another organisation Iola and I were both involved with, was WIRE—the Women’s Information Referral Exchange. It was fascinating to read her version of its establishment, which also gives us an insight into the ideological basis of her book and, to some extent, the reason for her success. Unlike Iola, I was attracted to WIRE because it was a collective (“a committee stacked with radicals” as she describes it). Her view “that it was quicker to force change from the top down, and let attitudes follow” speaks volumes. It was why she was in WEL rather than Women’s Liberation (both of which played a vital role in the women’s movement).

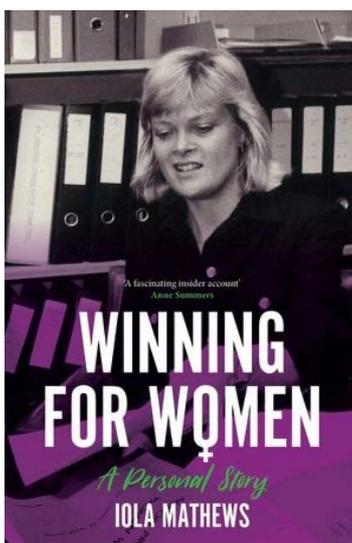
Nevertheless, in her description of her struggle with the “radicals and hotheads” (of which I was probably one!) at WIRE, and later as CEO of the Working Women’s Centre, she seems naïve, given how deeply entrenched were these schisms between elements of the women’s movement. Even though I was then quite new to the scene, I can still remember the resentment felt by some women at what they saw as Bill Kelty imposing a middle-class conservative with no labour experience as CEO of the organisation they had worked for years to establish.

Despite this, and the apparent contradiction with her previous support for “top down reform”, *Winning for Women* does acknowledge that there is always a role for a vanguard of radical union women “in forcing male dominated union executives to look seriously at the problems of women in the workplace.” As Iola comments, “All revolutionary movements need an advance guard. They’d paved the way for a major reform programme, and it was up to the mild-mannered feminists like me to work on it.”

Her insights into the “eccentric genius” of Bill Kelty and his significant role in driving many quite radical industrial changes, were some of the most interesting aspects of the book. Despite his non-democratic approach to some appointments, one can only be impressed by Kelty’s unorthodox negotiating style, and his ability to carve a path to success in the most difficult of circumstances. Especially interesting is her account of her years working with him at the ACTU, preparing and winning landmark cases, like maternity and parental leave, and equal pay cases for nurses, child-care workers and clerical staff.

Because what Iola documents is so important, it seems churlish to comment on her writing style. But I found the sometimes flat and passionless prose did diminish my pleasure of reading the book. Having been similarly plunged into the industrial relations world after a totally different life (hers was journalism, mine was academia) I, like her, initially felt overwhelmed by union-speak, feeling I needed crash courses in economics, arbitration and industrial relations. But that “what am I doing here” tone doesn’t change—even after ten years at the ACTU. The narrative becomes more engaging as the book progresses and the personal asides, some humorous, illuminate the work she was doing.

Overall, it was a pleasure to be immersed in a period where, despite the battles, so much was achieved. Women were becoming a force, unions were powerful and, thanks to Bill Kelty, they started listening to the women. As Sally McManus (who launched the book in Melbourne) rightly commented in the publisher’s blurb, “Iola’s story ... shows the best qualities of the union movement” and of the women’s movement as well.



Arthur Calwell and Conscription in Australia

M.E. Calwell

The following is an edited extract of an address given by M.E. Calwell, Trades Hall, Melbourne, 27 June 2019.

I thank the Labor History Foundation for inviting me to speak tonight about my father and his opposition to conscription through the ALP in the three major campaigns of the three significant wars that involved Australia in the 20th century. He was an ALP Branch Secretary at the age of 18 when it was illegal for Public Servants to join political parties. He stated that he was involved in many protest activities "because of my respect for human liberty and ... my love of freedom."

He became an anti-conscriptionist in 1915, legally joined the ALP in 1916 and spoke at many meetings. He gave up his annual leave for the 1917 federal election campaign and at the age of twenty, recorded: "Friday, 13.4.17 at corner Errol and Victoria Streets, first speech in open air." In another speech opposing conscription in 1917, he declared, "Whatever Labour has accomplished has been due to the unity of the working class, [and] that unity must be preserved."

In 1942, the Japanese invaded New Guinea and at a Special ALP Federal Conference in November, Prime Minister John Curtin stated that "voluntary enlistment and strategic requirements were the two main points of the Party's policy" and moved a motion that would add to the relevant definition in the Defence Act. It defined "Territories" as being "territories associated with the defence of Australia." Calwell, a Victorian delegate, stated that Curtin "had wantonly destroyed the unity of the Labor movement..." The motion was referred to State Branches; there was widespread opposition to Curtin, but a meeting on 4 January supporting Curtin resulted in conscription being extended to the equator.

In 1962, Australian military commitment to Vietnam began with thirty instructors. When the US retaliated to an alleged Vietnamese attack in the Gulf of Tonkin by bombing North Vietnam, Arthur Calwell, now the Federal ALP leader, welcomed President Johnson's unequivocal assurance that it would prevent extensions of the war. Calwell later said that Labor did not want to see Australian troops again "sucked into an Asian jungle" and urged a political settlement. In November, while Calwell was in Sydney, the Prime Minister, Menzies announced a defence review incorporating selective conscription for military service. Calwell declared the review was:

"a political document which trifles in a cynical way with the fundamental questions of peace and war and of life and death ... produced ... for the most transparent reasons of political expediency. Nor ... does it deal effectively with ... the present and future defence of Australia."

After regular troops were committed in 1965, Calwell declared that Australia's actions must be determined by

Australia's security. He anticipated that conscripts would be sent to the war. He said the war in South Vietnam was a civil war aided and abetted by the North Vietnamese Government but was neither created nor principally maintained by it. He declared to the ALP:

"We are doing our duty as we see it. When the drums beat and the trumpets sound, the voice of reason and right can be heard in the land only with difficulty. But if we are to have the courage of our convictions, then we must do our best to make that voice heard. I offer you the probability that you will be traduced, that your motives will be misrepresented, that your patriotism will be impugned, that your courage will be called into question. But I also offer you the sure and certain knowledge that we will be vindicated; that generations to come will record with gratitude that when a reckless Government wilfully endangered the security of this nation, the voice of the Australian Labor Party was heard strong and clear, on the side of sanity and in the cause of humanity, and in the interests of Australia's security."

In August, he stated: "Let rhetoric give way to reason, let slogans give way to sanity and let humbug give way to the crisis of suffering humanity."

In March, 1966, Calwell declared the Labor Party's most emphatic opposition to the dispatch of conscripted youth for service in Vietnam and the increased military commitment. When the first conscript Errol Noack was killed, Calwell said it need never have happened and those supporting the Government must share the terrible responsibility for sending vote-less 20-year-olds into action. On 21 June, after a meeting against the war in Mosman, NSW, Peter Kocan shot my father and wounded him. However, my father was at the Sydney Town Hall on 3 July for another big meeting. Calwell gave an acclaimed speech when President Johnson visited Australia just before the 1966 Federal election. He welcomed Johnson while disagreeing with him.

On the Monday before the 1966 election, Whitlam stated that, following discussion with the US and Vietnam, a Labor Government might keep troops in Vietnam and repeated the assertion two days later. Calwell replied that from the beginning, he had stated the Party's policy in unequivocal terms and never wavered from what he believed was the right exposition of ALP policy. Although Whitlam had helped draft the final policies, his interventions contributed to Labor's defeat and conscription continued for another 6 years.

When the Prime Minister of South Vietnam, Air Vice-Marshal Ky, visited Australia in January 1967, Calwell led demonstrations wherever Ky went. In Melbourne 10,000 people walked from the Trades Hall to the Botanic Gardens where memorable speeches were delivered. Ky was forced to arrive at Government House by helicopter. Calwell continued to campaign against the "unjust, immoral and unwinnable" war around Australia and wrote to author, John Webb, that "time will justify us and history will vindicate us".

It is important to remember that the first conscientious objector, William White, was assaulted by the Army and died young. Another, Simon Townsend, became a journalist. In 1969, my father led the whole ALP Victorian State Conference to Pentridge in support of John Zarb. When I joined the Department of Labour and National Service in 1970, I declined to work in the Branch that held the ballots for conscription.

Leslie Haylen, a former Federal Member for Parkes (1943-1963) wrote a poem, "Arthur", after my father died. It concluded: "A footfall is heard in the streets of his city / The shade of a comrade remembered/ The sigh of a conscript he freed."

RTBU Commemorations

Peter Love

On 24 April a small group of people went to the grave site of Frank Hyett to commemorate the centenary of his death and to pay tribute to his role in more effectively organising railways workers into an industrial union, the Victorian Railways Union in 1911. He was an energetic and talented socialist activist and a very effective union leader whose brilliant career was cut short in 1919 during the Influenza Pandemic.

The Secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union, Luba Grigorovitch spoke about the singular importance of Hyett to the union's early history. Peter Love gave a speech on Hyett's remarkable skills as a unionist and socialist agitator during one of the most tempestuous periods in Australian history, and paid tribute to his enduring legacy to the labour movement.

It was a very busy time for the RTB Union where the Hyett centennial commemoration coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the penal powers struggle centring around the gaoling of Clarrie O'Shea. The union organised a major exhibition, a dramatic choral performance by the Victorian Trade Union Choir and commemorative speeches at the Sub-Station, Newport on 15 May. It was an event where the Union confronted some of the harsh realities of its activities in the contemporary industrial environment and was the occasion for some very sober introspection. It was a very impressive event.



At Hyett's graveside. Photographer unknown.

Longford dispute settled

Peter Love

After more than two years the Esso Longford dispute has come to a negotiated conclusion. We are unlikely to know the full details of the settlement which the parties have agreed to keep confidential. What we do know is that it is one of the longest-running disputes in recent years which created a picket that was more like a settlement than a traditional picket line. We can only hope that the workers were happy with the outcome.



The picket at Longford. Photo by Peter Love.

Vale Giovanni Sgro

16 February 1931–18 March 2019

Anne Sgro

An activist for migrants, working people and peace, Giovanni Sgro was the first Italian to be elected to an Australian parliament where he broke with tradition to make a small part of his maiden speech in Italian—a means of indicating that Australia is a multicultural community and we all count. He was the member for Melbourne North Province 1979–1992.

From his arrival at Bonegilla in 1952, where he took part in the Bonegilla Revolt that was faced with army tanks, he campaigned for immigrant people to participate and have a voice in their community. He was a member of the Italo-Australian Labour Council, a founding member of the Ethnic Communities Council and a founder of Filef—the Italian Federation of Migrant Workers and their Families. He campaigned for radio and television networks that respected and included immigrant communities. He was an active member of the ALP since he joined in 1958. He had a huge amount of energy and determination, keeping connections with Italy strong and alive. He made a huge difference for younger people who followed.

He was an active member of the many organisations that campaigned for peace and social justice. He was a good man who made a huge difference.

Vale Darce Cassidy

24 December 1941-29 April 2019

Ken Mansell

Jon (Darce) Cassidy was probably not meant to become one of the foremost left-wing agitators of his generation. Jon's upbringing was privileged. His father Ralph Cassidy, tragically killed on RAAF service in 1942, was a barrister from a poor Irish background tinged with Orange sectarianism. His mother Audrey Cassidy scrimped and saved to send Jon to the elitist (and anti-Catholic) Sydney Church of England Grammar School. As a student Jon would drive his uncle, Sir Jack Cassidy (the right-wing Vice-President of the Liberal Party), and Sir Frank Packer to play tennis at the Royal Sydney Golf Club. Nevertheless, living in Cammeray in the fifties, in a by now downwardly-mobile middle-class family, Jon began to reject the narrow-minded ethos of both his home life and school. Symbolically perhaps, he embraced a new name—Darce.

Darce experienced his entry to Sydney University (as a law student on a Repatriation Department Scholarship in 1960) as a liberation from a restricted background, and particularly enjoyed mingling with Catholics. His service (1960-63) in the Sydney University (CMF) Regiment belied his rapid evolution to the political Left. He attended his first-ever political demonstration (the Martin Place rally against the 1960 Sharpeville massacre), and joined the NSW Association for Immigration Reform, becoming a speaker against the White Australia Policy. He read the magazines *Dissent*, *Outlook*, and *Nation*; and listened enthralled to Bertrand Russell, Jim Cairns and Ted Wheelwright on television. From late 1961 to 1966 Darce set the standard for committed activism as a member of the Sydney University ALP Club led by the Trotskyists Peter Templeton, Sylvia Hale, Hall Greenland and Ian McDougall. It was Darce who made (from his parents' wooden clothes line) and lit the petrol-doused "fiery cross" that turned a "Commem Day" prank in Wynyard Street (6 May 1964) into a sensational protest against US racial segregation.

Darce had joined the ABC as a trainee journalist on 10 March 1964, the start of a long career in respectable journalism. In the ALP Club, he began his long parallel career in disreputable "guerrilla journalism", a term he coined to describe the cheeky and irreverent style he learned from Pat Mackie, whose underground roneo machine had evaded the police at Mount Isa. Assuming the editorship of the ALP Club's scurrilous weekly news sheet "Wednesday Commentary", Darce would type the stencil in the Four Corners office and rush to Bob Gould's Woollahra home to use the Sydney Left's only gestetner machine. NSW Premier Askin opined: "It's the filthiest thing I've ever seen on paper—it makes 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' look like a very modest publication indeed". In February 1965, while employed on Four Corners, Darce and his tape recorder joined the Freedom Ride to Walgett and Moree, organised by Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA). (He soon found the ABC only wanted to bury his tapes, meaning his now famous Freedom Ride documentary was not aired until 1978). Darce later

returned to Walgett, conducting organising work at great personal risk.

Darce was transferred to Melbourne by the ABC in September 1966 and worked on *This Day Tonight*. A chance meeting with Monash Labor Club President Dave Nadel, who Darce had first met at an Australian Student Labour Federation Conference, prompted the establishment of "Jasmine Street", an off-campus political and social centre for the Labor Club in Caulfield, with Darce as front man with the landlord, and genial host at Friday night parties and Sunday night dinners. Darce enrolled part-time at Monash and his influence was soon apparent. The outrageous style that had marked "Wednesday Commentary" began intruding into "Print", the Labor Club's re-named news sheet with Darce's phrase "political power grows out of the barrel of a gestetner" emblazoned on its masthead. Nadel and Cassidy (the editor) were soon called before the vice-chancellor. When the Labor Club satirised the award of a Monash doctorate to Premier Bolte, the students, with Darce officiating as MC, conferred the degree on a pig. The ABC transferred Darce temporarily to Canberra in mid-1967. He completed his politics unit at ANU and joined its Labor Club, then engaged in collecting aid to the NLF.

Darce returned to Melbourne in February 1968 and bought No. 1 Shirley Grove, East St Kilda which doubled as the de facto headquarters of the Monash Labor Club throughout the heady year of 1968, the gestetner in the laundry being used for both "Print" and the High School "Underground" leaflets of Students in Dissent (SID). Darce was instrumental in establishing "The Bakery", a political centre in Greville Street Prahran. He was active in the Vietnam Moratorium of 1970-71, an organiser of the Worker-Student Alliance (WSA) formed at The Bakery in 1970, Production Manager of WSA's organ "Struggle", a member of the clandestine Young Communist League (YCL), a member of Red Eureka Movement, a pioneer of Community Radio (3CR), and one of the principal organisers of the six busloads that undertook the 1974 "Long March" to North West Cape. Darce received death threats when his name and address appeared on a leaflet celebrating the throwing of Nazis in the Yarra, and WSA members guarded the house.

In 1971 Darce was the subject of a sustained attack by *News Weekly* and Maxwell Newton's *Melbourne Observer* accusing him (and WSA) of "terrorism". A DLP question in the Senate led to an in-house ABC investigation and his eventual exoneration (ironically by ASIO). Darce led the 1977-1982 campaign to wrest control of the ABC Staff Association from the right-wing. In 1989 he was appointed South Australian State Manager (Radio). After retiring, he acted as spokesperson for both "Save Our SBS" and "Friends of ABC", and was on the board of Ethnic Radio 3ZZZ.

In his last years, before succumbing to Alzheimer's, Darce Cassidy joined the Australian Greens and fought for the rights of refugees. He was the man with the silver pen and the heart of gold. He is survived by his wife Jan Smith, their son Michael, and his daughter Anna (with Julie Rigg). R.I.P Darce.

Not Just Profs & Toffs

James Waghorne

Review: Juliet Flesch, *Not Just Profs & Toffs: Families Living in the University of Melbourne Grounds* (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2019). 143pp. AU \$34.95 paper.

The University of Melbourne has never been primarily a residential institution in the way we think of other universities in Europe or the United States, or even in other parts of Australia. Its residential colleges, with denominational association or else supported by the university itself, have never accounted for more than a minority of the people who came in from the suburbs each day. Yet, as this book vividly conveys, the university grounds have housed not only an assortment of teaching, administrative and technical staff, but also their families.

The book uncovers the lives of these families who lived in an array of dwellings arranged around the perimeter of the university grounds. It describes the benefits, particularly for the children growing up, of separation from surrounding suburbs and the free use of manicured gardens, while it also documents the social isolation that this could create, particularly between residents from different levels of the university hierarchy.

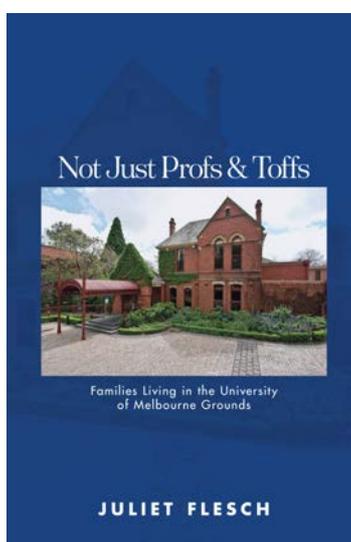
Recovering these stories and recognising these families is the area with which the book is most concerned, and the reason for its somewhat provocative title. It divides its work between documenting the families of professors and vice-chancellors living in the grounds, picking up some of the material presented in Audrey Cahn's memoir, *University Children* (1987) while also extending the scope considerably through extensive primary scholarship.

In documenting the lives of families of professors living on the campus, this book strives to identify the employees of these families. Where the names have been forgotten, the author searches for where they were likely to have lived. Here the author's extensive networks, built up over decades of work at the university, have proved invaluable. These connections add a dimension that few other authors could have provided.

The book also turns to the university's own "servants" (under the official designation), who were employed to maintain the gardens, attend the laboratories, supervise the union, many of whom were provided houses on the campus. This task is no less difficult, as the book so effectively reveals, because of inconsistent spelling of names where full names are

recorded at all. Such carelessness suggests other forms of disregard, and it stands in stark contrast with the fastidious collation of the qualifications of the professors. It reflects an institution able to direct resources only to the collation of essential records while ignoring others. Where names do appear, it seems, is when these families raised complaints about the condition of housing provided by the university, which was at times deplorable. The text is filled with indignation on behalf of these families.

A similar impetus to trace the full family unit is visible in R.J.W. Selleck's biography of the family of the University's first professor of Chemistry, Orme Masson, *Finding Home* (2013), and the narrative of this book is similarly enhanced by these inclusions. We understand more about how these people lived, how they understood their environment and their place in society. The consequence is that the university becomes not only a place inhabited by students and their teachers, but also an array of different kinds of employees, with different relationships with one another.



I found all this detail fascinating, and the book should interest all those concerned with the university and its heritage. Yet I also craved more analysis. We catch glimpses of fascinating moments that could have been explored in richer detail. The reference, for instance, to the first vice-chancellor seeking to use his house to improve connections with students is a fascinating idea, but the idea is not developed. Laboratory technicians are housed on campus to monitor laboratories after hours, but what did this actually entail? Such detail would have helped to give flesh to these people and their work. We also get no theoretical analysis of the place of servants in the operation of the university, akin to the United States' literature connecting universities with slavery. The book focuses resolutely on the University of Melbourne.

The work complements the work on the university's architectural heritage of Philip Goad and George Tibbits. It also draws on Flesch's previous work on the university, covering medical and education departments, and the department of property and buildings. These works shared the interest in biography, as did Flesch's collated biographies of university families *150 years: 150 stories* and its sequel *160 years: 160 stories*, co-written with Peter McPhee.

At its best, *Not Just Profs & Toffs* reminds us that universities are alive, filled with people and their families. The descriptions of children playing together and with their pets, should remind us that the heritage of buildings is not merely the preservation of fine architecture, but also the memory of the assortment of people who gave life to it.

Labor and Working-Class History Association

Ron Lambert

The Labor and Working-Class History Association Conference was held in Durham, North Carolina, 30 May to 1 June 2019.

This meeting had roughly 200 delegates and over 120 presentations, which included two keynotes, panels, round tables, and traditional conference paper presentations. I was fortunate in getting a spot on a panel and presented on a play the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council produced in 1989 about the community of Yallourn for the Art and Working Life program.

The keynote address by Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, Co-Chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival, and Pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church in Goldsboro, North Carolina, was awesome. Speaking with the passion of a true believer, Rev. Barber's talk cast a net over the four aspects of US life which are causing so much injustice. Constitutional law, demographics, and patterns of social pathology and entrenched racism were all explored by the Rev. Barber. His main call was for poor people to take part in the voting process and have their voices heard. He concluded by talking about the US as being in a moment in time when the whole nation may come undone because of the lurch to the right throughout the US.

A range of people from across the United States, Mexico and Europe attended the conference. There was also a fellow Australian and Labour History member, Lisa Milner from Southern Cross University, on our panel which was titled, "Working class narratives". Papers and presentations covered the total range of areas of relevance to people interested in working class and labour history. The panel that made the biggest impression on me was on "Families and radicalism: Oral History, Archives, Forgotten stories and narratives of resistance". This presentation dealt with remembering in families and records of events which is current in my work today. Other presentations dealt with strikes, women's struggles in the movement and far too many to discuss in the space available.

The receptions were well catered for and the host of the conference, Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy, was gracious in its support of the Labor and Working-Class History Association. The Iowa Labor History Society hosted a display, and this was especially interesting in discussing a large Oral History collection of workers' voices. An interesting panel dealt with the AFL-CIO and its work in developing nations in the 1960s and 1970s. This era is still very much an open wound to people in the progressive side of politics in the United States. The Association passed a resolution asking the AFL-CIO to open its records of the time to researchers to bring justice to people affected by US actions during these times. We also had a two-hour

discussion with members of the Illinois Labor History Society in which we discussed the current situation in the US, history in Chicago, and the significance of the legacy of the Haymarket Martyrs.

My journey around the US on Amtrak and local buses exposed me to a range of people living in abject poverty. The US may have been founded on excellent ideals, but it remains to be seen if people like Rev. Barber will soon see the country honouring the ideals it was founded on.

Labour History Notices

The organisers of the 16th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History Conference have been busy working up a draft programme. *Activism, Struggle and Labour History* is shaping up to be a landmark conference, with almost seventy papers to be given on a variety of themes. The conference is being held in Perth, 3-5 October 2019.

Registrations are now open and early bird pricing is available until 1 August 2019. Visit <https://www.labourhistory.org.au/2019-conference/conference-registration/> to register. A conference dinner is being held at a nearby restaurant and its \$60 cover charge includes drinks. The conference convenors are also organising several side events to coincide with the conference, including a heritage walk and tour. We hope to see you there.

At the last AGM of the Society, the Melbourne Branch committed to support Reason in Revolt, a website directed by Professor Verity Burgmann. The site brings together a unique online collection of primary source material that documents our shared radical history. Our sponsorship of this important resource will help to ensure its survival. To visit Reason in Revolt and search through its resources, go to <http://www.reasoninrevolt.net.au/index.html>

Melbourne Branch ASSLH Contacts

President: Peter Love pjlove@me.com

Vice President: Liam Byrne liam.byrne@unimelb.edu.au

Secretary: Brian Smiddy [Tel: 9435 5145]

Treasurer: Phillip Deery phillip.deery@vu.edu.au

Website: <https://labourhistorymelbourne.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LabourHistoryMelbourne>

Instagram: [instagram.com/labourhistorymelbourne](https://www.instagram.com/labourhistorymelbourne)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/lhmelbourne>

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