

# RECORDER

Official newsletter of the Melbourne Labour History Society (ISSN 0155-8722)

Issue No. 298—July 2020

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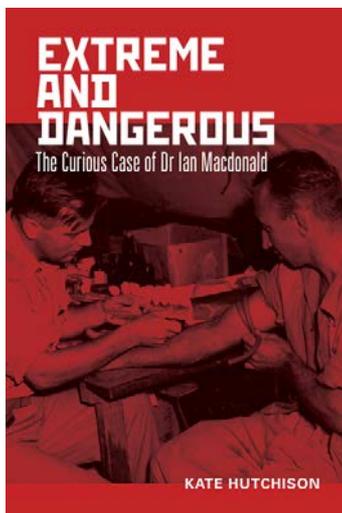
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## *Extreme and Dangerous: The Curious Case of Dr Ian Macdonald*

### Phillip Deery

Although there are numerous memoirs of British and American communists written by their children, Australian communists have attracted far fewer accounts. We have Ric Throssell's *Wild Weeds and Wildflowers: The Life and Letters of Katherine Susannah Pritchard*, Roger Milliss' *Serpent's Tooth*, Mark Aarons' *The Family File*, and John Docker's 'Troubled reflections on my father' in *What Did You Do in the Cold War, Daddy?*, but little else. *Extreme and Dangerous* is the latest addition to this genre. It concerns a daughter's attempt to discover why her father, a medical officer stationed in Darwin at the outbreak of World War II and who advanced knowledge of malaria, was removed from his post in 1941.

Through a meticulous examination of Macdonald's security files, both military intelligence and Investigation Branch (later bequeathed to ASIO), Kate Hutchinson learnt that, as a member of the Communist Party since 1932, he was designated as both 'extreme' and 'dangerous'. Concern about communists in the Army sowing disaffection among soldiers was intense; this was especially during the Nazi-Soviet Pact period when the Party opposed involvement in the war. Surveillance of alleged 'subversives' was not curious but commonplace. Macdonald enlisted in 1940 as a captain and for a time carried out medical examinations of defence force recruits. When the Communist Party was banned in 1940, Macdonald's Darwin home was raided and his case reached the Cabinet level. Although politically engaged, she concludes, her father's actions and beliefs did not represent any threat to national security.



His case parallels that of another medical doctor, Paul Reuben James, who was dismissed by the Department of Repatriation in 1950 for opposing the Communist Party Dissolution Bill. James was attached to the Reserve Officers of Command and, to the consternation of ASIO, would most certainly have been mobilised for active military service were World War III to eventuate, as many believed. There is another parallel. The chairman of the Repatriation Commission, Major General G.F. Wootten, instrumental in James' dismissal, was a prominent leader of the anti-communist, para-military Old Guard. So too was Major W.J.R. Scott, who played a key role in Macdonald's removal. This book, then, unravels some of the connections, normally hidden, between the military and the security services. Ian Macdonald has also been hidden from history, and this book affectionately rescues him from obscurity.

Kate Hutchinson, a speech pathologist, has chosen not to write a conventional academic biography, but a more filial and conversational book. It ranges back and forth between secret armies in the 1930s and the Lowe Royal Commission into Communism in 1949-50, but at its heart is the question of wartime security and why her father was then considered 'extreme and dangerous'. That Dr Macdonald was a member of the Communist Party was not, she rightly judges, sufficient basis to be considered a subversive, yet to historians of domestic security services and readers of *Recorder*, his victimisation should come as little surprise.

Kate Hutchinson, *Extreme and Dangerous: The Curious Case of Dr Ian Macdonald* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2020). pp. 195. \$39.95.

## The Fatal Lure of Politics

Verity Burgmann

Why did Europeans move from hunting and gathering to stationary food production? Why do Australian Labor MPs rat? These questions seem unrelated but are amongst those interrogated by world-renowned archaeologist and prehistorian Vere Gordon Childe—author of dozens of ground-breaking books, such as *The Dawn of European Civilization* (1925) and *What Happened in History* (1942), and hundreds of important papers. Terry Irving's extraordinary, investigative scholarship has provided an enlightening and enthralling account of the life and thought of Australia's most famous socialist intellectual. Irving's treatment is nuanced and sophisticated, producing perceptive historical and philosophical analysis, as well as a compelling narrative.

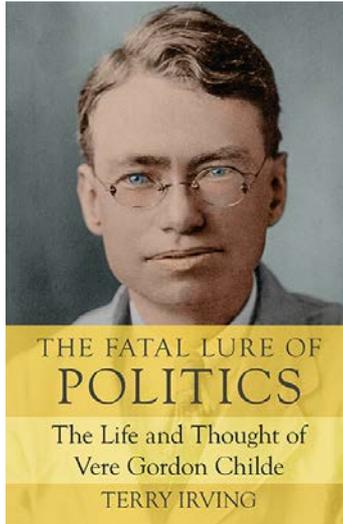
Childe was born in Sydney in 1892 and grew up in North Sydney. In 1914 at Sydney University he obtained First Class Honours in Latin, Greek and Philosophy, and the University Medal in Classics. With a travelling scholarship he spent most of the Great War years in England, returning home late in 1917 with outstanding undergraduate and research degrees from Oxford. Having campaigned with fellow anti-war socialist activists such as Rajani Palme Dutt, G.D.H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, he earned an MI5 file and British universities failed to offer him sanctuary when authorities started hounding him homeward.

Australian universities then discriminated against him for his Marxism and anti-militarism, despite his dazzling degrees and publication record. Upon his return home Childe had joined the Labor Party and began writing for *The Worker*, teaching political philosophy for the Workers' Educational Association, and helping Trades and Labour Council delegates oppose the federal government's attempt to boost military recruitment. Unable to enter the academy, Childe increasingly inhabited the turbulent world of labour movement politics in Sydney and Brisbane, becoming a well-known figure on the Labor Party's left.

Shunned by university selection committees, Childe found employment from August 1919 to October 1921 as private secretary to NSW Labor Party leader John Storey, who was Premier for most of that period. During this time Childe crafted his monumental work of immense interest to labour historians: *How Labour Governs. A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia* (1923). This was the historical moment when Australia was considered a 'social laboratory' and led the world in parliamentary representation of working-class electors, producing the world's first majority national Labor government in 1910. At home and abroad, reformers

believed that labour or social-democratic governments could abolish exploitation by getting the numbers in Parliament. Childe was well placed to write the world's first explanation for the decades of disappointment to follow.

Childe's book examined the excruciating process by which Labor MPs cease to be representative of those they represent; how they become parliamentarians rather than tribunes of the working-class; players of the games of liberal democracy instead of participants in the class struggle. The result: betrayal, to varying degrees. 'To avoid giving offence to middle supporters,' Childe observed, 'Labour Governments have followed a vacillating policy and have tried to govern in the interests of all classes instead of standing up boldly in defence of the one class which put them in power.'



*How Labour Governs* is not just a study of Labor in government but an astute assessment of the labour movement generally. The *Industrial Workers of the World* earns plaudits from Childe as 'the first body to offer effectively to the Australian workers an ideal of emancipation alternative to the somewhat threadbare Fabianism of the Labour Party.' Australian unionists, according to Childe, seized upon the IWW's point about the futility of the 'organised scabbery' of craft unionism, which divided the workers up into small sections, each out for their own hands and regardless of their mates. Irving identifies themes in Childe's approach to labour history, including: the criticism that labour has lost its ideals; contempt for political traitors; belief that a new form of trade unionism might save the movement's idealism; and disdain for workers who lack class-consciousness.

Childe explains he departed Australia in 1921 to 'escape the fatal lure' of parliamentary politics. A prolific researcher, in his mid-30s he became professor of prehistoric archaeology at the University of Edinburgh in 1927, then at the University of London in 1946. In this brilliant academic career, as Irving reveals, Childe treated archaeology as a branch of history, transcending the narrow 'tools and pottery' specialism of the field, and reaching audiences far beyond the academy with his Marxist approach to explaining the past.

Despite Childe's fame, or perhaps because of it, political surveillance continued after his retirement back home to Australia in April 1957, where he reconnected with old associates such as long-time close friend Bert Evatt and visited Russel Ward and Robin Gollan. On 19 October 1957, he died falling off a cliff in the Blue Mountains. Was it accident or suicide or was he pushed by ASIO? Sensitive to the heart and soul as well as the mind of this exceptional man, Irving's important book is biography at its very best.

Terry Irving, *The Fatal Lure of Politics. The Life and Thought of Vere Gordon Childe* (Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 2020). pp. xxiv+419. \$39.95.

## Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin

Nick Dyrenfurth

What more can be written about the life of John Joseph Ambrose Curtin, Australia's fourteenth prime minister and the nation's and Labor's most loved leader?

Plenty, as this important new book by emerging historian Liam Byrne skilfully demonstrates. Curtin has been the subject of numerous biographies, most notably David Day's canonical 610-page book, *John Curtin: A Life* (1999), but also accounts written by L.F. Crisp and Geoffrey Serle, as well as the economist John Edward's two-volume *Curtin's War* (2017/2018), which enlarged the 'Curtin Legend' beyond that of wartime leader to co-architect, along with his friend and Treasurer, Ben Chifley, of Australia's modernising post-World War Two reconstruction.

The novelty of Byrne's account of Curtin's political career is its paring alongside that of James 'Jim' Henry Scullin, ill-fated Labor prime minister at the nation's helm during the Great Depression (1929-31). Just as Curtin's prime ministership constitutes rather more than his near four-year wartime leadership (1941-45), so too, Scullin's career deserves more adequate treatment than its routine deployment as a tragic footnote, destined to be the crucifix bearer of Depression-era Labor's climb up its Calvary. The online book launch by Sally McManus and Wayne Swan of this fine history – mandated by the COVID-19 global pandemic – was not immune to this tendency. The long shadow cast by Curtin gave the appearance of a monochromatic study, rather than a duet, at least in the launch's promotion, something glimpsed even on the book's cover. A young Curtin stares intently into the eyes of the reader, exuding destiny, while a greying Scullin appears forlorn by comparison. It is a metaphor for popular understandings: the prime ministership transformed serial election loser Curtin into a 'success'; Scullin, by contrast, becomes a 'failure'.

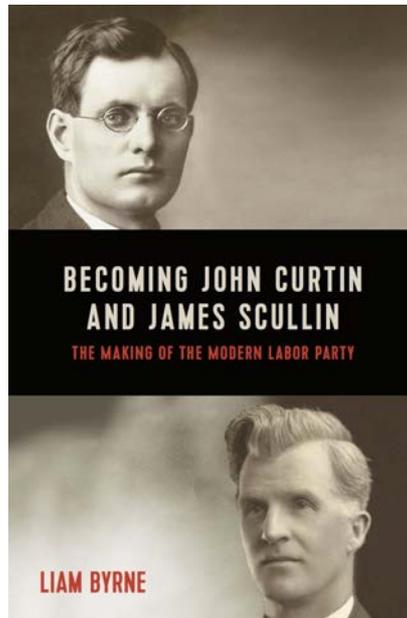
*Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin* rescues both men from the condescension of posterity, and binary stereotypes of triumph and tragedy. As Byrne, the Australian Council of Trade Union's resident historian, illustrates in this concise, well-written study, their careers cannot be explained in isolation to each other, nor the history, culture, and intellectual milieu of the Victorian ALP.

Moreover, while at first sight an odd coupling, Curtin and Scullin shared much in common, beyond friendship. Both were born into Irish Catholic working-class families from the central Victorian gold-rush region of Ballarat. Neither

finished secondary schooling. Both the religious, teetotal Scullin and professing atheist, alcoholic Curtin eventually moved to Melbourne (and to Perth in the latter's case), immersing themselves in the unique political culture of the Victorian labour movement. Each worked as a labour press journalist, the ex-timber cutter and grocer Scullin as the editor of Ballarat's *Evening Echo*; Curtin, a clerk and copy-boy, in charge of *The Timber Worker*, the publication of the Victorian union he led between 1911 and 1915, and later the *Westralian Worker*. Both men were drawn into the orbit of the powerful Australian Workers Union as journalists and paid political organisers, prior to embarking on careers in federal parliamentary politics. Scullin occupied an office between Curtin and Chifley during the war, proffering sage advice to both politicians; during the earlier Depression Curtin raged against the policy direction of Scullin's government before the ALP split in 1931 and he lost the seat of Fremantle.

The convulsive experience of the Great War of 1914-18 profoundly shaped the outlook of both men as it did the struggle between the reformists within the Australian Labor Party and union movement and socialist revolutionaries. Yet in Byrne's schema, Scullin emerges as a 'moderate', cautious supporter of the First World War effort and Curtin as the 'socialist' anti-conscriptionist firebrand, labels which do not give proper expression to the complexities of each actor's socialism, even if Scullin's roots in the rural-dominated, pragmatic world of the AWU were vastly different to Curtin's tutelage in the urban Victorian Socialist Party under the eye of British socialist Tom Mann and, most substantively, his friend, mentor and fellow federal Labor parliamentarian, the English-born radical, Frank Anstey.

Scullin is nine years older than Curtin, yet their fates are intertwined on the same journey. Each are active participants in the debates over the post-war labour movement's trajectory in the face of what seemed a radical tide following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. While both identify as socialists, Scullin is at the vanguard of efforts to resist any shift to the far-left, a debate which came to a head at the Australian Trades Union Conference held in Melbourne in 1921, and resulted in the eventual compromise at the same year's Federal Labor conference in Brisbane. The ALP's democratic socialist objective which aimed at 'the socialisation of industry, production, distribution, and exchange', was famously – or infamously – qualified by the misnamed 'Blackburn amendment'; 'socialisation' was desirable only when necessary to 'eliminate exploitation and other anti-social features.' Byrne reminds us that Scullin and Curtin – the latter absent from the northern gathering – were subsequently elected to the committee to oversee its integration into the



party's platform, where it remains today, albeit observed more in the breach.

Much of this is heavy subject matter as Byrne leads us through fascinating conference debates, as conveyed in labour movement press reportage. Yet Byrne has an eye for humour and humanity amid momentous historical moments. 'The convention was a sprawling, chaotic event, with delegates from across the country coming together in the smoky chambers of the Trades Hall to debate and scheme over five days', he observes of the 1921 Melbourne gathering, dryly recounting:

'Even the most experienced proceduralist was challenged by the disorganised and frenetic air. Seeking to impose some order from the chair, [Jack] Holloway commanded delegates to "stand where they sit! (Laughter.) I will ask all delegates concerned to stand where they usually sit. (More laughter.) Well, I will ask delegates concerned to stand where they mean to remain. (More laughter)". But soon enough the conference settled down to serious business.'

If I had one problem with Byrne's account of the journey of these two friends from autodidacts to labour movement intellectuals to powerbrokers and finally Labor prime ministers, as they addressed both intimate and mass movement meetings, debated friends and opponents, penned articles to cajole and castigate, and counted numbers, it is the lessons he argues we can draw for today's 'troubled politics'.

I wholeheartedly agree with Byrne's assessment of modern Labor as a party bereft of the working-class intellectual tradition which Scullin and Curtin once embodied. 'No more does Labor draw upon leaders with direct experience of working-class life,' writes Byrne, and this trend has had profound consequences, as indeed has the retreat of a 'creative tension' between factions of left and right in the post-Cold War labour movement. Too few ALP members and MPs are trained in debating ideas and public policy. Too many candidates for office are false 'safe choices' with a strong track-record of no independent thought. I share his belief that the neoliberal economic order is in a state of epochal crisis, as a direct result of this ideology's blindness to the evils of inequality and economic insecurity. Change must come.

But was the ALP always a vehicle of 'change and transformation' and 'progressive alternative' as Byrne suggests? Was there not always a strong small conservative labourist, nay socialist tradition, arguably embodied by the likes of Scullin, which opposed capitalism precisely because of its relentless tendency to reduce working-class people and their labour to no more than the status of commodities, to uproot social relations, all carried out in the name of inevitable, progressive change? It seems to me that the creative tension between Labor as a party of progress (not progressivism), of bold social and economic reformism, and that of a preserver of status, skill, vocation, attachment to place, and defender of an egalitarian national tradition or

Australian way of life against the relentless change mantra of free-market utopianism, is too easily discounted. The 1927 pamphlet *From Out The Past Glimpse the Future*, authored by then deputy Labor leader Scullin, which Byrne quotes from as evidence of a 'transformative reform' impulse, might be read as standard bearer of labour tradition founded on the ideological premise of wishing to preserve the liberties and material gains of the New World from radical attack.

I suspect Australian Labor does not have particularly much to learn from the disastrous period of Jeremy Corbyn's 'unrepentant socialist leadership' in Britain. After all, it is working-class Britons who will suffer most from a Tory period of national government spanning possibly two decades ushered in by this experiment.

These quibbles are not meant to detract from Byrne's overall achievement in *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin*. 'The task of this book is to excavate these pre-histories, to complete the picture of these two men – who they were, what they achieved, and what they believed', Byrne writes, and he has skilfully achieved this aim. In his vivid evocation of the lost world of Laborite ideas and debate, Byrne shows us how a better, fairer Australia was fought for and yet may be won.

Liam Byrne, *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin: The Making of the Modern Labor Party* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2020). \$34.99.

### *Dorothy Day in Australia*

Val Noone has published a new book on Dorothy Day who, alongside Peter Maurin, founded the Catholic Worker Movement (and its newspaper, the *Catholic Worker*). Inspired by Catholic social teaching, and often described as a kind of Catholic Anarchism, the movement fought for peace and for the redistribution of wealth. It is still in existence today.

Noone examines Day's influence in Australia and beyond, and he follows her 1970 visit to both New South Wales and Victoria. As Noone argues, the 'book offers the general reader an alternative understanding of twentieth-century Australian Christianity.'

Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, there won't be a launch of the book; however, readers can obtain a copy directly from the author by emailing [macmic@netspace.net.au](mailto:macmic@netspace.net.au) or downloading the order form from <https://dallymessenger.files.wordpress.com/2020/06/dorothy-day-book.pdf> The book is being sold for \$30.

To celebrate 50 years since Day's visit, a tape recording of Dorothy's wonderful 1970 Melbourne speech (recorded by Noone) has been digitised: <https://dallymessenger.com/2020/06/26/dorothy-day-speaks-in-melbourne-1970/>

**Jack Munday**  
17 October 1929–10 May 2020

### Verity Burgmann

Jack Munday, legendary leader of the green bans movement, showed the world how important workers could be in protecting the planet.[1] 'What is the good of fighting to improve wages and conditions', he asked unionists, 'if we are going to choke to death in polluted and plan-less cities.'[2] He emphasised that workers suffered most from environmental problems. 'Who lives in the least leafy suburbs? Who is subjected to increasing road noise, who has the poorest quality housing, who has least open space?'[3] Crucially, he stressed it was workers who had the greatest capacity to win environmental battles, given the power they could exert if they refuse to work. Environmentalists were important, he acknowledged, but they 'do not have the muscle to change developers' minds.'[4] In the green bans movement, 'Munday's one-man band', as a leading town planner observed, was 'able to do more than many decades of legislators have even attempted.'[5]

Jack grew up on the Atherton Tableland, where he learned to love the natural landscape. After Parramatta Rugby League Club talent scouts enticed him to Sydney in 1951, he suffered environmental shock, noticing how the sun was shining on fewer streets in the city as high-rise office blocks went up, and his young son Michael suffered respiratory problems from industrial pollution in Granville. Jack's first wife Stephanie died when Michael was a baby, a tragedy later compounded when Michael died in an accident when 22. Throughout his personal suffering and extraordinary political activism, Jack was sustained by Judy, whom he married in the 1960s.

Working in various occupations during the early 1950s Jack became active in the Federated Ironworkers Association, the Sheet Metal Workers and the Federated Engine Drivers & Firemen's Association. He joined the Communist Party of Australia in 1955, because he considered communists 'the most consistent fighters for better wages and working conditions'.[6] He was elected Sydney District Committee president in 1966. He declared he did not 'worship at the altar of either Peking or Moscow'[7] and hated 'this craziness about vanguard parties having all the knowledge ... Union struggles can play the biggest part.'[8]

Munday had joined the NSW Builders Labourers' Federation (NSWBLF) in March 1957 and became chairman of the Clyde Oil Refinery shop stewards' committee. He was important in the rank-and-file movement to remove the corrupt, right-wing leadership, achieved in 1961. Elected city organiser in 1962, he became a major force in the union, and in promoting Aboriginal rights, opposing the Vietnam war and asserting the right of women to work in the

building industry and receive equal pay. In 1968 he became acting secretary and was elected secretary in 1970.

The NSWBLF under Munday's leadership developed a 'new concept of unionism', which included an emphasis on job-site autonomy, opening executive meetings to all members; frequent use of mass stop-work meetings; tying officials' wages to the BLF award. The most startling innovation was limited tenure: officials should come from the job and, after six years at the most, return to the job. So Munday did not seek re-election and in 1974 returned to work as a pick-and-shovel labourer at St Vincent's Hospital. When other union leaders were appalled, Munday explained that the rule was designed to benefit the institution not the individual: 'the important thing was the release of power'.[9] The opposition of Bob Hawke, as ACTU leader, to Munday's militancy, is representative of the union bureaucracy's inability to embrace Munday's ideas, which distinguished between working-class interests and those of a trade union bureaucracy. He expressed the former.

The 'new concept of unionism' famously embraced 'the social responsibility of labour': workers had a right to insist their labour not be used in harmful ways. Munday wrote in the union journal in mid-1972: 'The Builders' Labourers' Union feels strongly about unions and the whole workers' movement involving themselves more deeply in all political, moral and social questions affecting ordinary people.' Several of its bans were not 'green', notably those on construction at Sydney University to safeguard a women's studies course and at Macquarie University to ensure reinstatement of a gay activist, and on a land developer in Redfern, which resulted in the Redfern Aboriginal Community Housing Scheme.



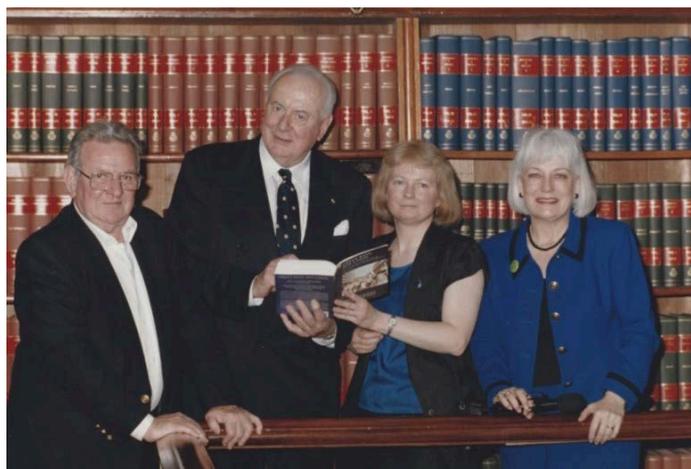
Resident activists with Jack in Playfair St, The Rocks, October 1973.

The most spectacular application of the social responsibility of labour, the green bans movement, saved Sydney and NSW regional centres from much of the destruction planned by developers. The Rocks would have become a jungle of high-rise office buildings without the green ban. Imposed by the

union from June 1971 until March 1975, when the developer-funded intervention by the federal branch of the BLF ended this remarkable movement, these bans expressed the labourers' refusal to demolish people's houses or significant buildings, or to build on natural reserves such as Kelly's Bush and Centennial Park. In February 1973, Munday coined the term 'green ban', explaining that 'green' instead of 'black' was more truly descriptive of this environmental activity and had more positive connotations. The terminology of 'green' has its origin here, because the green bans inspired Petra Kelly, who was visiting Sydney, to name her political party in Germany the Greens, which spread the usage globally.

Munday's efforts after the green bans were directed towards forging links between green and working-class activists. 'Trade unions must become involved with environmental issues, and environmentalists must become more concerned with the importance of promoting trade union struggles for socially useful production and consumption.' [10] This 'winning alliance', so effective in the green bans movement, was the only way to achieve his dream of 'a socialist world with a human face, an ecological heart and an egalitarian body'. [11]

As National Convener in the late 1970s of Environmentalists for Full Employment, Munday argued society must secure socially useful employment for all, the wisest use of appropriate energy and resources and the guarantee of a habitable environment. [12] 'The carefully orchestrated myth that the fight for a decent environment increases unemployment must be exploded.' [13] To counter this impression and provide positive solutions to ecological crisis, trade unions must design socially responsible job creation schemes, including projects to repair the damage already done to the planet.



Jack with Gough Whitlam and authors Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann in 1998 at the launch of the first edition of their book, *Green Bans, Red Union*.

Jack served as alderman on Sydney City Council in 1984-1987. When the CPA disbanded in 1989, Munday related his long-standing anti-Stalinism explicitly to ecological crimes. The 'USSR's pitiful environmental record' was the legacy of the 'stalinist

nightmare' that was an ecological disaster because it failed to deliver the promise of socialism. 'Whereas the very nature of capitalism is acquisitive, socialism's nature should be conducive to being able to harmonise better with nature.' [14]

In 1995 Jack was appointed Chair of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW. He was awarded honorary doctorates from the University of Western Sydney (1988) and the University of New South Wales (1998) in recognition of his 'eminent and vital service to society'. [15] In 2002 he received an AO for service to the preservation of natural and urban heritage, and was voted one of Australia's National Living Treasures. In 2003, he joined the Australian Greens. In 2007 an area in The Rocks was renamed Jack Munday Place; in 2014 he joined the fight to save The Rocks' Sirius apartments.

The green bans preserved much in the built and natural environments and prompted important improvements to the culture of town planning, and environment and heritage legislation at State and federal levels. Munday's impact was profound. His commitment to the working-class and conviction about its vital ecological role made him an especially effective force for good.

## References

- [1] On the green bans, see Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgmann, *Green Bans, Red Union. The Saving of a City* (NewSouth: Sydney, 2017). On Jack Munday, see Verity Burgmann and Meredith Burgmann, "'A Rare Shift in Public Thinking": Jack Munday and the New South Wales Builders Labourers' Federation', *Labour History*, 77, Nov. 1999, 44-63.
- [2] *Courier-Mail*, 30 June 1973, 17.
- [3] Jack Munday, 'From grey to green', *Australian Left Review*, 108, Dec.1988/Jan.1989, 19.
- [4] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 February 1974.
- [5] *Bulletin*, 12 May 1973, 36.
- [6] Jack Munday, *Green Bans and Beyond* (Angus & Robertson: Sydney, 1981), 21.
- [7] NSWBLF Minutes: Executive Meeting, 27 August 1968; General Meeting, 3 September 1968.
- [8] Jack Munday, interviewed by Meredith Burgmann, 3 April 1978.
- [9] *Tribune*, 19 August 1975.
- [10] Jack Munday, 'Preventing the plunder', in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *Staining the Wattle* (McPhee Gribble/Penguin: Melbourne, 1988), 179-80.
- [11] Munday, *Green Bans and Beyond*, 148.
- [12] Jack Munday, 'Compatibility of the 3 "E's" Vital to Survival', *Environmentalists for Full Employment*, Newsletter, no. 1, December 1978, 1.
- [13] Jack Munday, 'Covering letter for sending to prospective member-sponsor groups', *Environmentalists for Full Employment*, n.d., 5pp., roneod.
- [14] Munday, 'From grey to green', 20.
- [15] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 May 1998.

## Vale Jack Munday

### Brian Smiddy

The life of Jack Munday was remarkable in many ways, both as a trade unionist and as an activist, in campaigning to save the environment.

Jack Munday was born at Malanda, west of Cairns. With the death of his mother, the family was broken up. Jack went to boarding school, which he disliked because he was frightened by authoritarian Catholicism. He moved to Sydney to play rugby and found a job as a builder's labourer. In the early 1950s he joined the Federated Ironworkers' Association and the Communist Party. In 1968 he became Secretary of the NSW Branch of the Builders' Labourers Federation and while carrying out his union responsibilities he initiated campaigns on many fronts, including Aboriginal Rights in Redfern.

Soon after, women from Hunters Hill approached Munday and his members to see if the union would assist in saving Kelly's Bush, one of the few remaining areas of bushland on the Parramatta River. The Union had reservations in meeting the women as there were not many union minded people from Hunters Hill, but the women were desperate for assistance. Thus began a long campaign to save many notable sites and places, such as The Rocks, Kings Cross and Centennial Park. The words 'Black Ban' became known as the 'Green Ban'. What followed were many community activities to save important buildings and sites throughout the country.

Munday and his members were militant and made important gains in increasing wages and improving conditions. The employers were forced to respect and negotiate with the union. In 1975, Munday and other leaders of the NSW branch of the BLF were expelled from the union by the Federal leadership under Norm Gallagher. Munday went back to work on building sites until he and his colleagues were reinstated.

Munday continued with his involvement in the community particularly as a Sydney City Councillor in 1984–1987. His actions to make the world a better place to live in, earned him many honours from organisations and universities.

A few years ago Jack was still calling himself an Ecological Marxist. Jack said 'if you genuinely believe in human society, you can't walk away from idealism. You've got to continue to work while you ever have breath'.

Judy Munday survives him in the house they have shared for 55 years. To Judy we extend our deepest sympathies on his death, having lived a life of total giving.

## Batman By-Election, 1962: A Liberal Miscalculation and a Labor Win

### Carolyn Allan Smart & Lyle Allan

Batman was a federal electorate held most of the time from its creation in 1906 until its change of name in 2019 by the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The seat was named after John Batman, who allegedly founded the City of Melbourne in 1834, but protests by Aboriginal activists, the Australian Greens, and the Darebin Council resulted in a change of name to commemorate William Cooper, an Indigenous rights campaigner. In 1938 Mr Cooper, a Yorta Yorta man, led a march to Melbourne's German Consulate to make a stand against the persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government. It is understood that opposition from a Turkish burgomaster was also a factor in the renaming, on the spurious ground that naming an Australian electorate after John Batman gave the Turkish city of Batman (population about 600,000) a bad name. The Australian Batman was a bounty hunter, being involved in the massacre of Aboriginal people in Van Diemen's Land before he came to what was then the Port Phillip District of New South Wales.

In 1961, the ALP candidate Alan Bird won the seat by a healthy margin with a two-party preferred vote of 55.4%. He was a Northcote Councillor and had a high profile in his electorate, but had been suffering from ill health for some time. He died in 1962, necessitating a by-election. The ALP parachuted in as its candidate Sam Benson, a sea captain and former Mayor of the seaside suburb of Williamstown. Benson won with a massive 62.8% of two-party preferred votes, without a Liberal candidate and a turnout about ten per cent lower than at the previous election in 1961, possibly caused by mainly Liberal voters who stayed away. Benson proved to be a good local Member after his election.

The Liberals thought that the seat was ultra-safe, and decided not to contest the by-election. The Darby group from New South Wales (NSW) stood as proxy Liberals, using the title Liberal Forum. Douglas Darby was an Independent Liberal Member for Manly in the NSW Parliament. Darby spoke at a meeting in the Northcote Town Hall, together with their candidate, Donald McLeod, an unknown solicitor from Ivanhoe, a suburb within the Batman electorate. Darby held anti-Communist views similar to the American red-baiter Joseph McCarthy. He made the anti-Communism of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) look weak. His party was unable to staff most polling booths, as the Liberal organisation in Victoria gave his candidate no support. McLeod polled 19.4% of the primary vote, over ten per cent less than the Liberal vote in 1961. His vote was only 215 votes more than that of the DLP candidate, Jack Little, who polled 18.8 per cent.

What lessons can be drawn? 1962 is now a long time ago. Batman at that time included a strong conservative area in East Ivanhoe, with the booth in the Fairy Hills precinct

recording Liberal votes over seventy per cent. The electorate also included the ALP heartland of Northcote, where ALP votes were always above sixty per cent. Offensive comments by a resident of upper-class Toorak, John Pacini, a commentator on Radio 3UZ, referring to Northcote in derogatory terms as a low life working class suburb, may have influenced Liberal strategists.

It is possible that the Liberals may have won in 1963 had they contested the by-election in 1962, but of course we can only speculate about this. At the general election in 1963 the ALP candidate, Sam Benson, defeated the Liberal candidate, harness racing commentator and prominent Freemason Bruce Skeggs, after preferences by 703 votes, with 50.9% of valid votes. Benson was expelled from the ALP in 1966, after refusing to resign from an organisation called the Defend Australia Committee that was proscribed by the ALP. Benson won Batman as an Independent in 1966, and retired from Parliament in 1969.

The by-election of 1962 was before gentrification, and boundary changes that removed Ivanhoe from the electorate and moved Batman further to the Labor voting north. Batman in 1962 did not go north of the so-called Latte line, an imaginary line that suggested the limits of middle-class movement into the electorate. The line boundary was Bell Street in Preston. South of the line after about 2010 voted heavily for the Green Party, unlike in earlier decades. Batman in 1962 was not a safe ALP seat, as the Liberals thought.

The migrant vote in Batman in 1962 was minimal, but from about 1970 onwards Batman became a classic study of migrant politics. This factor is still there, and may still influence the election of ALP candidates, certainly above the Latte line and possibly below it. ALP factions in Batman have stacked branches with voters since about 1975, mainly for internal representation at ALP Conferences. The ALP obtained loyalty from Greek voters, and to a lesser extent from other groups, although that loyalty appears to be fading.

## *Without Bosses*

### **Brendan McGloin**

At a time when corporate neoliberalism occupies a hegemonic role in industrial affairs, Sam Oldham's *Without Bosses: Radical Australian Trade Unionism in the 1970s* presents a compelling picture of the upsurge in labour militancy that occurred during that tumultuous decade, documenting the litany of strikes, occupations and work-ins that arose within a wider climate of social and political unrest. The counterculture of the 1960s reverberates throughout this study, particularly as events in Vietnam and struggles around civil rights, both domestic and international, assumed a central significance within the social psyche.

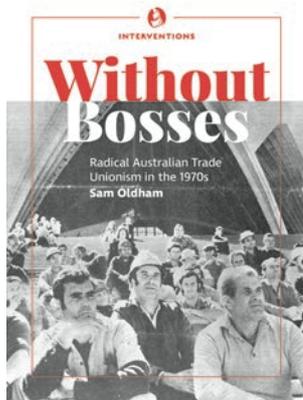
However, in tracing the emergence of notions of workers' self-management, which is the focus of this study, Oldham emphasises the material foundations for workers' attempts to control this vital aspect of their lives. In doing so, he raises important questions about the role of trade union bureaucracies, the function of political parties of the left, and where theory meets praxis and the potential limitations thereof.

Oldham's study begins with what may be considered dual catalysts for the period under examination: the repealing of the penal powers in 1969, and the rise of the shop committees around the same time. The explosion of industrial activity is also linked to the crisis in capitalism as the post-war consensus began to unravel and as the West crept towards the economic crises of the early 1970s and stagflation. Increased industrial agitation was therefore not limited to Australia. Oldham cites the examples of early 1970s Britain, which saw a huge increase in workers' struggles, and also events in France and Italy in the late 1960s where mass occupations occurred on a scale not seen since the 1930s.

Practically, these events were influential in the formation of notions of workers' control among sections of the Australian working class. Theoretically, however, ideas about workers' control of industry have a much longer ancestry within the union movement, and Oldham discusses earlier advocates of these ideas, including the Industrial Workers of the World in Australia and the shop stewards movement in Great Britain during World War I. During the 1970s, many of the more radical trade unions propagated these ideas as well, as did certain political parties. In the early 1970s, aside from the various unions themselves, the bulk of aligned workers were still wedded to the Labor Party. Although the Communist Party of Australia still held some significance, Oldham contends that most workers were unaffiliated. This supports the notion that struggles for workers' self-management were largely endogenous and a response to the precariousness and alienation emanating from the nature of wage labour.

It is this factor that presents what may be the central conundrum of Oldham's work. A recurring theme of this study is the often-conciliatory tendencies of trade union officials to managerial prerogatives, and the author cites examples of union officials either being ignored by angry rank-and-file members or even, in certain cases, chased off site. Perhaps even more illuminating here is Oldham's analysis of the conservative reaction to these events, which condemns right-wing politicians and certain union officials alike. As it sits outside the purview of this work, Oldham does not include the neoliberal reforms of the Hawke-Keating era, or the wholesale compliance of the ACTU in those reforms, in what must be considered a central component of that reaction.

This leads us to the questions that *Without Bosses* necessarily provokes: does the existing union infrastructure lend itself to such radical manifestations, or is it the graveyard of these types of militancy? And what of the relationship between the union movement and the ALP? The book does not provide any direct answers to these questions, as perhaps this falls within the realm of polemic rather than historical analysis. But they are questions that nevertheless arise.



*Without Bosses* is a wholly fascinating and thoroughly researched study, which provides a critical analysis of workers' struggles during a pivotal time in the history of the workers' movement and modern Australia. As a contribution to the historiographical exchange of this era, Oldham has provided a valuable addition to the existing record that speaks to a militancy that challenges conventional notions of trade unionism, and stands in stark contrast to contemporary industrial affairs.

Sam Oldham, *Without Bosses: Radical Australian Trade Unionism in the 1970s* (Melbourne: Interventions, 2020). pp. 198. \$30 paper.

## From Sicily to St Lucia

### Ken Mansell

This remarkable publication consists of three memoirs written after the author's retirement from the University of Queensland in 1993 and 're-discovered' only last year. Aided by reference to his own sizable archival collection, the writer plots the steady rise of a disadvantaged young Italian migrant to his eventual status as one of Queensland's most influential left-wing intellectuals. The memoir *My Political Journey*, set against the background of life on the North Queensland cane fields and the vicissitudes of the Brisbane left, is the story of a strong and determined individual who refused to be cowed by adversity, prejudice and victimisation.

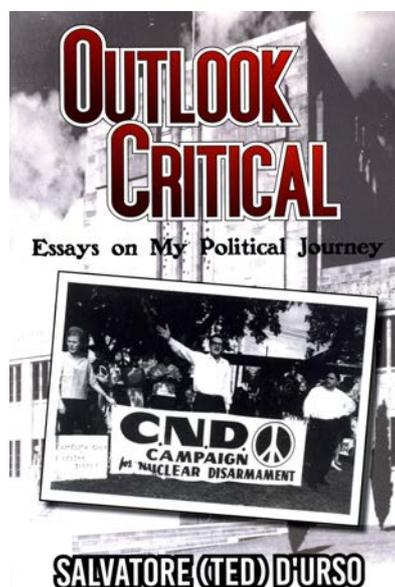
Salvatore (Ted) D'Urso was born in Sicily (1928) and grew up in ethnically-diverse Innisfail (North Queensland) where his family settled in 1931. The family endured hardship and prejudice. Ted's father Alfio, who cut cane and ran a billiard saloon, was arrested and interned in 1942, leaving young Ted

carrying partial responsibility for managing the saloon. Ted attended primary schools in Innisfail and Charters Towers, secondary school in Cairns, and earned a scholarship to study commerce at the University of Queensland in 1947.

An introduction in his course to Marxism combined with resentment at the injustices inflicted on himself and his family 'kindled the seed of youthful idealism.' In his second year Ted joined the Radical Club and frequented the lively student newspaper (*Semper Floreat*) office. In September 1948 he joined the Communist Party and its University of Queensland cell. Ted was appalled when the CPA leadership proclaimed the 1949 coal strike defeat as a victory for the Australian working class. Increasingly critical, he was threatened with expulsion but refused to recant. Ted resigned from the CPA mid-1950 but never 'ratted' and continued to adhere strongly to classical Marxism.

In 1957 Ted became the Brisbane representative of the recently-launched 'New Left' journal *Outlook* and was involved with the Brisbane *Outlook* discussion circle until it folded in 1962. By then he had been drawn into the orbit of Trotskyist groups emerging in Brisbane and Sydney. (Ted's memories of Nick Origlass, Izzy Weiner, Wal Suchting, Bob Gould, Alan Roberts, and George Petersen are brief but intriguing.) In late 1962 Ted's wife Janet Lewis launched a CND branch in Brisbane. The members were interrogated by Federal Police when a reprint of the British *Spies for Peace* pamphlet (an exposure of how Britain would be administered in the event of a nuclear attack) appeared in Brisbane. Brisbane CND had declined by early 1965 and attention shifted to the Vietnam war.

Ted and Janet relocated to Armidale in late 1965 when he was appointed to a lectureship in Education at the University of New England. There the couple joined a small band of campus anti-war activists. They returned to Brisbane in 1970 when Ted took up a senior lectureship (Education) at the University of Queensland. It is not surprising, given Ted's own experience of victimisation (for example his virtual banishment in 1951 to the most isolated school on the Atherton Tableland), that he would strive to diminish the power of the bureaucratic administration of education in Queensland and reform secondary schooling, with a particular emphasis on the rights (and responsibilities) of students. Ted, labelled a 'dangerous agitator', was the driving force behind the Council for Democracy in Schools (CDS), an influential watch dog against abuse of regulations by school authorities until its demise in 1975. *My Political Journey* concludes with the unrepentant Marxist's interesting reflections on post-1975 conservatism and 'the ecological unsustainability of industrial



capitalism's growth imperative.'

The book also includes three smaller essays: 'The Billiard Saloon', 'Kelvin Grove Teachers College', and 'An Interpretation of Liberty' (published in 1949 after Ted had joined the CPA). There are eight pages of photos. Ted D'Urso, 92, is still very much alive. Though now physically confined to his flat in Indooroopilly, his intelligence is undiminished.

Salvatore (Ted) D'Urso, *Outlook Critical – Essays on My Political Journey* (Brisbane: InHouse Publishing/BLHA, 2020). pp.124, \$20 plus \$5 postage. To order email Jeff Rickertt, [blha.exec@gmail.com](mailto:blha.exec@gmail.com)

## Oil under Troubled Water

Michael Leach

In May 2018 Bernard Collaery, a former Attorney-General of the Australian Capital Territory and former legal representative of the government of Timor-Leste, was charged by the Commonwealth with conspiracy to breach the Intelligence Services Act of 2001. Collaery had represented Timor-Leste in the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague as it challenged the *Treaty on Certain Maritime Arrangements in the Timor Sea* (CMATS) of 2006: a treaty which divided up Timor Sea oil and gas royalties to Australia's advantage, and also purported to delay a permanent maritime boundary between the two countries for 50 years. Timor-Leste challenged the treaty in 2013 on the basis of allegations that Australia had spied on Timor-Leste's negotiating team in 2004.

The source of this allegation was a former ASIS agent, Witness K, whom Collaery had earlier been cleared to represent in another matter. Witness K's testimony would be central to the challenge. Before K could testify, his home and Collaery's office was raided by ASIO and the AFP, confiscating documents relevant to the case and K's passport, preventing the latter from testifying. It is sometimes lost in coverage of this story that the espionage allegations were first publicly revealed by the Commonwealth itself, in a 2013 press release by then Foreign Minister Bob Carr and Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus.

Unable to practice his legal profession since the charge, Collaery has spent the time drafting a remarkable book which examines the long history of Australian diplomacy and legal manoeuvres in relation to the Timor Sea. Despite the fact that the author is legally forbidden from directly discussing the charges, which Andrew Wilkie MP describes as 'Australian politics' biggest scandal', this is a remarkable book which adds considerably to our understanding of Australian

foreign policy towards Portuguese Timor, Indonesian-occupied Timor, and the independent state from 2002, and the central role of the Timor Gap's oil and gas resources in this history.

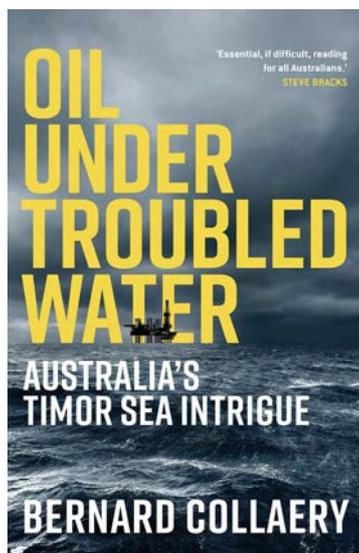
For a lawyer, Collaery proves an exceptionally good historian in this engagingly written and well-evidenced book. Perhaps most explosively, Collaery unearths previously unseen documents from the British archives, relating to circumstances leading up to the deaths of the Balibo Five on 16 October 1975.

As the NSW coronial inquest of 2007 concluded, the five journalists were deliberately killed by Indonesian Special Forces on the orders of their commander, Major-General Benny Murdani, at Balibo. It had long been suspected that the Australian Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) had foreknowledge of Indonesian intentions to murder the journalists to prevent exposure of their military incursions into Portuguese Timor, but Australian intelligence documents establishing this remained inaccessible.

In this book, Collaery's research into the British National Archives demonstrates that the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs was aware that the Indonesian military regarded the five journalists as a 'particular hurdle to be got over' (154-5). Collaery notes that then UK ambassador to Indonesia, John Ford, was in possession of Australian intelligence confirming Indonesian military incursions by September 1975 at least one month before the killings. Ford noted the Indonesian concerns of exposure, relayed to the UK by Australian intelligence, especially in relation to the imminent presence of Australian journalists. This is a chilling finding of the book.

The book otherwise covers in great detail the now resolved, but long-running dispute between Australia and Timor-Leste over oil and gas in the former Joint Petroleum Development Area, and the yet to be exploited Greater Sunrise field. As to the core issue subject to the charges: the author handled these well, with a straight bat which errs on the side of caution. No less is to be expected of such a senior lawyer. The gripping narrative of the book suffers little from this necessary lacuna.

While there are some arguments made that are contestable – the author's view on domestic politics after the restoration of independence in Timor-Leste will not find universal agreement – *Oil under Troubled Water* stands alongside Kim McGrath's *Crossing the Line* (2017) as essential reading for those interested in Australia's murky history of oil and gas diplomacy with Timor-Leste. For those interested in the health of Australian democracy, and the treatment of those revealing potentially illegal activity by the state, Collaery's ongoing trial and the



disturbing secrecy of its conduct, makes the contents of this book as relevant to Australians as they are to our East Timorese neighbours.

Bernard Collaery, *Oil under Troubled Water: Australia's Timor Sea Intrigue* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2020). pp. 466 \$39.95.

## The Yalta Conference: February 1945

**Laurence W Maher**

Late in the night (local time) of 13 February 1945, an allied air force dropped a total of 14,500 tons of bombs on the historic – and undefended – German city of Dresden.

The incineration of Dresden was carried out in partial implementation of decisions reduced to final form the previous day – the eighth and final day of the Crimea (Yalta) Conference between the gravely ill US President Franklin D Roosevelt (he died on 12 April), the UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Generalissimo (as the Conference Agreement formally described him) Joseph Stalin of the USSR.

The Yalta Declaration provided for the inaugural meeting of the United Nations Conference in San Francisco in April 1945, the restoration of order in, and the economic reconstruction of, liberated Europe, the complete dismemberment of the former Nazi state, the creation of US, British, Russian and French zones of occupation of Germany, and implementation of a Protocol for German reparations in kind.

In March 1939, Britain had given a formal assurance to Poland that in the event of any action which clearly threatened Polish independence, and which the Polish Government considered it vital to resist with their national forces, British would consider itself bound at once to lend Poland all support in its power.

It was Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 which led two days later to King George VI's declaration of the existence of a state of war with Germany, by reason of which Australia and New Zealand and the other nations of the then British Empire were at war. In March 1939, Britain had given a similar assurance to Greece. And it was the Greek government's desperate eleventh-hour reliance on that assurance which led directly to the catastrophic losses for Australia, New Zealand and Britain on mainland Greece and on Crete in April/May 1941.

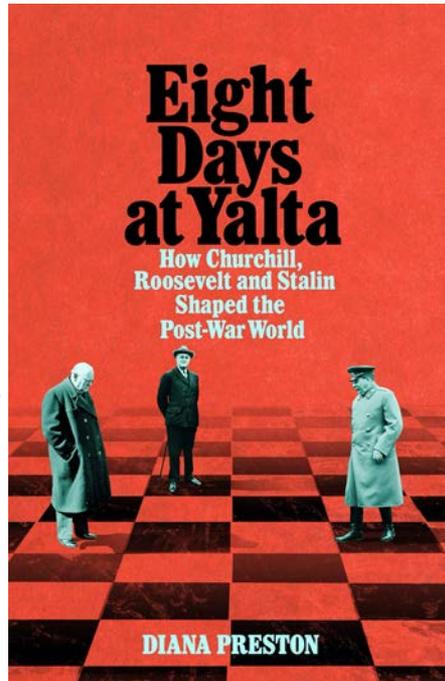
The Crimean seaside resort – adjacent to what Field Marshall (soon to be Lord) Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, observed in his diary on 7 February 1945 were 'the British Crimea battlefields' – was chosen in part because it contained more than one Tsarist-era Palace, thereby accommodating the three large delegations. The principal military and diplomatic advisers included US Secretary of State Edward Stettinius and General George Marshall, Chief of the US General Staff, Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary and Field Marshall Brooke, Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister, and General Alexei Antonov, the First Deputy Chief of Staff of the Red Army. There were many other major actors in twentieth century history most of whom, for one reason or another, have long since been forgotten. The outcome of the conference was also a product of the participation of many other individuals. The US delegation included FDR's only daughter, Anna Boettiger, and Kathleen Harriman the daughter of Averill Harriman, the US Ambassador in Moscow. Churchill's daughter, Sarah Oliver, was a member of the British delegation. The work of the Conference was also affected, for good or ill, by national leaders who had not been invited, most notably, Chiang Kai-shek and Charles de Gaulle.

One of the US Department of State officials was Alger Hiss. He was appointed to act as the temporary secretary general of the San Francisco Conference on 25 April 1945 which gave birth to the United Nations. In 1950, he was convicted on one count of perjury arising from his alleged false sworn denial of having been a Soviet spy since the 1930s.

Diana Preston's compact scholarly book is a thoroughly absorbing, detailed account of the interactions of the three very contrasting leaders at the formal conference sessions and associated dinners with their play-acting and formulaic toasts, the three leaders' informal dealings with one another including their private

scheming with and against each other, and the formal and informal dealings of the many members of supporting cast. This is set in the broader context of the approaching end of the war in Europe, the final months and aftermath of which involved death, atrocities, and other human misery, dislocation, and physical destruction on a jaw-dropping scale.

Despite the overall air of co-operative determination to crush the German war machine, there was suspicion all round at Yalta. Churchill, who had always detested the Bolsheviks, had plenty of form for sending men from all parts of the Empire to their early deaths in hopeless military interventions. He was still at it in May 1945, shortly before his election loss.



He was thinking about the idea for Operation 'Unthinkable' (referred to without the name at p. 296), a possible joint US/British surprise attack on the USSR commencing on 1 June and concluding on 30 June 1945, and had the UK Joint Planning Staff produce a report. Brooke's blunt assessment was that 'The idea is of course fantastic and the chances of success quite impossible.'

If the book has any substantial failings, one is the concluding potted history of the Cold War coupled with the thimble-sized post-Cold War epilogue which do not, in my view, fulfil the expectations reasonably created by the book's sub-title.

Of the many breathtaking reminders of the magnitude of the war on the Eastern Front, and what the Nazis inflicted on the people of the USSR, one which the author mentions (p. 315) will suffice for present purposes. Of the five million Soviet military personnel captured by the Nazis, three million died in German prison camps.

Diana Preston, *Eight Days in Yalta: How Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin Shaped the Post-War World* (London: Picador/Pan MacMillan, 2019). pp. 327. \$49.99.

### ***The Boys Who Said NO!***

A new documentary on the US Draft Resistance Movement screened online at the Melbourne Documentary Film Festival (30 June – 15 July). 'The Boys Who Said NO!' was directed by Judith Ehrlich, Oscar-nominated for the outstanding 'The Most Dangerous Man in America', about whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg's 1971 release of the Pentagon Papers. For more information on the film visit their site: <https://www.boyswhosaidno.com>

### **The New International Bookshop**

While lockdown 2.0 may have forced NIBS to once again close their doors, they are still selling books online. To support them go to <https://nibs.org.au/onlinebooks>

### **Union Education History Project**

*From Max Ogden:* The union education history project has now been under way for several months, and is going extremely well. Our two researchers Alice Garner, [agarner1@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:agarner1@unimelb.edu.au) and Rene Burns, [renee.burns@rmit.edu.au](mailto:renee.burns@rmit.edu.au), are doing a great job, and with the assistance of a lot of ex-trainers and others with experience of TUTA, or individual union training, are unearthing some wonderful archives, stories, and articles, and have already undertaken several interviews. So if you have any story at all about your experience of participating in, or conducting a TUTA or union training course, or want to be interviewed, please contact Alice or Rene.

### **Graham Berry, *Democratic Adventurer***

Sean Scalmer's new book on Graham Berry, *Democratic Adventurer: Graham Berry and the Making of Australian Politics* was launched by Frank Bongiorno (via zoom) on 25 May this year. This fascinating book examines the life of Berry, a three-time premier of Victoria. Berry was a hugely influential figure on Australia's early political life. Sean was recently in conversation with Phillip Adams on Late Night Live. The book is published by Monash University Press: <https://publishing.monash.edu/books/da-9781925835779.html>

### **Tribune photographs online**

David McKnight recently let us know that the State Library of NSW has digitised photographs from the *Tribune* archives. To access these images go to the NSW State Library's catalogue at <https://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/> -- from there search for 'Tribune negatives' and you can also add a search term (eg women, union, personal etc). It will return wonderful images like this one for you to download (Item 0450: 'Tribune negatives including gay rights march, Sydney, New South Wales, July 1979'):



### **Melbourne Branch ASSLH Contacts**

**President:** Peter Love [pjlove@me.com](mailto:pjlove@me.com)

**Vice President:** David Cragg [davidkragg@hotmail.com](mailto:davidkragg@hotmail.com)

**Secretary:** Liam Byrne [liam.byrne@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:liam.byrne@unimelb.edu.au)

**Treasurer:** Phillip Deery [phillip.deery@vu.edu.au](mailto:phillip.deery@vu.edu.au)

Website: <https://labourhistorymelbourne.org>

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

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

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*Recorder* is published three times a year. The opinions of the contributors are their own and not necessarily those of the editor or executive of the ASSLH, Melbourne Branch. Send all contributions and queries to the editor, Julie Kimber ([jkimber@swin.edu.au](mailto:jkimber@swin.edu.au)). *Recorder* is published with the generous help of Ellen and Brian Smiddy, Phillip Deery, Peter Love, Susanne Provis, and Kevin Davis.

We respectfully acknowledge the First Nations of Victoria, and their Elders past and present.