

RECORDER

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Biennial Labour History Conference

The 17th biennial conference of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) will be held 5-8 December 2021 in Bendigo, Victoria. Organised with the support of LaTrobe University, the theme of the conference is ***Fighting For Life: Class, Community and Care in Labour History***.



NY Health care workers join Amazon workers on strike outside Staten Island warehouse on May Day, 2020. Getty Images/ Photographer Stephanie Keith.

Convenors of the ASSLH conference have chosen this moment of an international health crisis to examine changes in the meaning and historical context of labour, health, and community. What have been the experiences and relationships between health, community, and labour over time? Can a crisis be an opportunity for strengthening community networks and increasing political organisation for meaningful change?

A provisional conference program is out now and can be downloaded from <https://www.labourhistory.org.au/2021-conference/> We hope to see you there.

Melbourne Club Occupation 12 October 1982

Peter Green

In 1982, I was a member of the Coalition Against Poverty and Unemployment (CAPU), which was led by Harry Van Moorst. I had met Harry 10 years earlier, when I was a conscientious objector against the Vietnam War. At the beginning of October 1982, Harry invited 17 members of CAPU to a special meeting. He explained that we would occupy the Melbourne Club to protest against poverty and unemployment. It was to be kept a secret. The media was not to be told.

At 2.15pm on the 12th October, 15 minutes before the planned invasion, three of us walked along Collins Street to ensure that all was normal outside the Melbourne Club (no extra security, for example). When we got close to the front, I recognised an ABC reporter talking to someone. This was no ordinary reporter – this was Mike Sutherland. I had taught him in secondary school: we were both members of the Communist Party. He and I lived in the same house (but I hadn't told him about the plans for the demonstration). He saw me coming along Collins Street and yelled out 'Hey, when are you going in?' I walked up quickly and hissed – 'Get away from here – this is supposed to be secret'. He and his mate came with us, as we moved further up the street, and I explained what would happen.

I was in the middle of the bunch of protesters as we went in, and I said 'Hullo' to the startled doorman – he politely said 'Hullo' in return. We went to the dining room, where we handed leaflets to the waiters setting the tables. A manager rushed in and had a fit – he began blustering. Then manager number two arrived. He was calmer. He asked us to move to the foyer, where he would talk to us. We refused, so he left to call the police. Some of the CAPU members moved a table against the doors at the end of the room. When the manager returned via the second door, he was angry for us moving the furniture, and invited anyone to have a fist-fight with him (the ruling class will never relinquish power without a

fight). We declined, and talked to him to calm him down. The manager after a few minutes relaxed, and started chatting amiably. He apologised for being aggressive and insulting, and mentioned that some of the Melbourne Club members suffer from senile decay.

He promised he would consult his committee about our demands (which included things like better child care) and get back to us within 24 hours. And we could come back and meet him in the foyer. We stipulated the dining room. He said he couldn't agree to anything until he had spoken to the committee. Someone had opened a window at the south end of the dining room, onto the street, and said a reporter wanted to do an interview. It was Mike Sutherland, with a news cameraman. So I was interviewed from the front window of the Melbourne Club. (It was the lead story on the ABC news that night. The subtitle on the video was 'Peter Green, Sociologist'. My Sociology teacher told me later she was over the moon.)

There were repeated requests for us to leave and much discussion about unemployment, rights, poverty, arrests, etc. After 15 minutes, the police arrived and made a formal request for us to leave. When we wouldn't we were told they would organise 'reinforcements'. Five policeman remained in the room. The manager's assertion 'if you get arrested, you won't be able to get a job in the public service' was met with much laughter.

Melbourne Club staff removed the cutlery from the tables and the paintings from the walls (did they think there would be a blood bath?). It took another 30 minutes for the extra police to arrive. All of the CAPU members sat on the floor and linked arms, except me. I chose not to. I took a jug of water from a table, and poured a series of glasses of water (all from the same glass – minimum disruption) for all the protesters. By this time, I am sure, they decided I was the leader. The police again asked us to leave, and stated when we were touched by them, we would know we were under arrest. The police, working in pairs, started carrying or dragging off the protesters, one by one. I was last. In the paddy wagon, while we waited for another 10 minutes, I conducted a short interview through the vent about how hot and stuffy it was. At the city watchhouse, when it was my turn to be processed, I was asked 'Aren't you a bit old for this sort of thing?' I was 37 years old. I cheerfully answered 'Yes, I am a bit. I might knock off some time soon.'

We were fingerprinted, despite our belief (proved later to be a fact) that it was not legally necessary. When I refused, the policeman asked 'You wouldn't want me to disobey standing orders, would you?' One of the protesters heard a discussion among the police – 'Peter Green is the ringleader of this group of international socialists. He's the troublemaker. We will have to get their photographs by surprise.'

In the courtroom an hour later, next door, the charges were read out. That we did wilfully trespass in a place, to wit, the Melbourne Club, and did refuse to leave that place after being warned to do so by Ronald Titcombe the person representing the occupier. We were let off on the promise that we wouldn't do it again before our case was heard.



'The Red Flag is flown during the occupation of the elite Melbourne Club in 1982.' The Commons. Social Change Library.

I recall that the charge was called 'besetting premises' (meaning to surround and harass; assail on all sides) and so much of our defence was that we went to the Melbourne Club to talk, not to harass or intimidate anyone, or to create a 'nuisance'.

I decided I would defend myself in court – one of two of us. The others didn't appeal the charge. I asked a lawyer friend who could advise me. I mentioned I was on the jury in a court case six months earlier, in which Robert Richter had done a great job to defend a client accused of attempted robbery. We had found his client guilty, but not without an overnight stay of the jury.

A meeting with Robert Richter was organised, and he enjoyed hearing about the debates we had in the jury room. When I said I would be cross examining the manager of the Melbourne Club about his behaviour, Robert suggested that although I was there and saw what happened, I should use the phrase 'I put it to you that you...' ('you wanted a punch up', for example). When I put my statements about what happened to the manager of the Melbourne Club, (an ex-Colonel, we found out) he denied having challenged us to a fight, and denied that he had apologised for his behaviour, adding 'Nothing like that ever happened.'

I called one witness – Superintendent Barry Phelan, whom I knew well, because he lived a few doors up from my parents' place. I hadn't told him what I would ask him. 'Superintendent Phelan, do you recall when we last spoke?' 'Yes. It was at your father's funeral, a year ago'. 'Yes. And do you recall what we spoke about?' I thought he might fudge this, and say we talked about my dad, which we did. But he knew what I was referring to. 'Yes. We spoke about protesters and the right to demonstrate around social justice issues.' 'Did we discuss what kind of work I do in relation to social justice?' 'Yes – you spoke about your work with unemployed young people in Broadmeadows.' 'Thank you Superintendent. That will be all.'

The Melbourne Club became the focus of several demonstrations held over the following years.

[Peter received a good behaviour bond].

ALP Federal Intervention, 1970

Bob Murray

A potpourri of politics, some quite exotic, formed the background when the ALP Federal Executive intervened in the Victorian Labor Party in September 1970 and sacked the Central Executive. To grossly simplify, the Executive had to consider the interests of three factions in the home state as well as numerous sensitivities in other states.

Gough Whitlam, then the Federal parliamentary leader, inspired the intervention in his drive to broaden the Party's organisational wing and the Adelaide MP Clyde Cameron executed it.

A stockily built ex-shearer, shrewd and tenacious, charming but devious, Cameron's conversion to the Whitlam cause made the intervention possible. South Australia had long held the balance of power on the Federal Executive and Federal Conference. It had generally exercised that position on the side of the left. Cameron dominated the South Australian branch of the Australian Workers Union vote. His close partnership with State Secretary and Senator, Jim Toohey, gave him substantial control of the SA branch if State Premier (from June 1967 to April 1968) Don Dunstan agreed.

Since the 1955 Split, Cameron had been the advocate for a left-wing party that would come to power in an economic crisis and implement a radical programme of state-owned industry and foreign affairs independence. His hero was the NSW MP Eddie Ward, who had begun his career as a protege of the Labor Premier Jack Lang. Ward died suddenly in 1963. The Federal parliamentary left chose Jim Cairns as its next leader and Cameron's enthusiasm gradually waned. Whitlam argued successfully that a Labor win in 1972 with a big spending social democracy program would better help the workers – and Cameron would be his Minister for Labour.

Don Dunstan had just become Premier again (June 1970) and wanted any trouble in the party to be early in his term. He had also become a more national figure at the 1969 Federal Conference – the first to be held in public and to have the four federal and six State parliamentary leaders as delegates, along with the six selected by each state conference. In short, by 1970 Dunstan and Cameron were ready for an intervention to attack the 'Victorian problem'.

The left leader in the Federal organisational wing was (and had been since 1955) F.E. 'Joe' Chamberlain from Perth. He was the Federal President or Secretary during these years but also Secretary of the WA branch of the ALP. The two positions had been combined in the 1930s to economise and now gave Chamberlain the pre-eminent sway in the West. The tension between he and Whitlam became bitterly personal but his reputation as

a good union official, adept at arbitration, made him popular with WA workers. He was a very good committee politician who enjoyed the power of his dominating positions, both state and national. His ideology, as far as it can be assessed, was that of a conventional socialist but was mostly known for being rigidly against all the usual Labor enemies.

The Victorian situation prior to intervention had become almost bizarre. The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) had leverage in the branch since 1955 through the unions it controlled to various degrees. It had exercised it judiciously through the affable George Seelaf of the Meat Workers Union in favour of policies such as a strong role for unions, nationalisation of industry and a neutral foreign policy.

By the late 1960s the CPA was in decline. Membership had fallen and remaining members were losing conviction. The mainstream CPA had broken away from pro-Moscow and pro-Peking (Beijing) splinter parties. Trotskyist cells were growing with the New Left. All had influence in unions and what was called 'competitive militancy' developed among them. The New Left spirit also produced younger officials who saw themselves as an independent ALP union left. All these, though bitter enemies, jostled for influence in an outwardly solid Trades Hall left.

The ALP State Secretary, Bill Hartley, who came from Perth, was Chamberlain's man in Melbourne. The mainstream Victorian CPA leader was Laurie Carmichael of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, a more aggressive personality than Seelaf.

'Unity tickets', where both ALP and CPA members could stand for union elections on the same how-to-vote card, were especially divisive. Federal ALP policy banned them, but the Chamberlain compromise was to not enforce this ban in Victoria. The critical issue for the left was for the ALP to stay right out of union elections. The Whitlam forces, however, wanted much less Communist Party influence.

The other major left-right issue was State Aid for non-state schools. The left adamantly opposed it, though it was never clear how far this was about educational conviction and how far it was a stick to beat the right. Apart from the actual question, the right saw State Aid as a free hand essential for winning elections. State Aid was the spark that set off the intervention. Opposition Leader Clyde Holding promised a small amount of State Aid for the May 1970 Victorian election. As a new leader Holding hoped to improve on the Party's previous dismal performances. State Secretary Bill Hartley, presumably directed by Chamberlain keen to hold the left firm, instructed Holding to withdraw the promise, which he did.

The voters were not impressed. The hovering Federal Executive swooped and used its newly changed 'numbers' to investigate the branch, get the answer it wanted, sack Hartley and the executive and introduce

a new administration system based on proportional representation.

The 'Feds' shrewdly put Bob Hawke, elected the year before as ACTU President, in charge of a provisional committee to administer the Victorian branch, pending election of a new administration. A new 'Centre Unity' faction developed around Hawke, comprising the Trades Hall moderates and another group of unions and branch members who had previously voted with the Central Executive. Hawke's 'numbers man' there was Bill Landeryou of the Storemen and Packers, later a State minister.

The Socialist Left that arose from the intervention looked on those who had crossed to the Hawke side as a 'fifth column', one of the angry epithets used at the time. The moderate branch members led by future Senator John Button also detested the new faction as opportunists who would look after their mates – especially for pre-selection – despite the more open voting system. Landeryou's domineering style on behalf of Hawke and Holding dismayed them. The embittered former participants formed an 'independents' faction which often voted – strategically, not ideologically – with the Socialist Left to defeat Landeryou's faction.

Hawke and Holding had until then opposed the intervention. They had been under pressure from Carmichael: Hawke because the left unions had backed him for the ACTU presidency and Holding because of the union work going to his law firm.

Whitlam made the intervention possible. He campaigned relentlessly and welcomed what support he could get. The moderate unions, his notional base, had not always been enthusiastic. They did not want fruitless Trades Hall discord or too many union elections. They were wary about backing charismatic political leaders whose sense of destiny eventually turned to tears. Lang, Evatt and Calwell came to mind.

I had decided at this point that my personality did not suit political activism and let my ALP membership lapse. But one night that week I had the good fortune to be in the Melbourne hotel room where Cameron and John Ducker, the emerging strong man of the NSW right, were working the phones to get support for the intervention. 'They've beaten us with a ticket to the races,' Cameron said resignedly after hanging up from a call to a wavering union leader.

But they were wrong. Tom Burns (ALP federal president) and Mick Young (federal secretary) were successfully installed as temporary administrators of the Victorian branch. My friend and Whitlam's speech writer, Graham Freudenberg, pronounced then that that Cameron-Ducker alliance made the Whitlam Government possible.

Robert Murray is the author of The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties (1970), Labor and Santamaria (2016) and The Confident Years: Australia in the 1920s (2020).

Memoirs of a Cold War Warrior

Michael Easson

Review: Keith Harvey, *Memoirs of a Cold War Warrior* (Connor Court Publishing, 2021). pp.+260. Paper \$32.95.

This is a lucid and interesting story by Keith Harvey: From university activist in the Democrat Club at Monash University in the early 1970s, gradual attraction to the ideals and works of the National Civic Council (NCC), conversion to Catholicism, marriage, children, recruitment to the anti-communist union cause, union work, including the Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) in 1977-78 (it did not end well), then the Federated Clerks Union (FCU) to retirement, and attraction to the ideals of the Australian Labor Party in coalition with Christians concerned with social justice.

What is unusual about these memoirs is that Harvey was not a product of the ALP split (he was a toddler at the time). He was as a recruit decades later, who saw consistency and purpose in the 'old Catholic right' of the Victorian Movement. There are few such memoirs, if any, from those of his vintage who fought and stayed true (as distinct from those who returned from battles disillusioned and in apostasy.) Harvey uses the term 'vocation' to capture how he and colleagues of religious inclination saw union work, seeking better pay and conditions for working people. Ideals of a better world were turned into practical reality.

The book, dedicated to his wife and family and for 'all those who kept the faith', also mentions Harvey's ancestors, one a progressive farmer, another a utopian socialist, as if there is a consistency of purpose, a coalition over time that reflects the grand, boisterous coalition that was and (to some extent) still is the Australian labour movement.

Harvey was employed by the Victorian branch of the FCU from 1979, then the national office of the union until it disappeared in 1993 — amalgamated with several unions into the Australian Services Union (ASU) where he worked until 2013.

The book's first chapter, 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', alludes to Orwell's novel, communism, and the year Harvey re-joined the ALP (having previously been a member from 1974-78). 1984 was the year the Victorian branches of the Clerks, the Shop Assistants, the Ironworkers and the Carpenters and Joiners, applied to re-affiliate to the Victorian ALP. It is a nice scene setter.

Chapter 2 is 'The Monash Soviet' (which was really the Beijing Soviet, as the university's Labor Club and much of Monash student politics were dominated by Maoists and other crazies.) A future Labor Premier of Tasmania, Jim Bacon, then a Monash Maoist, was a contemporary, as were future Builders Labourers

Federation activists. Harvey felt revulsion at far-left chants 'Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh, dare to struggle, dare to win' in Vietnam war protests and their sympathy for the murderous Cultural Revolution in China. Harvey joined the Democrat Club, a student body originally inspired by the DLP.

Chapter 3 affectionately traverses activities as an Organiser from 1972 with the Rope and Cordage Workers' Union, one of those small unions that were swallowed by amalgamations into various conglomerate unions following industry changes.

Chapter 4 describes Harvey's aborted placement in a key research position in the VTHC. The book's cover features a cartoon by William Ellis Green in the Melbourne Herald showing an official at Trades Hall locking a door and barring Harvey from an office he was dismissed from. 'I thought you'd got the message' was the caption. This refers to his recruitment by Ken Stone (1926-2006, VTHC secretary, 1969-1985), a moderate, who saw Peter Marsh (VTHC secretary, 1985-88) as his replacement, but hoped for a cleanskin, right-wing Labor activist who could make sure the numbers were there for the future.

But Harvey's NCC links were used by the Left to challenge control of the VTHC, and Stone felt disappointed Harvey's background was not fully disclosed to him. Harvey was sacked. Stone's instincts were right, as when Marsh moved on, airily dismissive of factionalism, one of Australia's most prominent Left unionists and recent ex-communist John Halfpenny (1935-2003) took over (VTHC secretary, 1988-1995). In fairness to Harvey, he says he disagreed with many of the policies of the NCC; he respected their anti-communist zeal more than anything else, and this rings true.

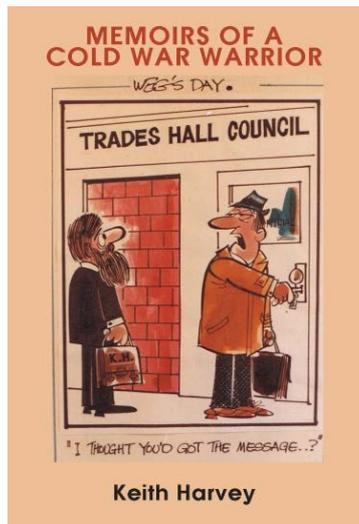
Chapter 5 is about working for John Maynes (1923-2009) and is the most fascinating and well-written part of the book. Miranda Priestly, the exasperating character in the film *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) is an unlikely comparison at the start. Maynes led the Clerks' ALP Industrial Group from 1946 to his retirement from union office in 1992. Harvey worked closely with Maynes as his power-base collapsed, and Maynes' wordy discourses on anything and everything, bossiness, forgetfulness, and ego made him hard to work for. Gore Vidal's description of Gough Whitlam comes to mind: It was sometimes hard to tell the difference between vanity and over-weening vanity. Yet, at heart, Harvey sees Maynes as a good and brave man, whose better days were behind him.

Maynes' team won control of the Victorian branch of the union in 1950. By the early 1950s, many of the officials elected by the ALP Industrial Groups across

Australia were young, in their late 20s and early 30s. A few too many aged in situ.

Maynes dominated the FCU's policy work: technological change, equal pay for female members, family income assistance, and international unionism. In 1988, however, Victoria was lost to the ALP Left and allies. Interestingly, and not widely known, Maynes did not have a full-time paid union position until late in his career, after the NCC split in 1980-82 when Maynes fell out completely with Bob Santamaria, the NCC impresario and dominant media and organisation personality. Prior to that, Maynes was the NCC's full-time industrial officer.

Nearly all the industrial activists in the NCC, having been sacked, retrenched, or departed in disillusion, formed a new organisation, known as Social Action, in which John Maynes was initially a key figure. But this too petered out and this provides some context for why some of the erstwhile NCC-aligned unionists in Victoria were so receptive to Bob Hawke's urging that they re-join and heal the ALP Split.



The next chapter discusses international work, including the Cold War union rivalries in the Pacific. Chapter 7 is bitter-sweet: Solidarność support, Cold War victory, while losing the Clerks Union to the Left. The last chapter is an attempt to reconcile family, his experiences, the labour cause, and the Catholic social justice tradition.

An Appendix contains a short-hand summary of why the anti-communist fight was important, highlights the significant beachheads and control of key unions by Australian communists and their allies, and the mess/tragedy of the ALP Split. This is Harvey's cogent estimate of the period before he came to prominence. He is right to say that for 30-years the Victorian ALP did everything to head off unity with the DLP ex-members, as readers of Paul Strangio's account of Labor in Victoria, *Neither Power Nor Glory* (2012), can discover.

Harvey concedes that through the years covered he was mainly a loyal foot soldier, sometimes a conspicuous one, often with little direct understanding of or involvement in key decisions. Time, retirement, and reflection enable perspective. The book's footnotes display genuine scholarship, and a handy index assists the reader. Through zest, determination and certitude he rose to a significant place in the FCU only to have the union crumble underneath him. The best that can be said of anyone is they worked honestly, conscientiously, for noble ideals, uncorrupted by base temptation. This was Harvey's vocation.

Michael Easson is former Secretary of the Labor Council of NSW, 1989-1994.

Francis Patrick 'Frank' Sheehan

17 August 1937 – 5 June 2021

Brian Smiddy

The death of Frank Sheehan of Dunnstown, Ballarat, has left me mourning the loss of an endearing friend. I first met Frank in November 1956 at the National Young Christian Workers (YCW) Conference in Melbourne. Each time we met we had many ideas to talk about.

Frank's childhood was spent in Dunnstown, a small hamlet on the outskirts of Ballarat. The population consisted of small rural landholders growing potatoes and other produce. Frank went to the local Catholic primary school and his secondary education was St Paul's Technical College. Following the completion of his schooling he became an apprentice motor mechanic.

Frank's involvement with the YCW had a big impact on his life. It made sense to him linking his religious beliefs to his daily life. He helped develop the YCW in Ballarat and went on to spend time in Newcastle supporting and helping its members before becoming National President from 1963–66.

In October 1966, Frank married Rosalie Moroney. They had four children, Jane, Michael, Roseanne and Katrina and twelve grandchildren. Frank was a good sportsman, particularly in Australian Rules Football. While playing for Ballarat East he won the Best and Fairest trophy in 1959 and 1961 and won the Courier Award in 1959.

Frank's entry into politics commenced in the early 1970s. In May 1973 he was endorsed as the ALP candidate for the State seat of Ballarat South. He was unsuccessful and he stood again in 1976 and 1979, finally becoming successful in 1982 at the time of the election of the John Cain Labor Government.

The results of Frank's election campaigns were heavily influenced by the votes of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), who always gave their second preferences to other candidates rather than to the Labor Party. The DLP was formed after a split in the Labor Party in 1955, allegedly because of the influence of communism in the ALP. The presence of a strong Catholic vote in Ballarat often resulted in the DLP out-polling the primary vote of the ALP. The DLP was not very successful in winning seats, but had a decisive say in who formed Government.

Frank's parliamentary career earned him the admiration and support of the community through his great love, respect and interest in the community. He was especially interested in worker's rights and safety. The story is told that sometimes after a hectic day John Cain would ring Frank at 10.00 at night to discuss the day's affairs. John Cain told me that Frank was one



Frank Sheehan.

of his strongest supporters although he held a very marginal seat.

On retirement Frank had many interests including his family, garden, his work shed and the environment through Catholic Earthcare Ballarat. He was a founding member and played a prominent part in supporting the victims of sexual abuse in Ballarat through the group Moving Towards Justice. He did not enjoy very good health in his last years. Frank was a happy person with a cheerful and welcoming smile and sadly is no longer with us. However, his contribution to society remains.

Well done Frank. We express great sympathy to Rosalie, Jane, Michael, Roseanne, Katrina and their families.

Ian Bransgrove

Lyle Allan

It is with deep regret that we report the death of Ian Bransgrove on 23 January 2021, at the age of 76 years. Ian was a long time member and once served on the Executive of the ASSLH (Melbourne Branch). He was also a life member of the Australian Labor Party.

Ian had been in ill health for a number of years, and at the time of his death was a resident of Hope Aged Care in Brunswick. Ian's body was cremated, and a service was held at Fawkner Memorial Park on 10 February 2021.

Roger Wilson turns 90

Phillip Deery

The Maritime Union of Australia auditorium in West Melbourne was packed with friends, family and assorted comrades on 20th May. The occasion was the celebration of Roger Wilson's 90th birthday. Roger became a ship steward at 16, a communist at 18 and a trade union official at 19. The celebration, originally scheduled for 2020 (he was born in 1930) but postponed due to the pandemic, was a rousing event. Speakers referred regularly to his unflinching commitment to social justice and the betterment of the working classes, his humility and his ongoing activism. Paddy Crumlin, MUA national secretary, gave an especially inspiring address in acknowledgment of/salutation to Roger's many qualities.



Roger Wilson. Photo by Chris Clarke.

Roger himself, in fine form, described some of the many instances of this activism, stretching back to protests against political repercussions of the Royal Commission on Espionage (1954-55) – he read from a telegram he sent to the director-general of ASIO, Colonel Spry – through to the fight for equal wages for women, against apartheid and in support of the Wave Hill walk-off. What he did not mention was his leading role as assistant secretary of the Seamen's Union of Australia in opposing the Vietnam war. The SUA was one of the earliest opponents, and initiated industrial action in the mid-1960s against Australian merchant ships carrying war supplies to Vietnam. For Roger, peace was trade union business. He attended the Warsaw Peace Congress in 1950, which triggered the commencement of a 3-volume, 550-page ASIO file.

A consolation for *Recorder* readers unable to attend this wonderful event is that Roger can be seen and heard in a documentary film: the MUA's 'An Australian Merchant Seaman's Story in his own words – Roger Wilson' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YcfNiH1GgE>



'Roger Wilson takes the wheel, Gdansk Poland 1950 after the World Peace Congress.'

Anti-Ky demonstration

Mary Elizabeth Calwell

Mary Elizabeth Calwell shared with us this photo taken at a Canberra demonstration in January 1967. The photo features Gordon Bryant, Anne Kerr MP, and Mary Elizabeth's mother, Elizabeth Marren Calwell, among others, protesting the visit to Australia of the Republic of South Vietnam's Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky. For readers interested in his visit, you can read Phillip Deery's *Recorder* article here: <https://labourhistorymelbourne.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/recorder-283.pdf>



Radicals

Barry York

(Review) Meredith Burgmann and Nadia Wheatley, *Radicals: Remembering the Sixties* (NewSouth Books, 2021). pp. + 432. Paper \$39.99.

The concept behind this highly engaging book is simple but its content complex. The project was to interview twenty activists from the 'sixties', which the authors define as 1965 to 1975, write up the interviews, and provide context and interpretation. The authors adopted a consistent approach, delving into how individuals became radical and how the radicalisation changed their lives.

Burgmann and Wheatley found that a sense of boredom and frustration with the Menzies era, repressive school regulations, police brutality, male chauvinism, censorship, capital punishment, Aboriginal injustice, conscription, Vietnam, apartheid, the 1968 global uprisings, and cultural influences such as folk and rock music, all had an impact. And it's fascinating to read of the more personal influences including parents, childhoods, religion, teachers and books. Few of the twenty came from working-class families. They seem to have done well and continue to do good things.

Burgmann and Wheatley are very capable writers and understood the problem of selecting individuals to be interviewed, given that the sixties involved such a diverse mob. They compared it to inviting people to a party, saying 'You need enough diversity to provoke interesting conversations but you want the guests to have enough in common to avoid too many fights afterwards'. In Melbourne, for a brief period and from my experience, the 'fights' – or 'struggle between the two lines' – were what gave the movement its internal momentum and a revolutionary direction.

It is heartening to see the book's front cover prominently display the flag of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam among a crowd of protestors. It's a reminder that we – or many of us – were not 'anti-war' activists but in solidarity with the 'Viet Cong' whose military victory we supported. Meredith Burgmann, an iconic figure in the Vietnam and South African solidarity movements in Sydney, writes with pride about waving a Vietcong flag, while wearing a red headband and floral mini-skirt; they were stylish times.

The twenty 'guests' to their party include some who were well-known like Geoffrey Robertson, Margret RoadKnight, Albert Langer ('Arthur Dent' since the late 1990s), David Marr, Gary Foley, Peter Duncan, Robbie Swan, Margaret Reynold, Vivienne Binns, and Burgmann and Wheatley who write autobiographical chapters. I must say that Nadia Wheatley's piece, 'The girl who threw the tomato', is stunning in its elegance and frankness, with psychological and social insight. What a writer!

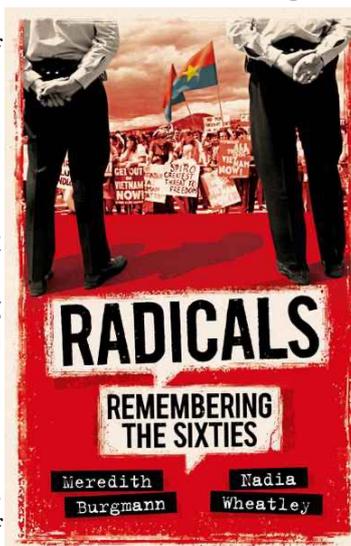
As an activist back then, I recognise most of these names and had met a few. I identified as a Maoist, so I was very interested in Wheatley's chapter on Albert Langer who was once described by Mungo MacCallum as 'the youngest and most brilliant of the Australian student revolutionary leaders'. Arthur tells Nadia that he sees 'nothing in common between the Sixties radicalism and the various people that claim to be engaged in radical politics these days'. It's a pity that more emphasis is not placed on today's situation.

By 'radical' Burgmann and Wheatley mean left-wing – and they rightly assert that in important ways the radical movement helped change society for the better. Feminism emerges as a theme linking many of the stories, and Women's Liberation was indeed responsible for the main lasting cultural and social change. It's been a very long time between high tides. What does a quasi-death cult, like the Extinction movement, have in common with the revolutionary spirit of 1968? The Occupy movement was closer to the mark, but sadly fizzled out.

Socialism will not be built by cultural shift alone. The individual stories confirm that we tended to be activists first – living and breathing the struggle on a daily basis – and not concerned enough with theory. With capitalism now heading for a major, possibly unprecedented, global crisis, few on the left have much grasp of economics.

I have a gripe with the authors' promotion of the myth that Whitlam withdrew the troops from Vietnam. The large numbers of ground forces were withdrawn by the McMahon government in 1971. Whitlam only brought home the last remaining small group of embassy guards and the like. The authors are also wrong to claim that 'We had a class-based party that was committed to bringing the troops home'. Whitlam's defeat of Calwell as ALP leader in 1967 saw a change of policy from supporting the complete withdrawal of Australian troops to a policy of 'holding operations'. This is important as it gave credence to the extra-parliamentary left.

The book shows how well the radicals, now mostly septuagenarians, remember 'the Sixties'. Curiously however, the authors promote the notion that 'If you remember the sixties, you weren't there'. I've never liked that saying. Most of the twenty activists in the book 'smoked only occasionally or didn't do drugs at all'. Nearly all had their eye on the prize. They should feel proud to have been on the right side of History. *Radicals* succeeds in capturing the diversity, angst, oppression, sacrifices and fun, of the sixties. What we all had in common was a rebellious spirit, belief in progress, a selflessness, courage, determination and optimism. 'We all believed we could change the world', as the authors put it. But it was struggle within the movement that pushed it forward, giving it clarity and a genuinely left-wing direction for a while. The rapid decline of the sixties' radical spirit, and its failure to revive, remains a puzzle and a challenge.



A Book of Doors

Ken Mansell

(Review) Anne Richards, *A Book of Doors* (AndAlso Books, 2020). Paper \$25.

A Book of Doors, the autobiographical memoir published last year by Brisbane author Anne Richards, is a remarkable work. From the opening chapter it packs quite a punch – literally. Anne, the heroine, is an 18-years-old second year Arts student at the University of Queensland. She has been forbidden by her patriarchal, DLP-supporting father to march in the May 1970 Vietnam Moratorium. She defies the tyrant. He strikes her, disowns her, reports evidence of her marijuana use to the Drug Squad, and sets the tone for the book by unifying the ‘personal’ and the ‘political’. Anne has earned this reader’s sympathy (given my own personal difficulties with the sixties ‘generation gap’).

The author, writing in the first person and past tense, explores and recalls two distinct but interwoven realms of reality and experience, the public life of Queensland politics and the private lives of those young people immersed in it. Public figures – including some protesters and all politicians – are identified with their full names; her own personal friends in ‘private’ life remain anonymous (first name only). The author’s description of her personal life after being shut out of home is detailed in scope, admirably honest, and will tear at the heartstrings of most readers. Homeless and broke, she sleeps in the university library. Her lover ‘Neil’ is killed on his motorbike. She moves to a shared house at 41 Prospect Terrace, Highgate Hill. Here the ‘public’ intrudes on the ‘private’, as customs officers descend in a hostile raid to search Anne’s room for drugs.

Anne has been politicised as a Catholic high school student impacted by the ‘sixties’ youth culture, and is then further radicalised at university. Rebellious and inquisitive, she becomes increasingly involved, attending rallies and demonstrations, both on and off campus. All the familiar landmarks associated with this period of heightened radicalism at the University of Queensland are evoked – the Forum, the scene of passionate political debates featuring the oratory of ‘word spinners’ like Brian Laver and Dan O’Neill; the *Semper Floreat* newspaper office; the Red and Black Bookshop in Elizabeth Arcade; the Royal Exchange Hotel at Toowong; the ‘Tent City’ erected to involve students in the Moratorium. Some of the more spectacular incidents of student revolt, such as the sacking of the University’s CMF building and the infamous ‘kidnapping’ of a Saigon diplomat, are recalled. The author describes in graphic detail the police violence unleashed against her fellow anti-apartheid protesters during the 1971 South African (‘Springbok’) rugby tour and Premier

Bjelke-Petersen’s State of Emergency. (The coalition that emerged in Queensland between Indigenous leaders and the young radical left affects Anne personally and she helps set up a holiday school for Aboriginal kids).

Police repression is a recurring theme of the book. Radicals in Brisbane were constantly monitored and harassed by Special Branch police and ‘living below the radar’ became a requisite for survival in ‘The Scary State’. A significant number of protestors withdrew from political activity or became involved in the growing alternative lifestyles movement. Anne too is increasingly attracted to the counter-culture, attending the May 1973 Aquarius Festival in Nimbin where ‘there was very little mainline politics, no one hustling for political action or revolutionary comrade righteousness.’ This is not intended as a history of the protest movements. It is a history of her involvement in them. I was, however, disappointed the author did not attempt to outline or understand the left ‘revolutionary’ groups (their ideas and differences treated as mere ‘factionist fervour’). I suspect this is because Anne was not a joiner, even staying clear of ‘unsettling’ women’s liberation meetings.



It is in her detailed treatment of her experiences that the memoir appears to take on the character of a novel. One typical example is her lengthy description of Brisbane’s Moratorium march where even the colour of boots is remembered! Each chapter includes slabs of everyday dialogue so detailed that it is impossible to believe it has not been ‘made up’. The author’s ‘memories’ of her inner psychological life, expressed in lyrical and poetic terms (repetitively using the ‘Door’ as a metaphor for safety and to convey her insecurity) are also novelistic. Use of these fictional devices is presumably intended to convey what it felt like to live a political life in sixties’ Brisbane and draw the reader closer to an identification with the heroine. For me, however, preferring a more analytical memoir, the slabs of dialogue felt artificial and the lyrical touches were obscure. So is this book a memoir, or a novel? I don’t believe it can be both. The National Library Catalogue lists it as a memoir. The blurb on the front and back covers states categorically it is a novel. The first section of Richards’ book was published as a novella in 2017 and presumably the author has used a similar style here. Even allowing for the novelistic features, this is an account of real historical events and real historical actors, with the historical Anne at the very core of the narrative. The book is definitely a memoir, albeit one trying very hard to feel like something else.

The final chapter of the book describes Anne’s determined effort as a 24-year-old to arrive at a personal catharsis, to ‘make peace’ with her father and ‘belong to the family again’. This is a book about bravery – of a young woman, and of a generation who stood up to ‘Bjelke’ and his police state. Anne Richards has honoured both herself and her generation with this invaluable contribution to the history.

George Zangalis 1931 – 2021

Jock Collins

George Zangalis, who died in Melbourne earlier this year aged 90, spent his lifetime in Australia fighting for migrant worker rights in the trade union movement, the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and among ethnic communities. He arrived in Australia as a 19-year-old migrant from the Greek village of Drymades, in North Epirus in 1950. Politics led to his arrival in Australia and shaped his life ever since. He came to Australia to avoid the persecution that the Greek Left were going through after the war and a month after his arrival in Melbourne he joined the Democritus League, a Greek workers' club.

Post-1945 immigration led to a great change in the Australian working class. By the late 1960s 180,000 new immigrants arrived each year. While Arthur Calwell, the first Australian Minister for Immigration, promised that nine out of every ten immigrants would come from Britain, that was not the case. To fill annual quotas, the immigration net was cast first to Displaced Peoples from Eastern Europe in the 1940s and then to northern and southern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. Greece and Italy became key source countries of post-war immigrants, most of whom became 'factory fodder' as the Australian manufacturing industry grew to employ one quarter of the workforce by the mid-1970s.



George's interest in working-class politics and the cause of socialism led him to quickly join the Eureka Youth League in May 1950, and in December, the Carlton branch of the CPA. Like most post-war immigrants at this time, George walked straight off the boat into a job: in George's case it was working on the GMH assembly line. For George, who had never been inside a factory before, this was a big change. He stayed at GMH for a year before taking a job on the railways, then moving back to the car industry at the CPA's request in 1957.

Over the next decades George Zangalis rose to prominence in the trade union movement and in the CPA. While formed to fight for working class rights, both organisations had very few immigrants from what we now call CALD backgrounds in their leadership. George was set on changing this lack of migrant representation. George was elected as the first president of the ACTU Migrant Workers

Committee and fought to transform trade unions from monolingual and monocultural organisations into multicultural and multilingual ones – setting up multilingual committees in unions and migrant worker centres. In 1970 he became a member of the Party's Victorian State Executive and the National Committee. From 1988 until 1996 he was Victorian President of the Australian Railways Union.

One important area of struggle for George Zangalis related to the fight against the deportation of progressive – read politically active and/or communist – Australians. George himself had to fight for 22 years to gain Australian citizenship – despite having an Australian-born wife and child – because of his prominent public role in the Victorian and national CPA. In 1953, ASIO's Victorian Director, H C Wright, suggested that Zangalis be deported back to Greece as an 'undesirable alien'. In 1969, the 'Make Zanga a Kanga' public campaign was launched. George stood as a Communist Party candidate for election in the Melbourne federal seat of Bruce against Immigration Minister Billy Snedden. It was not until 1973, after the Whitlam Government's election, that George finally became an Australian citizen.

It was in ethnic community politics that George also had a very significant impact. The adoption of multiculturalism in Australia in the 1970s opened new political space for ethnic community politics. George Zangalis became one of the most influential members of the Greek community in the following decades. He was a foundation member and leading official of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) which, under the Hawke and Keating Labor Governments, had the ear of Prime Ministers. The Galbally Report led to an outburst of ethnic media – print, radio, TV – in Australia, including establishment of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) ethnic radio and TV services and expansion of the community multilingual broadcasting sector. George Zangalis was in his element. He played a key role in *Neos Kosmos*, the left-wing bilingual Greek newspaper. He was elected to the SBS board in the early 1980s and became very active – eventually president – in Melbourne's ethnic communities radio station 3ZZZ. He also became president of the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters' Council of Australia, the Community Broadcasters' Council and served for several years on the ABC State and National Advisory Council. He authored the *Short History of Ethnic Broadcasting in Australia*, and co-authored *The Golden Holden* with John Arrowsmith.

In 2002 George Zangalis received the Bicentenary of Federation Medal for services to migrant workers and the community. George remained active in politics in Melbourne till the end. He was Vice-President of the Fair Go for Pensioners Coalition and campaigned for better aged care, particularly for migrants and other working-class elderly who, as George put it, 'don't have funds to go into the rich man's nursing homes'.

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The Good University

Adam Fforde

(Review) Raewyn Connell, *The Good University: What universities actually do and why it's time for radical change* (Monash University Publishing, 2019). pp. +233. Paper \$29.95.

This is an exceptionally good book, useful, short, well-written and in the centre of that zone many call 'reflective practice'. Connell both analyses and problematises the current situation in universities, thus pointing us to causes and remedies. I am not an academic, rather a scholar and a practitioner, having parleyed PhD and postdoc in Vietnam studies into a career mainly in consultancy. I have though been a fulltime staff member of a university, and I have taught in many universities in Melbourne.

Few academics I know have nice things to say about the quality of university administrations and are generally critical of how they are managed, pointing to signs of dysfunctionality such as tendencies to 'blue sky' organisational change introduced without proper trials, the fact that their own time spent doing administrative work is not properly accounted for (i.e. paid for), and their inability to deploy power to change situations that they do not like. Nor are they happy about the quality of their core activities of research and teaching. There is a systemic problem. Resources are not well allocated, and they are controlled by the wrong people.

Connell's text has eight chapters. The first two examine the core activities of a university – research, and teaching and learning. She then places these into their immediate contexts by looking at the 'collective intellectual' and the global economy of knowledge. This contextualisation is then broadened by looking at power and resources in universities. These are the most valuable chapters, analytically, and here Connell displays a wide knowledge of relevant literatures.

Chapters 7 and 8 then offer solutions, pivoting on the analysis in the first two chapters of the core activities of research and teaching. Connell juxtaposes 'why ... universities exist' with analysis of how the neo-liberal impulse has undermined their central purpose. If a community wants better and more authentic research and teaching, then they need the power to ensure that the negative effects of the contexts (chapters 3–6) are removed. The text is supplemented by a valuable set of references that show Connell's mastery of the subject.

For me, the most interesting and striking aspects of Connell's argument lies in the tension between the

diversity of knowledge and students and the homogenising practices of universities. Critical here is university management's use of aggregating statistics to extend their power over academic workers through targets and metrics. Power in universities is increasingly centralised, and this is a mistake.

As an economist, with a business background, it has always struck me as absurd that a university, which is not a for-profit business, should be a site of the managerial language of for-profits. Mainstream economic theory tells anybody who wants to know that under certain circumstances market forces cannot lead to economically efficient outcomes, crucially when there is 'joint-production' – where there is no simple single priceable outcome, such as a can of beans. Economic efficiency, in this language, is not productive efficiency. The neo-liberal agenda, asserting the value everywhere of commercial methods, is not suited to such institutions.

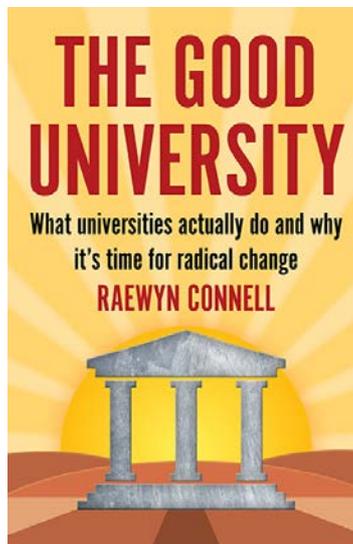
Instead, Connell calls for us to understand that to get 'good' universities, we need to appreciate the 'widespread humanism among university workers, and a widespread belief in universities as a public good', so that 'within universities, we [can] ... end managerial control, the selling of access, the commercialisation of knowledge, and the culture of lying'.

Connell argues in favour of the democratisation of universities, which provides an opportunity 'to recognise the modern university as a shared social resource'. Her call to 'realise such principles most effectively by building from below', means putting resource allocation decisions in the hands of those

close to the 'chalkface' and who are properly informed about the complex, textured and granular information inherent in a world where output is highly differentiated: all students are different, and want to be treated so; research papers and projects are all different, and should be treated so. Use of jargon and concepts designed for for-profits obscures this.

Pretending that there is similarity and simplicity (standardised testing, research output norms) where there is diversity and complexity, as Connell shows, leads to waste. For-profit methods are valid when output is not diverse. But students and research are essentially unlike a can of beans. Change is needed. The discontent among students and staff (academic and non-academic) who know how a good university runs tells us much that is wrong with our current system. This can change. This book increases the likelihood that this will happen.

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Stuff the Accord! Pay Up! (A Reply)

Liz Ross

Response to Don Sutherland's review of *Stuff the Accord! Pay Up! Workers' resistance to the ALP-ACTU Accord*.

Don Sutherland raises several issues in the ongoing debate about the role and impact of the Accord. His review in *Recorder* no. 300 suggests that analysis of 'the origins, content and conceptual issues of the Accord' should have been expanded. All books can have more chapters, but *Stuff the Accord* was never planned to be a detailed critique of all aspects of the Accord. The book's intention was to draw together the crucial struggles in the one place for the first time, to assess and detail the extent of workers' opposition.

All the chapters that describe specific disputes are there to highlight the dangers and impacts of social contracts and provide evidence of working class opposition to the Accord. The review does not account for the attacks on workers or unions delivered by more anti-union legislation, the smashing of two unions, the reduction in wages and conditions and the sharp decline in unionisation.

Instead it argues for a 'critical interventionist' analysis of the Accord, one which could have, in Laurie Carmichael's words, 'raise [d] the level of intervention' of the working class in line with his commitment to 'socialist concepts'. There is no evidence provided that the Accord did or could have done any of this. If anything, this 'third way' led to the opposite. Sutherland describes industry policy, including plans such as those on the waterfront and steel, as 'union policy and widespread shop stewards' activity'. These two plans led to a massive reduction in jobs and unionisation, increased productivity and profitability for employers, while real wages fell. Award restructuring, which is cited as another example of this intervention, had disastrous consequences in the manufacturing industry, as the book points out.

The review suggests that union attempts to limit job losses in manufacturing is barely mentioned. That is not true. The book discusses the dispute on Cockatoo Island, among others, and expressly highlights union members' attempts to save their jobs, including the occupation. What it also details is how this heroic dispute was undermined and finally crushed by the unions' leadership at every step. A pattern that was frequently repeated during the Accord years.

Although the left unions claim interventionist industry policy as a sign of union influence and impact during the Accord, apparently they played no role in its conception. Contemporary and later commentary clearly places Laurie Carmichael, the CPA and the AMWU at the centre of the formulation of the Accord's policies and its implementation. Laurie Carmichael was in fact, 'widely regarded as one of the architects of the ALP/ACTU

Accord...' [ALR 108, 1988]. Certainly without the support of the AMWU, BWIU and other left unions – and the pivotal role of the AMWU in the lead-up to the Accord, as I outline below – any Accord proposal would have been a dead letter. Despite their sometimes critical stance, it was only the left unions that could give credibility to the Accord and had the industrial power to enforce it, as they did with devastating impacts on workers.

Until 1981 the union movement explicitly rejected social contracts (called 'incomes policy' at the time). The AMWU, through its national wage agreement campaigns and its publications, played a major role in promoting union acceptance of the class collaboration of social contracts. The process really got underway with the 1981 Metal Trades Agreement which introduced the 'no further claims' clause for its duration, effectively a no-strike clause. In the same year the union endorsed the ACTU Congress's Income Policy resolution. This was followed by the 1982 publication *Australia on the Rack*, which popularised the ideas of moderating wage claims in return for increases in the social wage, industry policy and tripartite industry planning. That year the AMWU replaced its full wage claim with one for a reduced amount and a 'social wage' supplement. This campaign on behalf of the union's members soon morphed into backing the ALP's 1983 election campaign and the ALP-ACTU Accord.

The review does not deal with the book's primary focus: why did workers resist, do the defeats associated with the Accord help explain the dire situation the unions are in today? Was it right for workers to fight back, including against the policies of their officials? If they were wrong, did they go about it the right way? Should the workers have abided by the rules, gone through the proper channels, accepted the umpire's decisions? The whole history of the union movement, including the AMWU's, suggests otherwise, suggests that only militant struggle could have won anything from – or defeated – the Accord.

Stuff the Accord is one part of important debate about the Accord's impact on the working class. I stand by my analysis of its disastrous consequences.

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