

THOMAS GLASSEY—QUEENSLAND LABOUR LEADER

(Read by S. A. RAYNER, M.A., at the meeting of the Historical Society of Queensland, Inc., on April 25, 1946)

As we view the benefits enjoyed by all classes under our progressive social legislation, it is only fitting to honour an advocate of political reform and better industrial conditions. Through the efforts in Parliament of the early Labour pioneers the ideals they envisaged have come to be accepted as the basis of our modern industrial relations. Outstanding among them was Thomas Glassey, the first representative of Labour to win an Australian parliamentary election.

Around the name of Thomas Glassey a fertile crop of legends has arisen, industriously cultivated by friend and foe in that stormy period of political strife over forty years ago. To his enemies he was a vain old man who would wreck the party to further his ambition; to his friends he was the founder of the Labour movement, a statesman intrigued against by his disgruntled proteges. Now that the need for them has passed, such exaggerations can be ignored and the value of Tom Glassey's work can be appraised more dispassionately.

Thomas Glassey was born at Market Hill, County Armagh, Northern Ireland, in 1844. His mother died while he was still an infant and when his father married again the Glassey home does not seem to have been a happy one.

At the age of six, necessitous family circumstances forced him to go into the local linen mill. Here he assisted the hand loom weavers and received the munificent sum of one penny per day, with his midday meals thrown in. As the Glassey family had no clock and he could not risk his penny by arriving late, the young worker often waited an hour in the frost for the gates to open, his feet in his cap to keep them warm. There were Factory Acts in existence and there were supposed to be inspectors to enforce them, but, on the rare occasions when these gentry were in the factory, young Tom was hidden in a packing case and told to

keep quiet until they were gone. As the hours were twelve per day he was impressed very early in life by the desirability of shorter working hours.

After a year in the linen mill, he became a letter carrier; at the age of eight he was promoted to messenger at sixpence a day and held that job for five years.

As the family's living standard remained low, Tom, then aged thirteen, left home with his brother Sam and crossed to Scotland where he became a miner. During these years in Scotland he became a staunch trades unionist and an advanced thinker. He took such an active part in the miners' societies that he never held any job for long. Feeling instinctively that combination presented the only hope of improving conditions and wages, he tried to form unions whenever he went into a new district. However, the Coalowners' Association was very strong and they had little difficulty in destroying his work. As a result of these activities, he was sacked from one mine after another and finally, in 1867, was so effectively blacklisted that he was forced across the border to the Tyne.

While in Scotland he received a little formal education from the local Sunday school and supplemented this by reading every book available. In 1864 he married Margaret Fergeson White, a young mill worker, who shared his troubles and gave him encouragement for over thirty years.

In England he settled in Bedlington, a small mining town of some 7,000 souls, about twelve miles from Newcastle. Here he worked in the mines for ten years and quickly became known as a fiery agitator. During his stay in Bedlington he was the union organiser and conducted many of the negotiations between the men and the mine owners.

The coal owners in the Bedlington district were far more liberal than those in Scotland had been. He became very friendly with many of the local managers and so was able to speak freely before them. At times the miners feared that his vigorous action and outspoken words would cause trouble, but they never did; the employers were impressed by his honesty and as each side treated the other fairly, a co-operative spirit was maintained.

In 1871 he had his first success in local politics. At the village of Choppington Guide Post he in-

augurated a movement for better sanitary arrangements, as the village was then in a most miserable condition for want of water. Here he successfully conducted the first local board election ever held in the Bedlington Shire district. He secured the election of his friend Dr. Trotter and successfully expanded his water scheme into one for supplying the whole electorate. In the same year he established a Mechanic's Institute to provide reading matter for the district.

He became interested in the enfranchisement of the miners. After several desperate struggles in the law courts, and after nearly being committed for contempt by a hostile judge, he secured the vote for 4,500 of his fellow workers. This resulted in the election of Mr. Joseph Cowan, the first English supporter of Irish Home Rule, and of Thomas Burt, one of the first working men to enter the House of Commons. His Miners' Association was chiefly responsible for both these successes.

This period was one of the busiest in his life. Owing to lack of trade, miners had much time off and he devoted this to the Miners' Association, his political work, or the agitation for sanitary reform. Often he never saw his family by daylight for months on end except on Sundays.

He had never been robust and the privations of his early years had left him with a puny frame and a feeble constitution. In 1877 his health broke down completely under this round-the-clock activity, and on the advice of a friend he went to the Dublin hospital. As he could not save much from his scanty earnings, this trip was made possible only by the generous contributions of his friends and well-wishers.

On his return he was unable to continue in the mines, but secured a position in a newly established co-operative store. As this was only a part-time occupation, he later set up a small auctioneering business. Consequently he was able to devote more time to political activity and during the great Northumberland strike he was very active in collecting both money and food for the relief of destitute families.

In 1881 he entered local politics. His programme included better roads, more efficient methods of scavenging, and an improved educational system. He was elected to the Bedlington Local Board by a large majority for a term of three years, but as he was not

supported by his colleagues he resigned at the end of the second year, and was triumphantly returned with a band of enthusiastic followers. The following year saw the inauguration of many beneficial reforms.

For ten years he was the local representative of the Liberal Party, regularly attended the registration courts and tried to ensure that all supporters were on the electoral roll.

Such had been his success, both as local Councillor and as political agent, that the Liberal party requested him to stand for a newly created seat in the neighbourhood. As he had already decided to go to Australia, he declined the offer.

As trade conditions were so bad in England he considered that the Old Country did not offer sufficient opportunities for a growing family. The Queensland Government maintained in England a lecturer named Randall to attract a suitable class of migrants. When Randall was speaking in the Newcastle district he stayed with the Glassey family. Glassey had previously read much of Australia, but it was the glowing reports he received from Randall which finally persuaded him to come to Queensland.

He left Bedlington in September, 1884. Before leaving he was presented with an illuminated address signed by John Morley (presumably on behalf of the Liberal Party), Burt, Bradlaugh, two other M.Ps., the leaders of the Miners' Associations, and other prominent men of the district. His reputation as a political agent did much to facilitate his entry into Queensland politics.

The Glassey family left England on the immigrant steamer "Merkara". The amenities were not those of a luxury liner. The migrants were expected to look after themselves and to do much of the general work of the ship. Regularly the future Australian Senator could be seen, up early in the morning, scrubbing the decks and carrying out his other chores. The emigrants were supplied with food from the cook's galley, but the company was not over generous, and when the ship pulled into Aden they were very pleased to secure a dozen loaves of bread to supplement the meagre rations. As they were not allowed ashore at any of the ports of call, it was a monotonous trip and none was sorry to arrive in Brisbane, where they slept

at the old Immigration Depot in William Street and had their first meal in Australia at South Brisbane with the Randall family.

Randall had suggested that they go to the Bundaberg district where Glassey hoped to become a commercial traveller or commission agent; he had no desire for agricultural labour in the sugar fields. When he found that there was no suitable openings, he returned to Brisbane in advance of his family.

Here he obtained a position in the Post Office as a letter carrier. Immediately he began to organise the postmen; after they had forwarded a petition containing a list of grievances and requests, the departmental head, who was something of a martinet, immediately sacked him.

He then opened an auctioneer's shop in Brunswick Street, opposite where T. C. Beirne's store now stands, and remained in business there for two years. In September, 1885, his family had followed him to Brisbane and he made his home in New Farm.

At Bundamba he met many of his old friends and acquaintances from the Tyne and he set to work to form a Union. Early in 1887 he circulated a pamphlet in which he pointed out how much worse their conditions were than those of miners in other colonies; after this appeal, he created and became the first secretary of the Bundamba Miners' Association.

As most of his large family were now supplementing the family income, he was able to devote more time to political activity. He was interested in the Village Settlement Scheme; there he met many other radical thinkers and he became friendly with William Lane who was then the dominant figure in the Queensland Labour movement. His letters of introduction from the English liberals had made him known to the local party (then led by Griffith) and he was employed by some ministers as their political agent. In particular, he spent much time in the electorate of C. B. Dutton, the Minister for Lands. As Dutton was easily beaten at the ensuing election, his efforts could not have been very profitable.

At the General Election in 1888 Glassey was persuaded to stand for Bundamba by his numerous friends in that district. An official Liberal candidate had been selected but, in view of his friendship with Dutton and his work for other Liberal leaders, Glassey seems to

have received their unofficial approval. However, he always declared himself a Labour candidate supporting the ministerial party. Certainly he never sought the assistance of Griffith, and he was recognised as a Labour candidate by Lane. When the poll was declared he had secured 322 votes; Thomas, the McIlwraith candidate, had 293, and Shilito, the Government candidate, 292.

It has often been claimed that T. J. Ryan, and not Glassey, was the first Labour member of Parliament. This claim rests on a quibble that was never heard until after Glassey had left the Party. At the Senate election of 1903 there were three labour candidates, three anti-labour candidates and Glassey. It seemed possible that Glassey, by attracting Labour votes, would permit the election of their opponents. No effort was spared to belittle his achievements, and to spread charges, some at least of them definitely untrue. One of these accusations was that he had been elected as a liberal in 1888 and that he had not associated himself with the Labour movement until some years later.

Ryan was certainly the first man to be endorsed by the Australian Labour Federation, but that Federation did not exist when Glassey was elected. In 1888 four defeated candidates in Brisbane had been endorsed by the Trades and Labour Council, but the influence of that body did not extend beyond the Metropolitan area and it could not have endorsed a candidate for Bundamba. The only organised Labour body in the Bundamba electorate was the Miners' Association. That body was wholeheartedly behind Glassey.

If any further proof be needed it can be found during the tour Glassey made with Hinchcliffe, secretary of the Labour Federation, and Casey, who went with Lane to Paraguay, through the Western districts eighteen months later. On one occasion Casey emphatically refuted the slanders against Glassey spread by their opponents, and continued in this way—

“His reception here and elsewhere proves beyond all doubt that Mr. Glassey is not the representative of Bundamba only, but is recognised throughout the colony as the representative of Labour generally.”

A few days later at Blackall a public meeting presented a joint address to Messrs. Glassey and Hinchcliffe as being “the successful and defeated Labour candidates at the last general election”.

I venture to suggest that had anyone denied Glassey's claims before the shearers of Blackall he would have received a very poor hearing. The mass of evidence seems to indicate most definitely that Glassey was regarded by his contemporaries as the first Labour member of Parliament.

When Parliament met he let it be known that he intended to fight for his principles and that he would seek the utmost publicity for the platform on which he had been elected. In his maiden speech Glassey deplored the absence of measures designed to benefit the working classes, and in compliance with his election pledges he moved an amendment to the Address-in-Reply that it was desirable to legislate for the introduction of a compulsory eight-hour day. This breach of parliamentary etiquette in moving what was virtually a vote of censure on the newly elected ministry scandalized the older members, but, in spite of McIlwraith's scorn and the friendly remonstrances of Griffith, he refused to give way. When the division occurred, he was left with only seven supporters to face McIlwraith's 44. Griffith and most of the Liberals refused to follow the lead of this newcomer and abstained from voting.

During the next two seasons he was responsible for few sensational actions. He soon realised that he would not secure the benefits he desired by means of long speeches, though these might be valuable for propaganda purposes. His greatest successes were achieved in the discussion of details. His knowledge of working conditions enabled him to produce irrefutable arguments for the extension of existing privileges and the elimination of current abuses. He succeeded in bettering the lot of the Railwaymen, he exposed the use of cheap coloured labour on the mail boats, tried to restrict the entry of Chinese and wished to impose a poll tax on those already here. At the close of this first session he was thanked for his efforts by the Trades and Labour Council. The publicity he received in the daily papers made the unaggressive trade unionists realise that they had a representative in parliament who would ventilate their wrongs. For the first time the workers had a voice in parliament, a voice that was strong and persuasive and not to be daunted by the opposition it aroused.

At the close of the session of 1889 Glassey, with Albert Hinchcliffe, the secretary of the Australian Labour Federation, made a tour of the Northern and Western Districts. As he had not previously visited that part of Queensland, it gave him a greater understanding of local problems; also it enabled him to meet the union leaders and to show them the desirability of sending other Labour members to parliament. Everywhere he was received with an enthusiasm never previously bestowed on a private member and rarely given to ministers. In Blackall, Hughenden, Longreach, Barcaldine, and the other towns he spoke to large and appreciative audiences and was presented with illuminated addresses. The tour was followed by a great revival of unionism in the west. This introduction to bush conditions proved invaluable to him during the shearers' strike.

During the session of 1890 Glassey spoke less frequently. He did not play a leading part in the maritime strike. In his few public utterances he was foremost in urging the strikers to practise restraint and not to weaken their cause by violence or intemperance. Glassey and Lane both seem to have been opposed to the strike as being an unnecessary dissipation of union resources. As a result of their efforts this strike was marked by few crimes. During this session he was joined by his first and most faithful parliamentary supporter, J. P. Hoolan.

During the next recess the Premier, Griffith, appointed a Factories and Workshops' Commission. It was so evenly composed of representatives of workers and employers that its critics expected it to fail to reach a decision. Glassey marshalled the labour witnesses, and so successfully cross-examined their opponents, that the investigation revealed many flaws in the industrial system. Consequently two of the lady members, who controlled large drapery stores, supported him, and the majority report recommended stringent legislation.

In 1891 came the shearers' strike, the greatest industrial dispute in the colony's history and the one with the most momentous political consequences. Again he was the public spokesman for the men. When reports of grievances reached the labour leader, he was able to gain them wide publicity by making formal complaints to the ministers concerned. Unfortunately, some garbled stories of cruelty and ill-treatment by

the police reached him. Several times the officers concerned were able to show that the charges were marked by inaccuracy and exaggeration.

The causes and events of the strike were thoroughly investigated during the discussion in Parliament of his motion for the appointment of a committee to examine the men's grievances. He had secured letters and other documents which indicated that some public servants had favoured the station owners and had tried to help break the strike. When Glassey produced these letters they were denounced as forgeries, but when the Magistrate concerned admitted their authenticity, the Government made counter charges against the Labour leaders, and Griffith described Glassey as "the associate of thieves and forgers".

During this period Glassey had to face the most persistent abuse and vicious misrepresentation of his career. The Government had failed to silence him with the prospect of lucrative seats on Royal Commissions or to temper his criticisms through the good fellowship of the refreshment rooms. Now members endeavoured to break his spirit by inflicting on him a series of petty insults and humiliations. On one occasion when in one of the Lobbies he was struck by Hume Black, an ex-Minister; as he was sick at the time the insult had to be ignored. On other occasions members refused to leave their hats on the same row of pegs as his lest they be contaminated by proximity to such a potential source of infection. On another occasion, when a crowd had marched down to the House after attending an Early Closing meeting in the city, he addressed them from one of the pillars at the entrance. When he had finished he found that someone had taken and hidden his hat. At this time Glassey and Hoolan were known as the two B's. Whether the B's represented their electorates (Bundamba and Burke) I cannot say.

He annoyed McIlwraith so much that the latter commissioned C. A. Bernays to write to Thomas Burt to check on Glassey's assertions of friendship. Bernays also wrote to McIlwraith's brother requesting him to uncover some disreputable facts about Glassey's earlier life. During these four years, 1888-92 he faced his opponents either alone or with only one supporter. He was ridiculed; his motives were questioned; his honesty was impugned; his sincerity doubted. How-

ever, he never lost faith in his principles, and at the next election the value of his continual propaganda became apparent.

At the beginning of 1892 he was still sitting on the Government cross benches as a nominal ministerial supporter, though he had long since become its most persistent critic. Towards the end of the session Griffith scornfully accused him of using those seats so that he could eavesdrop on the private conversations of the ministers. He indignantly refused to remain in the House and did not reappear for some weeks. This year he was joined by two other Labour members, T. J. Ryan from the Barcoo and C. J. Hall from Bundaberg.

The most important step of the year was the first convention of the parliamentary party, which met in August, 1892. It consisted of the four Labour members and six representatives of local Workers' Political Associations; Albert Hinchcliffe was Secretary and Glassey Chairman. It set up a permanent executive Council to endorse all Labour candidates and to raise and distribute funds.

The creation of a Central Executive and a platform marks the formal establishment of the Labour Party. For seven years Tom Glassey, as president of the Executive and parliamentary leader, was very influential in forming the policies and directing the tactics of the young party. The great increase in the Labour vote at the General Elections of 1893 must be largely attributed to the systematic manner in which voters had been enrolled and supporters canvassed. He was applying the lessons learnt in England. So thoroughly had the initial organizing work been carried out that subsequent electoral gains were relatively smaller. His opponents paid him the compliment of copying his methods.

At the election of 1893 Glassey made a bold attempt to serve the Party. The former Chief Justice, Sir Charles Lilley, appeared as the leader of a new democratic party. If he could secure enough followers to take office he proposed to form a coalition with the Labour Party. Just as McIlwraith had secured the victory in '88 by beating Griffith in his own electorate, now Glassey and Lilley made a similar attempt to wrest the double seat of Brisbane North from McIlwraith and Kingsbury. However, the socialistic bogey was so well exploited that Glassey could secure only one half the necessary number of votes.

As the North Brisbane contest was in the first set and that for Bundamba several weeks later, Glassey was still able to contest his old electorate. His opponents were determined to oust him. Brisbane business men had bought small allotments in the electorate and so gained a vote there. His opponent, Mr. Thomas, was one of the largest coal owners in the district, and the rumour was spread that if he were defeated most of the mines would close and the men would be thrown out of work. On polling day Glassey was again beaten—by 674 to 402.

After the strain of this election, in which he had made extensive tours of South Eastern Queensland, his health broke down completely. His doctors insisted on a prolonged rest from all political work and suggested that he take a long sea voyage. His private resources prohibited either course. However, a public subscription was started to which his friends and admirers contributed so liberally that the sum of £863 was raised, and he was able to make an extended tour of New Zealand and the United States. On his return to Queensland Hoolan immediately resigned his seat and Glassey was elected by a large margin.

In 1894 began a new period of his life. He had 14 supporters and the quality of his leadership became a determining factor in the party's history. Previously he had been unhampered by any similar responsibility. The parliamentary members had been only a small section of the Labour movement and of little importance when compared with organised unionism. Lane, the Editor of the "Worker" and the Executive of the A.L.F., had been paramount. The failure of the strike of 1891 had lessened their prestige. After that of '94, as some unions abandoned their affiliation and the membership of others diminished, their influence declined yet more. The unexpected political successes of 1893 and the further victories at the two by-elections next year gave the parliamentary party its independence. The way was clear for Glassey to display his ability as the unfettered leader of a united and enthusiastic party undivided by the jealousy and intrigue of later years. Several of the more vigorous union leaders, Mat. Reid, Charles McDonald, Dawson, Fisher and Browne, had been elected and, as novices in parliamentary procedure, followed his leadership more faithfully than they did later.

Relatively impartial critics agree that Glassey did not possess the ability necessary in a good parliamentary leader. They unanimously praised those qualities which had made him such a successful pioneer and organiser, but they all admitted his deficiencies.

An English visitor named Bertram, who wrote an article on Queensland politics for "The Contemporary Review", described Glassey in this way:

"He gave the impression of great simplicity and earnestness of character. He has the small stature, slight physique, suppressed egotism and conscious incorruptibility which distinguishes more than one of the great English Labour Leaders. His qualities seemed those of a rhetorician and advocate rather than those of a statesman."

The eminent statistician, Coghlan, described him thus:

"He is a man of unimpeachable respectability and wide sympathy; but he is not gifted with a high degree of intelligence and never learnt the rudiments of parliamentary practice."

There seems to have been justification for these and other criticisms of his leadership. His lack of early education had hampered his intellectual efficiency and development; this was noticeable on some occasions when he used statistics to support his case. In 1895 he adduced figures to prove that there was an enormous number of unemployed in the colony. His opponents were able to ridicule these claims, and, when he repeated them in Parliament several of his supporters felt it necessary to explain them away. As several of his followers were more widely read, had a greater knowledge of Queensland conditions, and possessed a greater mental alertness, some discontent was inevitable. His attitude of "conscious incorruptibility" and his satisfaction at having played so well the part of a pioneer irritated both his followers and his allies. The obstinate determination that had proved such a valuable asset when facing large majorities single handed was not appreciated by his own party when opinions differed. He overestimated himself at times and this often blinded him to the ability or sincerity of those who disagreed with his methods or principles. He seems to have lacked the tact and especially the capacity for diplomacy and intrigue so necessary to maintain his position and to keep his party united.

As a speaker Glassey was fluent, but he was no orator. His vocabulary was limited, but this was more than compensated for by a good hearing memory and he could quickly pick up and use points made by previous speakers. He was audacious in this respect; he would follow a member in the Assembly who had an expert knowledge of the subject and then deliver a short discourse covering exactly the same ground. John Leahy, a member for a country constituency, often complained bitterly of such presumption.

Of course in nearly every leader or would-be leader there is, to a greater or lesser extent, the theatrical love of appearing before the footlights—a desire to pose on the political stage at what they consider the appropriate time. As Leader of the Labour Party he would feel that the public would expect him to have something to say, and this would account for Glassey's not infrequent speaking on topics he knew very little about.

In another way he was unfortunate; there was no order of seniority in the party. Among his followers five were destined to be party leaders, three were to be premiers, and another was to be a Federal speaker. As all had equal parliamentary experience, there was some jockeying for position among them. With so many strong and able men in the party discipline was weak, and this reflected on his leadership.

He does not seem to have been friendly with the leaders of the A.L.F. He had won his seat without their endorsement and with very little help from them. His ideas had already matured before he came to Queensland and he refused to bow to their judgment. He was never a socialist and his moderation in some matters made him suspect.

The diverging views of the two sections of the Labour Party were revealed at the opening of the Trades Hall early in 1894. Sir Charles Lilley performed this ceremony. While expressing his sympathy for Labour ideals and policies, he declined to sign the platform or become a member of the party. In reply both Glassey and Cross declared that they were prepared to accept aid from any sympathetic non-Labour man. On the other hand, Reid and McDonald pointed out that unity was essential. It was the extension of this doctrine of party solidarity on all questions that led to numerous defections later.

During this session the Shearers' Strike occurred in the Western Districts. It was realised at the headquarters of the Labour Federation that success was unlikely, so the parliamentary party devoted itself to securing a satisfactory compromise. In August, Glassey moved that a conciliation conference should be ordered by Parliament. The Pastoralists' Association should nominate two members, the Shearers' Union two members and the Chairman should be appointed by Parliament. This conference was to examine the causes of the strike and make recommendations to be enforced on both parties. The Government allowed the debate to continue intermittently for several weeks until it was obvious that the strike had failed.

During the strike the Government passed the Peace Preservation Act, which gave officials very broad powers to prevent disorder. Glassey and his followers protested so vigorously against the use of the Gag to rush the measure through that they were suspended for periods of up to a week. This was the first series of wholesale suspensions in the Queensland parliament; the outburst showed a decline in the standards of conduct on both sides, but it served its purpose of giving wide publicity to the unnecessary severity of the Act.

For several sessions there had been some co-operation between the Labour Party and the Independent Opposition; however Glassey alienated its leader, Powers, by introducing an Elections Act after Powers had given notice of the same thing; other disagreements followed and each became antagonistic to the other.

Powers, speaking to his constituents at Maryborough early in 1896, announced his retirement from Parliament as he considered that he could do no useful work. He declared that his position as leader of the Opposition had been made very difficult by Mr. Glassey, who frequently called for divisions to show up the absence of members of the Opposition. He declared that the Labour members gave loyal support and that, but for the extremeness of Glassey in refusing any compromise short of the whole Labour platform, the Government would have been defeated. This attack seems to have been unjustified as the policy was determined by a central committee and not by Glassey and the Executive of the A.L.F. As Powers appeared in

opposition to Glassey three years later it seems probable that this attack was an effort to gain the support of the ministerial party.

Glassey's leadership was repeatedly attacked during his campaign. This was done openly by the Government and its newspaper supporters, and indirectly by the "Worker" and some Labour candidates.

H. F. Hardacre is reported as having said:

"Many of the Labour Party recognise that Mr. Glassey has faults; but still the Colony should never forget him. He has done a great deal for the Labour interests in Queensland and has been to us a sincere and honest friend. But we all recognise—and there is no disguising the fact—that often he takes an extreme course when there is no necessity and that he lacks tact and he lacks judgment."

Glassey regained much prestige by a bold stroke. He did not seek re-election for Burke but went to Bundaberg, then held by a ministerial supporter and believed to be a strong Black-Labour electorate. He could have had the choice of several more promising seats, but as he had begun life in Queensland at Bundaberg he resolved to put his fortunes to the test there. His success was not anticipated by either party.

The "Worker," which had formerly made insinuations against him, now appealed to Labour men "to rally round the honest, plodding, persevering and warm-hearted servant of the cause of reform". It declared:

"Tom Glassey did yeoman service for us all. If only for his good and excellent service . . . the Bundaberg workers cannot desert a man like him."

This was the characteristic tone of the "Worker" at this time. It was constantly inferring that on current performances and recent acts Glassey had done little to merit re-election, but that as a sign of gratitude for his earlier services he was worthy of support. However, as the prospects of his election seemed smaller and smaller and the attacks of the ministerialists was concentrated on him personally, the support of the "Worker" became more emphatic. The editor wrote:

"It is insinuated that Mr. Glassey is the best friend of the Government. Make no mistake, there is no man the Government would rather see out of

the House than Mr. Thos. Glassey misguided workers are commencing to re-echo the slanders spread by Boodlewraith."

His easy victory by over 200 votes won the temporary admiration of both friend and foe, while the defeat of Mat. Reid in Toowong removed his most serious rival for the leadership. The other suggested leader, Hoolan, was Glassey's warmest admirer. He was re-elected unanimously.

Towards the end of the session of 1896 serious differences arose between himself and the men who controlled the "Worker" and the A.L.F. During the debate on the affairs of the Queensland National Bank he had pressed for an inquiry, but then, in company with Hoolan and Cross, he had supported the Government in granting temporary support to that institution. He considered that to liquidate it would mean another great depression. For this he was attacked by the "Worker", which from this time on continued to hurl petty insinuations at him and his friends.

The finality of the breach was not immediately apparent. During the recess he and his friends made tours of the electorates and strongly defended their action. The "Worker" described his Bundaberg speech as being marked by "a painful absence of the vim that once characterized his speeches". It continued:

"We do not question his sincerity but the other side can beat him every time at diplomacy As it would appear that Mr. Glassey is not going to fight from the jump next session we respectfully ask him to consider whether the time has not arrived when a change in the leadership of the party could be made with advantage."

On this occasion the "Worker" had over-reached itself and Glassey received strong support. Kidston declared that the only talk of a split came from the "Worker" and that the foolish talk of the sort the "Worker" indulged in might do a great deal of harm. As a result the "Worker" backed down and declared that its statements merely represented the view of the A.L.F. and that it did not control the parliamentary party.

When Parliament re-opened Glassey and his friends occupied the front Opposition benches and for several months he virtually acted as leader of the

Opposition. However, after some members had repudiated his action and declared that the official position was being foisted on him by the Government he made no claim to it. On one occasion he had granted the request of the Acting Premier for an adjournment of the debate of the Federal Enabling Bill at a time when one of his amendments favouring a broader franchise could have been carried. This action aroused unfavourable comments on his tactics at the time; however, when the motion was put a few nights later it was carried as a means of defeating the bill. The Anti-Federalists, having achieved their object, then reversed the decision. On this occasion the Labour Party had permitted itself to be used by a very small faction of discontented ministerialists.

During the Session of 1898 he was again Leader of the Party and Chairman of the Political Convention that met to prepare a new platform. His influence seems to have been as strong as ever and the new platform contained few changes. The independent opposition had sought an alliance, but after a meeting in which the Labour Party was represented by Glassey, Dawson, and Kidston it was seen that no agreement could be reached. The party then decided to assume the role of formal opposition; and Thomas Glassey, former mill boy and miner, became the first Labour leader of the Opposition in Australia and probably in any British community.

At the end of the Session of 1898 he had been appointed as one of the Queensland representatives on the Federal Council of Australasia. The business before the Council was unimportant, but there were many unofficial discussions on Federation. When in Melbourne Glassey caused a stir by boarding in a cheap coffee house instead of at a palatial hotel with the other delegates. He declared that he did not feel justified in imposing such large costs on the colony. On one occasion he declined to go to the Governor's dinner as he did not possess a dinner suit; on being pressed he finally arrived in an ordinary lounge suit. One of the overseas guests whom Glassey had known in England was a nephew of Lord Salisbury. His intimacy with this scion of the nobility caused him to be sought after by many snobbish Melbourne people who had previously shown no inclination for his company.

When the election nominations were received at the end of 1898 it was apparent that Glassey could no

longer remain as leader of the party. For refusing to sign the party platform his closest political friends were not endorsed; his greatest friend, Hoolan, indulged in violent public attacks on the party he had just left. As chairman of the party, Glassey was forced to refuse the endorsement of Cross, but privately he wrote a letter sympathizing with him. During the campaign he supported other non-endorsed friends (e.g., King).

Although no formal announcement of his retirement from the leadership was made, he seems to have realised that he would not be re-elected; consequently he made no effort to act as party leader but confined himself to securing his own re-election for Bundaberg. Here the Government had a strong candidate in Charles Powers, ex-leader of the Opposition, and again it was expected that Glassey would be defeated. However, his majority was even greater this time. None of his friends was successful and it was apparent that he would have no chance in a struggle for the leadership.

When the party met he at once declared that, if it were proposed to nominate anyone else, he was not disposed to cause differences in the Party and would retire from the election. He then left the room and Anderson Dawson became leader of the party.

A short session was held to pass a Bill authorizing a referendum on the Federation proposals. Glassey had always been the foremost exponent of Federation in his party, but the sudden death of his wife kept him away from the House and he took no part in the early discussions of the referendum.

During the final month of the campaign he was a tower of strength to the cause. It was recognised as a non-party matter and members of each party spoke in pairs from the same platform. He made an extensive tour, particularly in the Bundaberg-Wide Bay area, in the West Moreton District, and on the Darling Downs. The Labour Press was almost unanimously against Federation, and, had Glassey followed their lead, it seems that the Labour vote would have definitely swung the majority in favour of isolation. The result of the Federal vote was Glassey's greatest victory as a party leader. Even his old opponent the "Bundaberg Mail" paid a very graceful tribute to his efforts:

"We cannot close this article without acknowledging the magnificent work done during the cam-

paign by our member Mr. Thomas Glassey, not only in Bundaberg but in the various parts of the country which the limited time at his disposal permitted him to visit. He has proved himself a champion among the champions of Federation in Queensland and to him is due rather more than one man's share of the credit of Saturday's victory."

At the end of 1899 a small clique of dissatisfied ministerial office seekers combined with the Labour Party and the Independents to defeat the Government, with the result that Dawson formed Australia's first Labour Ministry. Although several deputations came to beg Glassey to join the cabinet, he realised that it could not survive for long and declined to do so. He considered that the time was not ripe and that it would be better to wait until the electorates were prepared to accept a Labour Ministry. Events proved him right as the Ministry was defeated by a large majority as soon as it met Parliament. However, this action showed that the party was prepared to accept its responsibilities as an Opposition, and it is a great pity that Glassey did not accept office and become a minister of the Crown.

On the outbreak of the Boer War Glassey was one of the few Labour men to support the British cause. During the debate on the raising of an overseas contingent he spoke as follows:

"We are British people and our sympathies must go with our own people. We must come out with honour and when peace is accomplished liberty will come to those seeking it. It is not a question of aggrandisement or increase of territory; it is to remove grievances."

He was a prominent member of the Patriotic Fund and remained foremost in defence of the war. As the leaders of the A.L.F. and some of the parliamentary party were strongly pro-Boer many were the jibes flung at him.

His refusal to accept office had piqued some of the more extreme members of the party and unfounded insinuations were made that he intended to join the Government as Drake had done. At the same time a heresy hunt was begun on the war question, though this was not dealt with in the parliamentary platform.

These repeated underhand attacks became so constant that he could see no other way out than to leave the party.

In a speech to his constituents shortly before Parliament opened in 1900 he read correspondence from the Bundaberg Branch of the Workers' Political Organisation insinuating that he was about to leave the Party. He declared that this want of faith was an unworthy reward for his long years of service. He challenged anybody to prove that he ever approached Philp for office and denounced the other rumours of his disloyalty as lying fabrications. He still adhered to his Labour principles, but he refused to alter his opinions on the justice of the war at the behest of an extremist section. He had resigned his seat and would leave the question of whether he was fit to represent them in Parliament to the electors of Bundaberg.

For the by-election the Labour Party sent up a very strong candidate in Albert Hinchcliffe, Secretary of the A.L.F. Fourteen of the Labour members visited the electorate to oppose Glassey and every effort was made to ensure his defeat. Glassey was supported by Hoolan, C. J. Hall, and G. Barber, the ex-Secretary of the Bundaberg W.P.O. Hoolan was a tower of strength, often holding as many as three meetings in the one night. In spite of a bitter campaign of abuse his majority increased to over four hundred and he secured more than double the number of votes of his opponents. His breach with the Labour Party was now complete, and he was ignored by his former colleagues.

When the elections for the first Federal Senate were held early in 1901 Glassey was a candidate. He was ridiculed by the Labour press and ignored by the ministerialists, but the workers of the colony had not forgotten his efforts on their behalf and he was returned sixth on the list. He had never been disloyal to his principles and in this campaign, in which the whole State was the electorate, his victory revealed the esteem in which he was held. With his election to the Senate he passes from the scene as a Queensland Labour leader.

In regard to the policies he advocated it is enough to say that they were those which became the official programme of the Labour Party. Before 1900 there had been only two Labour platforms, those of '92 and

'98. In each case he was the Chairman of the Deliberating Convention and the results—especially the platform of '92 on which later ones were based—seem to bear signs of his hand. His first parliamentary action had been to draw attention to the necessity for a shorter working day. He was one of the pioneers of the White Australia movement. At the Federal Convention and the Federal Council in 1899 he insisted that sugar could be grown by white labour and that the workers of Queensland would not vote for a federated Australia unless coloured labour were excluded. He opposed the flooding of the labour market with assisted immigrants while there were so many unemployed in the colony. As a staunch disciple of Henry George, he opposed the alienation of Crown Lands and the system of Land Grant Railways. He saw that democratic reforms would be impossible under the existing limited franchise. He was always something of a republican; he preferred a local man as Governor of the Colony and strenuously opposed any sign of British interference in colonial affairs. As early as 1895 he had unsuccessfully proposed a bill to abolish the veto of the Legislative Council. For the finance of the country he advocated an Income Tax and a Land Tax instead of the high excise and customs duties which penalised the poorer man. He repeatedly demanded a bill for the inspection of land boilers, a lien bill, old age pensions and municipal socialism. He opposed corporal punishment and sought better conditions for railway men and other government employees.

It seems evident that the attacks which finally drove him from the party were the outcome of personal differences and that the abuse was directed not at his principles but at himself. Other members differed from the majority on the war question, but there was never any effort made to expel them. George Barber was the Secretary of Glassey's election committee. When Glassey left the party Barber followed him and was one of the leaders of his new Democratic League. Yet when Glassey resigned from the State Parliament after his Senate victory, Barber was nominated by the local Workers' Political Organisation and was endorsed by the Central Executive. It seems that when Glassey had been removed from State politics his supporters were forgiven.

It seems a pity that Glassey could not have honourably retired to the Upper House or to some other

post where his experience could have been used and where he could have spent the remainder of his life in peace and honour. He was too active to remain in the Assembly as an elder statesman and he did not willingly subordinate himself to the new leaders. This attitude naturally irritated them.

Glassey was always remarkable for his consistent courtesy. Once members had recovered from their earliest hostility he became popular with both political friends and foes. His warmest admirer was always John Plumper Hoolan. In their early years, after a late sitting, it was no uncommon sight to see Hoolan continue past his lodging in the Ulster Hotel to finish a conversation with Glassey. Often the discussion was still not finished when they reached the Valley, and then Glassey would walk with him back to the Town. His kindly manner again made him popular in the Federal Senate.

In view of his services to his State and to his party it is only fitting that his memory should be preserved. His chief services for Queensland were his advocacy of Federation at a critical moment and the successful culmination of the anti-Kanaka campaign in the Federal Parliament; his greatest service to his party was the establishment of the principle that its strength is based on vigorous local associations which keep it in touch with the people of the State.

As the majority of his detractors left the Labour Party a few years later it is fitting to conclude with the prophetic words written by William Lane in 1892:

“I should be one of the last to declare that Tom Glassey has no faults and all the virtues . . . he and I have our differences, for he is necessarily somewhat of a politician and it is in method that politicians differ.

“I should never be surprised if I heard that an extreme section of the Labour Party were up in arms against Glassey’s leadership, but I should be very much surprised if I heard that Glassey had got out of step with the great mass of the rank and file and I cannot possibly imagine any turn of the wheel which would make Glassey . . . ‘rat’ clean away from the crowd. It is this dominant steadfastness which is his strength.”

History vindicates this prophecy.