Rethinking Community: Social Capital and Citizenship at the Eveleigh Railway Workshops

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The tradition in Australian community studies has been to use the term 'community' as a synonym for 'the social organisation of a limited geographical area.' Likewise, the traditional approach taken by Australian labour historians to this social formation has been to focus on specific localities where the dominant industries have produced extensive union membership and activism. Generally, such studies have favoured coal mining and iron and steel industries and with only a few exceptions, they have tended to subordinate communal dynamics to economic, political and industrial developments.[1] The problem with this approach is that it fails to deal with the inherent complexities of community and the processes through which communities of interest interpenetrate with communities of action. As Metcalfe puts it, localities are contestable entities with contestable rights, whose existence depends on economic and political processes which reach beyond their borders. They cannot be isolated, mainly because a multiplicity of social processes and networks pass through them 'in different directions and for different distances.'[2]

It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide a conceptual overview of community and its relationship to class identity and locality.[3] Instead, it focuses on the Eveleigh railway workshops in order to present an alternative approach that identifies some of the key elements of working class communities and the way they were connected to both the industrial and political wings of the labour movement. The paper builds a conceptual bridge between community and traditional institutional approaches to labour history by drawing on the concepts of social capital and citizenship. Albeit in different ways, both highlight how those who were spatially connected to these workshops and the surrounding inner-city industrial suburbs of Sydney relied on their interlocking workplace, occupational, family, religious and neighborhood networks, and also their associations with labour movement institutions to advance or defend their industrial and political interests. Instead of being seen as a geographic location in which specific industrial activities occurred, Eveleigh is treated as a microcosm of social and political relations and the epicenter of an occupational community, whose social capital helped to produce an unusually high degree of political activism.

From the 1880s the Eveleigh railway workshops were central to the activities of the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Railways and Tramways. By 1900, ten per cent of railway staff were employed there. And immediately before the outbreak of World War One, when the Department had become one of the largest employers in Australia, Eveleigh represented the heart of the NSW transport system.[4] Recruitment patterns and limited transport services encouraged residential concentration in the localities that surrounded it. The social interaction between fellow workers was therefore reinforced by extended kinship ties, intergenerational occupational continuity, and social, industrial and political organizations that provided multiple, often overlapping contexts in which people formed networks of civic engagement. These not only enabled spontaneous co-operation for mutual benefit but also helped to produce social trust and also norms of reciprocity. At certain specific junctures these dimensions of community and social capital enhanced workers' bargaining power vis-à-vis the state and bureaucratic authority and this, in turn, provided 'a culturally-defined template for future collaboration' that was repeatedly used by Eveleigh's workers in their efforts to address 'new problems of collective action'. My argument, in essence is that their social capital was underpinned by a perception of mutual interests that built on the shared experiences of working class life. Such experiences and perceptions provided the foundation for solidarity and collective action that extended beyond the industrial sphere into politics.[5]

Citzenship, Community and Social Capital

Why is citizenship pertinent to social capital and how does it help us to understand the way Eveleigh workers mobilized to influence government policies on industrial and technological matters? As Ian Turner explained, whereas industrial organizations, notably trade unions, are primarily concerned with wages and conditions of labour and engage in actions such as strikes, boycotts and the withdrawal of industrial efficiency, 'political organizations combine workers in their character as citizens and as voters', to the extent that they engage in electoral campaigning, pressure group and parliamentary activity. In Australia, workers' stock of social capital and their ability to mobilize collectively relied on both sorts of organizations mainly because of the symbiotic relationship that developed between the industrial and political wings of the Australian labour movement during the closing decades of the nineteenth century. According to Ignatieff citizenship involves an active mode, such as running for political office, voting, political organizing, and a passive mode in the form of entitlements to rights and welfare.[6] Eveleigh's employees were able to combine both modes because of the way that the formal and informal networks of civic engagement based in working class communities overlapped with those formed by labour organisations.

The traditional connection between citizenship, entitlements, civic engagement and the state is particularly relevant to public enterprises like Eveleigh. Those who worked there recognized that one of the key roles of the state is to protect basic civil and political rights. Accordingly, they exercised their citizenship rights by lobbying for government action and legislation that increased their entitlements to employment and freedom of association, as well as greater access to public resources. The emergence of the eight hour movement during the 1850s and the formation of the Sydney Trades and Labor Council (TLC) in 1871, craft and railway unions during the 1880s and the Labor Party in 1891, were all critically important in providing institutional structures for active citizenship by Eveleigh's workers.[7] Twenty-five of them became Labor Members of the NSW and national parliaments, following some degree of involvement with these organizations. And although the majority of Eveleigh's employees played a far less prominent political role, they did successfully exercise their voting rights in the pursuit of their interests. For this reason Labor politicians, such as J.T. Lang, who was Premier of NSW during the 1920s and early 1930s and Jim Scullin, Australia's Labor Prime Minister during the early 1930s, organized election rallies in the workshops' vicinity.[8] Such political participation was fundamentally related to Eveleigh's workplace culture and its role as a hub for the neighboring working class communities.

How can such active citizenship be effectively related to community? The conept of social capital provides a useful

183

tool because it emphasises the myriad everyday interactions between people' that rely on and sustain networks, norms and trust, and facilitate spontaneous co-operation for mutual benefit. Two of the key elements of this concept which are pertinent to the issue of political participation are generalized norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement. Generalized norms of reciprocity are particularly important because in cases of continuing relationships they sustain mutual expectations that benefits granted at one point in time will be repaid in the future. At the same time, networks of civic engagement enable information flows about trustworthiness, which can increase confidence in those chosen as community representatives and also the likelihood of conformity to norms. In other words both elements provide a means for restraining opportunism by reconciling self interest and solidarity.[9]

How do these dimensions of social capital relate to the exercise of citizenship by Eveleigh's employees and to their community ties? To answer this question, I will examine how the strong ties of kinship and friendship that formed in the workshops and the surrounding neighborhoods, the local churches and hotels, as well as the secondary ties of acquaintanceship and affiliation with secondary associations, such as trade unions, the TLC and the ALP forged networks of civic engagement and norms of reciprocity. The resulting social cohesion, I suggest, not only encouraged cooperation in the industrial sphere, but also exerted a powerful influence on the performance of Labor governments.

Politics and Networks of Civic Engagement

By appealing to governments to redress their grievances, railway workers exploited 'the tension between railway management and the government' that arose from public ownership of transport infrastructure and services and subjected railway management to continuous political intervention. Such civic engagement drew on networks with politicians who were sympathetic to labour interests and who raised railway workers' concerns in the NSW parliament throughout the 1870s. Railway workers also responded to government interventions by forming temporary combinations to exploit political patronage in appointments. The interpersonal workplace networks that enabled such co-operation also extended beyond the railways during the 1870s as a result of the eight hour day movement in which railway employees were active participants.[10]

The formation of the NSW TLC in 1871 was critical to railway workers civic engagement not only because of its campaign for shorter hours but also because it mediated between government and unions involved in public works and enterprises. In this way it reinforced associations and norms of generalized reciprocity between railway employees, sympathetic politicians and also workers from other industries. Within two years of its creation, it lobbied for shorter hours in the railways. In turn, those employed in the railway workshops, together with those in the iron trades, responded by being the first to attempt to implement TLC policy on the eight hour day. These networks of civic engagement were underpinned by dense interpersonal networks within the railway service which relied on family ties and shared experiences of work and productive relations. Many families sought apprenticeships with the NSW Railways for their sons because railway employment offered security, paid holidays and relatively good pay, prestige and the opportunity for promotion. As in the USA and England, it soon became traditional for sons of employees to follow their fathers into the railways.[11]

Prior to the 1880s, workers responded to long hours, dangerous conditions and management discipline by forming social groups and benefit societies, as well as by joining together, on an ad hoc basis, to oppose wage cuts and to reduce hours of work. During the 1880s the general growth of unions spread to the railways.

In 1883 the Locomotive Engine-drivers' and Firemen's Association was formed, followed by the Guards' and Shunters' Association and the Signalmen's Union in 1885. Some unions, like those that represented boilermakers and engine drivers and firemen began making claims on behalf of members at the locomotive workshops, particularly for a closed union shop. In 1886, the Railway and Tramway Employees Association, which had formed earlier in 1879, was reorganized as the Amalgamated Railway and Tramway Service Association (ARTSA). The industrial and political behaviour of this union's first General Secretary, William Francis Schey, provides a good illustration of the nexus between industrial networks and citizenship. His career sustains Markey's proposition that railway workers came to terms with politics at a very early stage not only because their collective bargaining involved them in lobbying, but also because from the 1880s 'concentrations of railway labour, ... in particular electorates .... became an important consideration in the formation of governments and their maintenance of parliamentary support.'[12]

During his term Schey managed to increase his union's membership to forty per cent of the railway and tramway service. A year later, in 1887, he was elected to the NSW Legislative Assembly for the Seat of Redfern (which included Eveleigh) on the vote of his fellow-railway workers, thus illustrating the power of the 'railway vote'. Throughout his period in the NSW Parliament, Schey reciprocated this support by continually addressing problems that affected these workers. He strongly supported the *Government Railways Act*, which was passed in 1888 to eliminate political interference in the railways and between 1887 and 1897 he unsuccessfully introduced an Eight Hours Bill on nine separate occasions. His concentration on railway workers' concerns was rewarded in the 1894 election when he won the Seat of Darlington for the Labor Party, an electorate bordering on the Eveleigh workshops which was extremely poor, congested and dominated by the working class Irish.[13]

Concurrently, J.S.T. McGowan, a devoted trade unionist whilst employed as a boilermaker at the railway workshops between 1875 and 1891, also played an important part in forging such norms of reciprocity. In his role as a union delegate he helped to gain a closed shop for boilermakers. He then joined the TLC executive between 1888 and 1891, at which time he was also the President of the Eight Hour Day Demonstration Committee. In1891 he was the only official Labor Electoral League candidate for a Redfern seat, which he won. From then, until 1917, McGowan represented this electorate in the NSW Parliament, living in its heart and playing an active part in the community. He formed a district cricket competition in place of existing exclusive club competitions and he was the Superintendent of the Sunday School at St. Paul's Anglican Church, a position he retained for thirty-two years.[14]

The careers and political behavior of both these men demonstrate that the exercise of citizenship by railway employees relied on overlapping networks of civic engagement which produced norms of generalized reciprocity and social trust in the broader working class community. As Scates puts it, '[t]he first Labor members were swept into parliament on a great tide of popular enthusiasm'. By 'rekindling hopes' that had been crushed by the Maritime Strike of the early 1890s, they 'galvanized the energies of work site and neighbourhood, home and community.' The TLC played an important part in this regard, particularly because of its links to the eight hour movement and its central role in the creation of the ALP. The relationship between these two organizations ensured that workplace, union and political networks overlapped with each other and converged with social networks, because Party meetings were not only held in workplaces and union offices but also in

local pubs. These interlocking networks thus strengthened railway workers' struggles to attain union recognition, the eight-hour day and minimum rates of pay, as well as other benefits.[15]

In the Eveleigh workshops specific norms of reciprocity were forged by strong interpersonal ties based on craft traditions, proximity due to spatial and administrative arrangements and the permanent nature of much workshop employment. In 1904, the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the possibility of locomotive construction either by government or private enterprise found that informal output norms operating in both sectors were formally sanctioned by unions, which had been able to prevent employers from introducing piecework and bonus systems. Such co-operation for mutual benefit was generalised by Labor politicians like McGowan. Appearing before this inquiry on the workers' behalf, McGowan supported their antipathy to these pay schemes by referring to his earlier opposition to them, whilst the Secretary of the Boilermakers' Society. He also defended the guarantee given by Robert Howe, the Secretary of the Amalagamated Society of Engineers, that unionists at Fitzroy Dock and Eveleigh would 'avoid any labour disturbance for the next five, six, or seven years', and would not demand pay increases if contracts for the manufacture of locomotives were granted to these government workshops without changes being made to existing conditions. Such collaboration was reinforced by networks with peak bodies like the TLC, which successfully lobbied the NSW Government for the expansion of the railway workshops between 1903 and 1905. Against the backdrop of the 1904 State election, when the ALP's overall vote increased to twenty-three per cent, the TLC's campaign for domestic construction of railway rolling stock, preferably by state enterprise, attained positive results. The 1904 Royal Commission Report recommended manufacture at Eveleigh on the grounds that the workshops' machinery, plant and staff could be effectively adapted to the task. Manufacturing of locomotives began at Eveleigh in 1907.[16]

The affiliation of railway unions to the ALP also created networks of civic engagement, which strengthened the unions' bargaining power vis-à-vis the state and encouraged the active citizenship of Eveleigh workers. According to Nairn, McGowan's leadership of the Party at this time, was an important element in the Labor Party's increased polling at the 1907 State election and in its victory in 1910, because he 'assured voters that progress with the party would be judicious and safe.' As Labor's first Premier of NSW, McGowan demonstrated his trustworthiness when his government responded to demands made by Eveleigh's mechanics for an inquiry into the comparatively greater number of orders for locomotives that were being placed with private enterprise. In 1912, it appointed a Royal Commission to consider whether Eveleigh could meet future locomotive requirements, in the face of contrary demands for imports from Britain that were being made by some railway administrators. Subsequently, it supported Justice Blacket's recommendation for an expansion of the workshops. This action, coupled with its negotiations with the Chief Railway Commissioner for an eight shilling per day minimum rate, eight hours maximum work per day and one month holiday after twenty years of service for all of the Department's employees, reinforced the relationship of trust between McGowan and the workers who had supported his Government's election.[17] Such collaboration owed much to the Eveleigh workers' social capital.

Community and Social Capital

This social capital was not based solely on ties formed at work or through labour movement organizations. It was also spatially grounded in the localities that surrounded the Eveleigh workshops. Biographical profiles of three Eveleigh employees who became Labor politicians are particularly useful for highlighting how norms of reciprocity were 'inculcated and sustained by modeling and socializing' not only in the workplace but also in the homes, neighborhoods, churches, clubs and pubs where these workers interacted.[18]

Born in 1891, William John McKell attended school in close proximity to the workshops where he gained employment as a boilermaker between 1913 and 1914. In the interim, he was strongly influenced by McGowan who led McKell's Sunday School classes. Like the former, McKell became an active member of the Boilermakers' Society during his apprenticeship, representing it at the TLC and the Eight Hour Committee and becoming the Assistant Secretary between 1915 and 1917. In the latter year, McKell received Labor's endorsement as the Member for Redfern in place of McGowan who was expelled from the ALP because of his support for conscription during the 1916 referendum. By attaining over sixty-six per cent of the vote McKell won one of the safest Labor seats in Australia at the age of twenty-five.[19]

From the beginning of his political career, McKell had an important affect on the working class community surrounding Eveleigh. Stan Jones recalled when McKell initially stood for Parliament in 1917 because the latter came to address a night-time meeting in Wells Street, which was adjacent to the workshops and where Jones lived. McKell's speech to the locals from the Jones family's kitchen table, which had been placed 'underneath a lamp-post', created great excitement in the neighborhood. As Nairn suggests and Jones verifies, McKell 'was a very well-known and popular politician', who 'kept his feet on the ground in Redfern' by continuing to live there for forty years from the time he moved there with his family in 1904. Sensitive to the importance of community support for Labor's electoral success, McKell and his wife maintained an open house for constituents.[20] By doing so they helped to create ties of acquaintenceship which fed norms of reciprocity and in turn encouraged civic engagement and a public-spirited citizenry.

Eveleigh's sheer size, however, ensured that this community extended beyond Redfern to other suburbs which encircled it, like Chippendale and Surry Hills to the east, Darlington, Camperdown and Newtown to the north and west, and Alexandria and Waterloo to the south. By 1891, all these areas had become industrialized and overtly working class in their demographic profile. In Camperdown and Darlington, 'the streets were narrow and the terraces mean', while in Newtown, Redfern, Waterloo and Alexandria slum housing had existed from the 1870s. By 1891, moreover, population density in these suburbs had more than doubled from twenty years previously. Redfern's percentage of population per acre increased from 14.5 to 46.9 per cent, while Darlington increased from 25 to 61.9 per cent. Many who lived and worked in these districts shared more than just common employment. According to Fitzgerald, in 1891, the Irish made up over eight per cent of each of the suburbs of Darlington, Redfern, and Waterloo, while the Catholic population of the latter two suburbs accounted for over twenty-seven per cent in each, figures that were greater than the metropolitan average. Those Catholics who lived in Camperdown and Darlington made up over twenty-five and twenty-four per cent respectively.[21]

This social profile was also evident in the political arena. For as Nairn points out, during the late nineteenth century, Catholics became increasingly associated with Labor, a trend which became more pronounced in 1910, when sixteen of those elected to government were Catholic. Following the Labor Party split in 1916, over conscription, this trend was confirmed. Before it, seventeen of the forty-seven Labor Members in the NSW Legislative Assembly, or 36 per cent, were Catholics. Afterwards eleven of the twenty-four, or 46 per cent, 'were of the faith'. At the 1917 elections, this figure increased further to eighteen out of thirty-three or 54 per cent.[22]

Besides ties of ethnicity and religion, bonds of kinship provided another important feature of this community's social capital, as the case of Stan Jones cogently illustrates. Most of Stan's male family members worked at Eveleigh, beginning with his grandfather who gained employment there as a molder after arriving in Australia from England during the 1890s. When Stan went there in 1925, he joined his father who was a boilermaker, and his uncle and cousins who were molders and machinists. The occupational structure reflected in this family was typical of these suburbs which were dominated by blue collar workers and more specifically 'miscellaneous' skilled workers.[23]

Neighborhood networks were fundamentally affected by such overlapping family, class and workplace networks. Again, Stan Jones provides a good case in point. Like his father, Jones was born in Redfern where he lived with his family in Wells Street. His aunt lived next door, while his grandfather and other members of his extended family lived in Eveleigh Street, almost immediately behind. Because recruitment at Eveleigh often relied on ties of kinship and the railways were the district's major employer, this family grouping was representative of the area. At the same time overlapping networks, coupled with dense occupation, fostered a high degree of informal interaction among neighbors. As Jones put it, 'people knew each other and people used to fraternize as neighbors considerably', a trend he thought was probably assisted by the large numbers of Irish in the vicinity.[24] This view was reiterated by McKell who recalled regular gatherings of neighbors during the festive season in the home of an Irish family in Young Street, Redfern. Such interaction was critical to the formation of specific and generalized norms of reciprocity. 'Everyone helped everyone, there was unity, helpfulness and friendliness,' commented McKell,[25] while Jones stressed:

> there was no question in those days of anyone being in need and not being helped by a neighbor. Resources were limited but people would come in and talk to you if anyone was sick and someone would make a bowl of soup and bring it to the personal that was ill.[26]

Co-operation of this nature clearly relied on personal trust and promoted the emergence of social trust. These comments did not reflect an idealised version of community. They were not intended to imply that 'people all liked each other... that people didn't play dirty tricks on each other sometimes ... that people didn't have disputes'. Rather, they emphasise the way neighbourhood, kinship, workplace and religious bonds and networks created real social connections, from which these workers derived notions of social obligation and an impression of social cohesion and mutual interests, which produced and sustained expectations of reciprocation.[27]

Occupational ties not only overlapped with those based on kinship and residence, but also those formed by shared recreational practices at local hotels, which Jones suggested were often run by Irish people. Each section of the Eveleigh workshops favored drinking in specific pubs because 'where people worked, they would patronize hotels nearby'. On the northern side of the shops and railway line, those employed on 'the carriage side tended to go to the hotels on Abercrombee Street' in Redfern. The hotels in the heart of Redfern and Waterloo, on the other hand, attracted the patronage of those employed on the eastern and southern side in the locomotive works, erecting shop, running sheds and foundry. However, socializing at hotels was not restricted to Eveleigh workers. According to Jones, 'people used to go into the local pub and groupings would organize a drag picnic'. This recreational activity helped to overcome sectional networks based on Eveleigh's occupational and spatial arrangements because it involved loading a horse-drawn double-decker bus with people and beer and going fishing or playing cricket or coits with teams from other pubs.[28]

Churches also played a role in reinforcing this high degree of community interaction. Even though Jones described his family as 'careless' Catholics, he stressed the important part played by the churches in 'bringing people together', not just for religious but also for recreational activities. According to McKell, St. Saviers' church in Redfern was 'a meeting place', a venue for dances and its own football club. And while informants attest to the existence of a certain amount of sectarianism, they stress that the dense, segregated horizontal networks extended beyond particular religious communities because church football clubs participated in district competitions which cut across religious social cleavages. In McKell's words, 'it didn't matter whether you were Protestant or Catholic or calathumpian as long as you could play football.'[29]

Networks forged by secondary associations, such as trade unions, the TLC and Labor Party branches intersected with these communal-based networks of civic engagement and encouraged active citizenship by Eveleigh employees as is demonstrated by the case of J.J. Cahill, who became Minister for Public Works in McKell's Government during World War Two and Premier of NSW in 1952. Himself the son of a railway worker, Cahill was born of Irish immigrant parents in Redfern in 1891 where he also went to school at the Patrician Brothers college. Apprenticed as a fitter at Eveleigh in 1906 at the age of 15, he soon became a branch officer of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and a delegate at union conferences. In March 1917 he stood as the official ALP candidate for the seat of Dulwich Hill which he failed to win. He therefore continued to work for the NSW Railways and Tramways Department until later that year, when he was sacked for his involvement with the NSW general strike, which began in the Department's workshops in August of that year.[30]

Eddie Ward, whose father was a fettler employed on the tramways and a 'staunch supporter of the Labor Party', had similar occupational, kinship, neighborhood and labour movement networks. He, more than any other of the Eveleigh workers who were destined to political life illustrates Scates' point that 'the meaning of citizenship was enmeshed in wider social networks, the structures of the workplace and community, the family and the street.' Born in 1899 in Darlington, Ward gained his first full-time job at Eveleigh in 1915, making and repairing tarpaulins. Here he immediately launched a protest strike against the existing working conditions, which resulted in his transfer to the blacksmith's shop. Outside of working hours, Ward was 'a keen listener at street-corner political meetings' and he walked for miles to attend election rallies, particularly if the speaker was opposed to Labor. In such cases he would organize 'other boys of the neighborhood' to disrupt the meeting. Having accomplished this end, he would 'jump on a box' and reopen the meeting on behalf of the Labor Party, even though he was not yet a member. Afterwards, when he reached the age of sixteen, Ward joined the Party's Surry Hills branch, at the earliest age permissible by the Party's rules.[31]

Such civic engagement certainly built on community and labour movement networks. It also drew on previously successful collaboration between railway workers, their unions, the TLC and the ALP. Most significantly, the McGowan Labor Government's fulfillment of electoral promises and workers' demands for increased public employment and improved conditions and pay entrenched workers' expectations that Labor governments would conform to generalized norms of reciprocity. Such expectations were well-founded. In May 1915, a Political Labor League deputation to the Railway Minister requested an amendment to the *Railway Act* to provide for a universal eight hour day and a minimum wage of ten shillings per day for all employees over twenty-one. A year later the Government passed the *Eight Hours Act* which compelled the NSW Industrial Court to enforce a standard of eight hours per day or forty-eight hours per week.[32]

Concurrently, industrial co-operation increased in the railway workshops, particularly between 1915 and 1917, when Eveleigh's employees took advantage of labour shortages by engaging in extensive output restriction and industrial action. This partly reflected the social disharmony, which followed various government war-time measures, one of the most important being a freeze on wages, which undermined traditional norms of state sponsored meliorism.[33] In part, too, such industrial action responded to the changes that were being made by the NSW Department of Railways and Tramways to the way work was organized and supervised in its workshops. Against the backdrop of eight strikes mounted by workshop employees between March and April 1916, the largest of which involved 442 employees, leading railway administrators began an industrial efficiency campaign that attacked what was disparagingly referred to as the 'slowing down movement'. In November, the Deputy Chief Commissioner of Railways, James Fraser told a meeting of employees at the Locomotive and Carriage and Wagon Shops that he had recently dealt with forty-eight strikes and stop-work meetings, and that part of the works was still paralyzed by a two-month long molders strike. Workers immediately countered by forming a rank-and-file vigilance committee. Open to all union members in the workshops, this body organized mass meetings to protest against the claims of go-slow in the railways by the Arbitration Court's judges and railway administrators.[34]

There can be little doubt that this solidaristic culture was sustained by the nature of the work performed by Railway and Tramway Department employees and the high degree of union membership in the workshops. As importantly, it was also influenced by a tradition of political activism that had originated with the eight hour day movement and had been reinforced by the railway workers' successful lobbying for locomotive manufacturing during the early years of the twentieth century.

Civic Engagement and Labor Governments

The Eveleigh workers' trust in Labor Government's support of their interests was made clear in 1915 when their employer tried to introduce a new system of job records into its workshops as a way of increasing output. This initiative was thwarted by railway and tramway unions in June 1915, as was a similar attempt made exactly one year later as a result of the mobilisation of Labor Party connections and lobbying of the Labor Minister for Railways. The workers' apparently strong industrial position was, however, predicated on the existence of Labor in government, as they were to realize in 1917 following the election of a conservative Nationalist Government.[35]

Not surprisingly, when the Department introduced a new time-keeping system into its workshops on 20 July 1917, workers immediately represented it as 'the thin end of the wedge' for the implementation of F.W. Taylor's system of management. This, coupled with the Railway Commissioners refusal to negotiate with unions over the card system's implementation, fueled one of the greatest industrial upheavals in Australian history, the scale and duration of which indicates that networks of civic engagement and norms of reciprocity were effectively harnessed to restrain opportunism and ensure solidarity.[36] Initially, aggrieved workers tried to resolve the dispute by mobilizing labour movement networks. But in the face of management's intransigence, 1,100 tramway workers and 3,000 Eveleigh workers down their tools, followed soon afterwards by the railway firemen and locomotive engine-drivers. Two days later, a mass meeting of the ARTSA and the Sydney branch of the Locomotive Engine Drivers Association made a formal decision to withdraw all labour from the transport service from 2 August. A joint conference of the major unions involved in

the dispute then transferred control over industrial and political action to a Strike Defence Committee (SDC) made up of delegates from all these unions and the TLC. On 6 August, official strike notice was given and by the end of the week the number of strikers had grown from 5,780 to 10,000. The strike then spread to other unions and by 22 October approximately 97,500 workers had become involved. Only 15,000 of the NSW Railways and Tramways Department's 48,000 employees did not strike. This industrial action was also accompanied by daily mass demonstrations involving hundreds of thousands of people in Sydney and also in the States' other industrial centres.[37] This rapid industrial and political mobilization was made possible by the interlocking networks of civic engagement, civic traditions of collaboration and norms of reciprocity that had evolved over the preceding decades. As Stan Jones described it, 'there were not too many families whose men didn't take part in the strike'. Labor Parliamentarians who were now in Opposition, also threw their support behind the strikers by criticizing the Government's failure to settle the rapidly escalating dispute.[38]

The Nationalists' unwillingness to conform to norms of reciprocity that had become entrenched throughout years of Labor government effectively transformed what was essentially a struggle over industrial rights into one over public and social rights and entitlements, as well as over the role of the state. The resulting protest against what was perceived as political oppression involved an extremely broad cross-section of the community. Public meetings 'of citizens' were held throughout NSW and all carried unanimous resolutions urging the Government to appoint an independent inquiry into the dispute. Its decision to hold one, but only after a three month trial period was, however, accompanied by recruitment of volunteer or 'loyalist' workers and on 14 August the Railway Commissioners also began dismissing all strikers for misconduct. Only 1,300 workers returned to work early.[39] Those who stayed out became know as 'Lily-whites'. Three such men who later became prominent were J.B. Chifley, Prime Minister of Australia during World War Two, and the previously mentioned Eddie Ward and J.J. Cahill. Both of the latter were sacked from Eveleigh and both, too had their work cards marked with 'Not to be re-employed', a fate which befell 2,000 strikers. All of the twenty unions involved in the strike were de-registered after 20 August, 1917.[40]

All these actions by the Railway Commissioners, the Nationalist Government and the Arbitration Court directly challenged the citizenship of railway and tramway employees, whose combined industrial and political mobilization during the general strike not only sought to maintain autonomy and control over their own lives, but also to protect public entitlements. Such activity was based on an expectation of the state's obligations to its citizens that had been formed by a long-standing tradition of ameliorative intervention. As Gammage pointed out, Australians had been led to believe that state intervention was 'a right'. This expectation was thwarted after Labor lost office in the March election of 1917. In short, the new conservative government encroached on prevailing notions of public, social and individual rights because it failed to mitigate the 'real inequality in the market' through the 'liberal exercise of state power'.[41]

The continued employment of 'loyalists' in the railway services had a profound impact on the stock of social capital available to Eveleigh's employees. J.B. Chifley said that it left 'a legacy of bitterness and a trail of hate'. Many workers who gained employment at Eveleigh in later decades recalled the continuing hostilities caused by this event and the way this situation hindered collective action. Unable to enforce specific norms of reciprocity in the workshops, Eveleigh's employees directed their attention to their broader networks with the ALP. On the one hand, they

organized to help elect those who they believed would restore their trust and entitlements. On the other hand, successive NSW Labor Governments reciprocated by keeping their election promises to these constituents.[42]

In addressing the new problems of collective action posed by the aftermath of the general strike and the split in the Labor party over conscription, railway workers referred to the template of political collaboration that had been provided by the McGowan Labor Government. In his 1920 election campaign John Storey reinvigorated norms of reciprocity with railway workers by pledging to undertake the electrification of the suburban railways and to complete the city underground railways. This is hardly surprising given Storey's close associations with McGowan. Like the latter, he had been a boilermaker, a prominent member of the Boilermakers Society during the late nineteenth century, and foundation member of the Labor Party. When Labor won the 1910 election, he became McGowan's confidant and the chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works. Once elected in March 1920, Storey immediately responded to the unions' demand for re-registration by passing the *Trade Unions Registration Act* and also their appeals for a royal commission by appointing Justice Edmunds in October 1920 to conduct an inquiry into the administration, control and economy of the Railway and Tramway Service. In February 1922, Justice Edmunds reported on the victimization of those 1917 strikers who had regained their jobs. But before the Labor Government had the opportunity to deal with these findings Storey died in office and his successor, together with the Government was defeated at the polls in 1922. Meanwhile, the continuing bitterness in the workshops, led the ARTSA's successor, the Australian Railways Union to step up its political campaign against the continued existence of the loyalist unions.[43]

In his election campaign of 1925, Jack Lang, the Leader of the NSW ALP, addressed both matters. And on his victory in May, he immediately moved to fulfill his promises by attempting to eliminate loyalist unions from the schedule of industrial unions contained in his Government's Industrial Arbitration (Amendment) Bill. Subsequently, Lang introduced the *Railways Amendment and Reinstatement Act* in December of that year to restore the victimized railway and tramway employees' rights and entitlements. As Lang described it, 'That was our Xmas present to the Lily-Whites'. It gained him the loyalty of railway and tramway employees, eight hundred of who attended a dinner in his honor in 1926. In Lang's opinion, 'What seemed to please them most was that the Labor Government was honoring its election pledges.' Lang, in turn, introduced a bill in 1927, which amended the *Railways Act* so that employee representatives could be included on the newly formed Railway and Tramway Commission.[44]

Lang's efforts on behalf of railway workers, while successful, were subject to the vagaries of electoral politics. When he lost the 1927 election, the Bavin Government moved rapidly to undo his work vis-à-vis the reinstated Lily-Whites. On his re-election in 1930, Lang once more restored their rights. During this second period in government, which lasted until 1932, Lang again showed himself to be responsive to the concerns of railway workers and their unions. As both Premier and Minister for Railways, he protected the industrial awards of railway employees that had been threatened by the previous conservative government. He also personally intervened into specific disputes between railway employees and the management that were brought to his attention through ALP networks. In April 1932, he directly fulfilled the demands of Eveleigh's employees by abolishing both the card and bonus systems that had been implemented during and immediately after the general strike.[45]

Conclusion

The Eveleigh workshops not only represented the heart of the NSW railway system, but also pumped the life-blood into the surrounding working class communities. Networks of civic engagement that developed during the late nineteenth century between Eveleigh's first generation of employees and the institutions of the labour movement produced norms of reciprocity that resulted in extensive co-operation not just in the industrial, but also the political arenas. Such social capital and the active citizenship that it supported enabled workers to play a role in the expansion of Eveleigh's operations. In turn, greater employment opportunities for blue collar workers increased their residential occupation of the surrounding districts where they formed dense horizontal networks based on common experiences of class and strong ties of family, religion, ethnicity, occupation and friendship.

These associations provided the framework for citizenship at Eveleigh where strong interpersonal ties enabled workers to act collectively to protect and improve workplace conditions. Secondary ties based on union membership and involvement with the TLC and ALP reinforced this solidarity by encouraging the pursuit of broader entitlements to employment, freedom of association and access to public resources. Some, who used their rights to organize in both the industrial and political arenas, became prominent politicians and in this capacity they enhanced the social capital available to Eveleigh's employees through their personal involvement in the community and also through their policies, once elected to parliament. The majority, though, used their rights at the polling booth, and in doing so also augmented the community's social capital by establishing expectations of reciprocity. The McGowan Labor government repaid this trust by directly responding to the demands made by Eveleigh's employees or by protecting and promoting their industrial interests. In doing so it established a civic tradition, which was maintained by subsequent Labor Governments, thus providing a clear demonstration of the connections between social capital, politics and the emergence of the welfare state in early twentieth century Australia. Eveleigh effectively provided a landscape in which the politics of government converged with the politics of work, home and the street.

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