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Australian Trade Unionism: Past, Present and Future

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R.F.X. CONNOR MEMORIAL LECTURE

1980

**Australian Trade Unionism: Past, Present
and Future**

By

R.J. Hawke



UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG HISTORY SOCIETY

PREVIOUS R.F.X. CONNOR MEMORIAL LECTURES

1979

Hon. E.G. Whitlam, A.C. Q.C.,

The Connor Legacy

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R.F.X. CONNOR
MEMORIAL LECTURE
1980

AUSTRALIAN TRADE UNIONISM: PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE

Delivered by
R.J. HAWKE,
President of the Australian Council of
Trade Unions

Union Hall, University of Wollongong
26 August, 1980

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG HISTORY SOCIETY 1981



The University of Wollongong History Society established the R.F.X. Connor Memorial Lecture Series as a tribute to his representation of Wollongong in local, State and Federal politics from 1938 to 1977 and to his personal contribution to the debate on Australia's natural resources. As Minister for Minerals and Energy Connor expressed firm views on the ownership and control of those resources:

"Throughout my two-and-a-half years as a Minister of the Crown I have stood in the path of those who would have grabbed the mineral resources of Australia. I have no apologies whatever for what I have done. It has been done in good faith. It has been done in honesty. I fling in the face of the little men of the Opposition the words of an old Australian poem:

'Give me men to match my mountains,
Give me men to match my plains,
Men with freedom in their vision,
And creation in their brains!"

Each Lecture provides a platform for the expression of personal views within the theme of the Lecture Series.

THE SECOND R.F.X. CONNOR MEMORIAL LECTURE

I am indeed honoured to have been invited to deliver the second Rex Connor Memorial Lecture. Rex Connor was one of a distressingly rare breed. He was an Australian with a vision for his country's future. It was one of Rex Connor's close friends who, I believe, said, 'Connor is an Australian first and everything else second'. It is claimed that his great grandfather first settled in Wollongong in 1836 and that Rex himself was born on Australia Day 1907. He certainly was Australian. Not only in his love of the hard physical clashes of Rugby League but, as I think we still like to think of Australians, also in his independence of mind. I cannot do better in this respect than quote his own words in defending his visionary proposals before an Opposition that represented the powerful forces pitted against him as Minister for Minerals and Energy. He said, 'Throughout my two and a half years as a Minister of the Crown I have stood in the path of those who would have grabbed the mineral resources of Australia. I have no apologies whatever for what I have done. It has been done in good faith. It has been done in honesty. I fling in the face of the little men of the Opposition the words of an old Australian poem: "Give me men to match my mountains, Give me men to match my plains, Men with freedom in their vision, And creation in their brains"'.

It was inevitable that Rex Connor would take an active part in the Australian Labor Party. His grandfather I understand was a founding member of the Party. Rex Connor saw the Labor Party as providing the potential to implement not only his own vision but indeed the aspirations of the mass of the Australian working people. In those circumstances it would seem to me entirely appropriate that in the lecture tonight I should look with you at the struggle, the history, the present circumstances and the contemporary vision of the movement which gave birth to that Australian Labor Party. I refer, of course, to the Australian trade union movement. And I think it is appropriate, by way of introduction to what I have to say in thinking of Rex Connor and the trade union movement, to quote briefly to you a couple of sentences from George Bernard Shaw's work 'Man and Superman' which to me seem particularly apt to Rex Connor and to the trade union movement. Shaw said, 'The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable man persists in trying to adapt the world to himself, therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man'. I think in a sense that sums up Rex Connor and in a sense it sums up what I conceive of as the Australian trade union movement: the unpreparedness to accept things as they are.

The Australian trade union movement started very soon after the establishment of the colonies which subsequently became this country. I will not take you through that history from the very beginning but I would remind you that as the 19th century progressed the colonies witnessed a very remarkable growth in the organisation of trade unions in both the blue and the white collar areas. That movement was not one which simply was atomised into individual unions; from a very early stage individual unionists and individual unions recognised the need to come together within the colonies themselves and in inter-colonial organisations. Indeed, the year 1879 saw the first of the intercolonial trade union congresses and at our congress of the ACTU last year we celebrated the centenary of that first intercolonial congress. By any standards the 1890s were a turning point for the trade union movement and it was a period of critical significance in relation to that issue which I am concerned with talking about tonight. That is, the relationship between the trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party.

In the 1890s massive strikes and confrontations in the maritime, coal and shearing industries almost brought the trade union movement to its knees. The very question of its viability was an issue. And as the trade union movement emerged from that massive confrontation there was a fairly general realisation that there was a need for the trade union movement to have direct representation in the colonial legislatures and at the first attempt in New South Wales, after the establishment of the Australian Labor Party by the trade union movement, some 35 men were elected to that colonial legislature. It was clear that in this country, not then one nation, a decisive step had been taken in terms of the future direction, the future activities of the trade union movement of this country. I do not intend, nor is there time to talk about all the struggles of that trade union movement in the past or of all the major aspects of its relations with the Australian Labor Party. I do want, however, particularly for the purposes of coming to the present and for looking to the future to refer to some aspects of the struggles of the Australian trade union movement in the past which I think have a very direct and significant relevance for the present.

Of course, one of the early struggles of the Australian trade union movement was the struggle for reduced hours and you are not unacquainted with the fact that that is something of an issue at the moment. I think it is particularly important to remember in that context, therefore, that one of the proudest achievements of the Australian trade union movement was that which came to pass in the year 1856, because in that year the eight hour day was won by the building unions, chiefly in Melbourne. The issue of hours remained a central issue for the trade union movement for the rest of the nineteenth century and indeed through the earlier years of this century. The Full Bench of the Arbitration Court came to award the 44 hour week in 1927 and soon after that time, particularly with the onset of the Great Depression, the new and founding ACTU specifically took up the question of hours and moved its policies towards the attainment of a 40 hour week and specifically formulated that claim in 1936.

In 1936 the ACTU pointed out that shortening hours was the only logical way of battling unemployment; it pointed out that workers should receive, in the form of increased leisure, a share in the benefits of technical progress and mechanisation and that the only method by which the output of mass production can be sold is by an increased purchasing power. The 40 hour week was won in 1947 after a struggle and public campaign which joined together three issues which, I suggest, are every bit as topical and relevant today as they were more than 40 years ago. They were: that shorter hours is a logical response to high unemployment, that workers should share in the benefits of technological change and that an increase in productivity requires that workers have an adequate purchasing power.

It took the trade union movement an enormously long period to achieve 40 hours as a general standard across the board and the situation with which the trade union movement was confronted in that period leading up to 1947 was no different from that which confronted the trade union movement in recent times and still confronts it today. There are always those people who believe that the situation as it is is perfect, should not be changed and has some weight or authority of divine decree. Those people who think like that should be reminded that up until 1819 when the working hours of young persons under the age of 16 in Britain were first limited to 12 hours per day, excluding meals, there were people who like them accepted the *status quo*, and indeed defended it. Resistance at that time was so strong that children in textile factories took another 14 years to win a 12 hour day. It wasn't until 1844 that women in Great Britain were granted the 12 hour day.

In trying to encapsulate this constancy of conservatism and the consistent difficulties of those who would understand the present and try to chart the course for the future, I can do no better than read to you what I believe is one of the most perceptive passages that has ever been penned by any Arbitration Court bench in the long and at times proud history of that institution. I quote from the Full Bench decision of the 1947 judgement which established the standard of the 40 hour week, and I ask you to think how relevant it is to so many of the things that you will have been reading in the press of recent times. This is what the Full Bench of the Arbitration Court said in 1947 in reducing the standard hours from 44 to 40:

'The pursuit of leisure by the workers of the world has persisted through history for many centuries. But leisure did not become realisable until man was able to add to the labour of his hands and his animals the forces of nature. In the past it was enjoyed by the few who were able to command the labour of others, whether as slaves or feudal serfs. Capitalism, replacing earlier social orders ushered in the machine age and made it possible to extend the boon of increased leisure - freedom from the grind of unremitting labour - to the many. From the early beginnings of this system workers sought this leisure and have slowly won

it. One hundred years ago in England a ten-hours day or a sixty-hours week was enacted. In Australia ninety years ago an eight-hour day or a forty-eight hour week was achieved in limited cases. Twenty years ago this court awarded a forty-four hours week. There is no reason to assume that the capacity of industry has ended at forty-four hours.....

It has been the historic role of employers to oppose the workers' claims for increased leisure. They have, as is well known, opposed in Parliament and elsewhere every step in this direction and this case is no exception. The arguments have not much changed in a hundred years.

The employers have feared such changes as a threat to profits, an added obstacle to production, a limitation upon industrial expansion, and a threat to internal and international trade relations. Steadily, first in one country then in another, this opposition has been overcome until great institutions like the International Labour Organisation in the international arena, this court in this country, and the legislatures both here and elsewhere have declared for the desirability of added leisure'.

The Full Bench concluded by saying that 'history has invariably proved the forebodings of employers to be unfounded'.

Now that was said in 1947 and I would suggest, as I have been trying over recent times to convey to employers and governments, that history did not stand still in 1947, and it's certainly not going to stand still for us now in 1980 just because we at this point in time happen to be part of it. It is certainly not going to stand still to suit the perceived political advantage of Malcolm Fraser. The fact is that the 33 years since 1947, when the 40 hour standard was established, have witnessed a more dramatic change in technology and a more dynamic manifestation of the intrinsic capacity of the genius of men and women to improve the way in which they produce goods and services, than at any other time in the whole of recorded human history. These dramatic changes in the way in which we produce things, in which we produce services, has already in this country been reflected in the fact that, in many important sectors of the Australian economy, standard hours are significantly less than 40. They are already 35 hours in coal, in the oil industry, on the waterfront and in the container industry. They are already significantly less than 40 in other strategic areas of the economy including to an increasing extent the power-generating industry in this country. And it is not merely an exercise in absurdity but it is a cynical exercise in political manipulation for Mr. Fraser or any other politician to try and suggest that those forces which have produced the changes in the way in which we produce goods and services, forces which have already brought the benefit of increased leisure to something like 40% of the Australian working population which enjoys standards of better than 40 hours, are going to stop now.

The question is simply one of the way in which we extend that benefit through the workforce. We have adopted the position in the ACTU that in fact we should attempt to negotiate with those areas of the economy which have a greater capacity to pass on the benefits of their increased productivity, in part, by way of increased leisure to their workers. We will in the weeks and months ahead plan to achieve in an orderly, constructive and cooperative way that improvement in standards for the working people of this country. We hope to see the inevitable happen by way of consensus, by way of cooperation, by way of negotiation. We are committed to that method. As I say, that standard, that improvement, will inevitably come. There is nothing surer and if the forces of government or employers or of other institutions do not see the virtue of cooperation, of constructive negotiation, then in certain areas they will increase the likelihood of the inevitable occurring in other less desirable ways.

I want to make the point in talking about this whole issue of increased leisure that, insofar as the Australian trade union movement has been concerned with the bringing into being of political democracy and the intrusion of the trade union movement into the political processes of democracy, it has also been increasingly concerned with trying to extend the concepts of democracy beyond political boundaries and into the economic and industrial arenas which affect the welfare of the people that they represent. It is in that very real sense that this struggle for improved conditions of employment in terms of hours of work has been involved, because there has been this continuing attempt to give back to people who are employed in industry a greater period of their life, of their waking hours, in respect of which they are autonomous.

Now, if you look again at the struggle of the trade union movement through time one of the basic issues has been the question of the necessity for the trade union movement to defend itself against the attacks of governments which have sought to intervene by way of legislation to attack the very foundational principles of trade unionism. Right from the foundation of the ACTU in 1927 this was an issue. In 1927 a conservative National-Country Party coalition government led by Prime Minister Bruce introduced a series of measures designed to prevent strikes. It amended the Crimes Act and the Arbitration Act to define illegal strikes and it provided for secret ballots of members before strike action could be taken. At that period, more than 50 years ago, the trade union movement and the Labor Party opposed and fought those oppressive measures on the ground that employees were then, as to a very considerable extent they still are, in a weaker bargaining position than employers and that the right to strike was an essential last resort for trade unionists.

It was argued then, as correctly as it is today, that penal provisions, whether they be in the Arbitration Act itself or whether they be in the Crimes Act or in any form, are more likely to provoke industrial confrontation than to resolve it. Then, as now, the reasons for the introduction

of that penal legislation were essentially two-fold: first, to try to eliminate or diminish the fundamental and cherished rights of a free trade union movement and, second, to seek to divert attention away from the inadequacies and shortcomings of government towards a scapegoat trade union movement. Such legislation is intended to provoke that kind of confrontation which conservative governments believe may stimulate a measure of public support for them from any inconvenience which members of the public may have to endure as a result of the trade union movement taking action to defend its rights.

Now let us look at how in fact that has happened in recent times, how the history of this country in this respect has had an almost inevitable continuity about it under conservative governments. In the five years the Fraser government has been in power we have seen this attempt to divert attention from its inadequacies by continual attacks upon the trade union movement through more punitive legislation. It has been done in respect of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act itself where there have been successive amendments to impose further restrictions upon the trade union movement and, indeed, to impose further restrictions upon the capacity of members of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to go about the procedures of negotiation and of conciliation with parties in dispute. Perhaps the most blatant example of this attempt to increase the range of penalties upon the trade unions has been the creation of the Industrial Relations Bureau.

That body is one which is not only rejected in concept and in practice by the trade unions but which is equally anathema to the organised employers of this country who have joined with the trade union movement in seeking to have the Bureau abolished. It is seen by those directly involved as being an institution more likely to provoke industrial confrontations and disputes than to resolve them. The government is not content with limiting itself to increasing the range of penal provisions within the Conciliation and Arbitration Act but has utilised quite improperly the provisions of the Trade Practices Act, which should be concerned with trying to create greater freedom of competition between businesses, to impose greater restrictions upon the trade union movement.

In regard to its own employees the Commonwealth government has perhaps been more severe than it has anywhere else. The Commonwealth Employees (Redeployment and Retirement) Act of 1979 allows for what is euphemistically referred to as 'management initiated retirement' to deplete the public service at a faster rate than natural wastage would otherwise bring about. There is one other particular piece of legislation which, in the context we are talking about (that is, the context of a free trade union movement operating in a free society to try and protect and advance the interests of ordinary working people), has not yet received the degree of attention and condemnation which it deserves. And that is the Commonwealth Employees Employment Provisions Act of 1977, the CEEP Act.

The CEEP Act has attracted action in the international sphere which should bring shame to any Australian concerned with the good reputation of this country. This Act sought to give the Commonwealth government greater disciplinary powers over its own employees than were available to any private employer in respect of the capacity to stand down employees, public employees, affected by an industrial dispute elsewhere in the public service. It was so obnoxious in its intervention into the rights of free trade unionism that it was taken by the trade union movement of this country to the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The ILO, the only international organisation to survive from the establishment of the League of Nations in 1919, has had a continuous history from that time. One of the reasons why it has had a continuous history and remains one of the central instruments of the total United Nations apparatus is because it is uniquely a tri-partite organisation; that is, all nations of the world, all central employer organisations of those nations and the central trade union movements of the countries of the world, are represented in that body. It has as one of its centrally functioning mechanisms the Freedom of Association Committee and that Freedom of Association Committee is, like the ILO, composed in a tri-partite way of representatives of governments, employers and trade unions.

The purpose of that Committee is to monitor and police whether the basic conventions of the ILO concerning freedom of association are being observed in member countries. I can assure you that I speak with a considerable degree of authority about this because I have been a member of the governing body, the ILO, since 1972. Normally, the Freedom of Association Committee is concerned with the dictatorships of South America, and like countries, which have a fairly consistent record of acting against the conventions of the ILO concerning freedom of association. Therefore, I suggest it is a matter of considerable shame that the Freedom of Association Committee was called upon to deal with the Fraser Government's CEEP Act.

The Committee, a totally independent, tri-partite committee found the legislation so repugnant in terms of those conventions under which they operated and which constituted the charter of the Freedom of Association Committee, that it said in its report that the legislation was inimical to good industrial relations in the Commonwealth Public Service and called upon the Fraser government not to proclaim it. For every concerned Australian it should be a matter of shame that Australia should find itself in company with the military despotisms and feudal dictatorships which normally occupy the time of that Committee. Indeed, until such time as we have a government which is going to perceive of its duty in regard to legislation as being one of trying to create an environment not of confrontation but of consultation we will be in a position where we are likely to be attracting that sort of condemnation in the international bodies to which we belong.

Now, in having pointed to some of the issues which have concerned the trade union movement in a continuing sense (that is, hours of work, the movement toward increased leisure and the continuing struggle of the trade union movement against conservative government which have tried to legislate to restrict the rights of a free trade union movement), I want to suggest what I see as some of the issues which will occupy the time and attention of the ACTU into the 1980s and beyond. The issues I propose to examine will not constitute the entire agenda of the Australian trade union movement. Rather, they will be amongst the most important of the items which will constitute that agenda for the future. They have a common thread which is that it is the function of the trade union movement, and has historically been so in Australia, to concern itself not only with fostering democratic participation in the political arena but also in the industrial and economic arenas. It is in that context that I think these will be some of the important issues in the future.

First, there is no doubt that the question of industrial democracy will be an issue of considerable importance in the 1980s. Ten years ago people would have believed that the issue of industrial democracy would have been a larger issue than in fact it has turned out to be. Now, that is not because it diminished in importance during the seventies. But it is unquestionable that from the mid-1970s a range of difficulties have almost fully occupied the trade union movement in a defensive position: trying to maintain standards in the field of wages and conditions of employment and trying to protect itself against attacks in the legislative field. In that changed economic environment there has not been the same degree of opportunity that existed at the beginning of the seventies to pursue the question of industrial democracy. But I have no doubt that in the 1980s it will be pursued with considerably greater vigour because it represents a logical extension of all that the trade union movement has been about in trying to bring democracy to workers.

There is no reason at all why workers in the workplace should not have the right to a greater part in the process of decision-making which determines the context under which they are going to spend so much of their lives. The ACTU has not attempted to lay down an overall blueprint which says that this shall be the way in which you achieve for individuals a greater opportunity and capacity for self-expression in the workplace. Given the different processes of historical evolution in different sectors of industry and enterprises different forms of worker participation, of industrial democracy, will be appropriate in one place rather than another. We do, however, believe as a fundamental principle that there should be a move towards a greater degree of participation. Indeed, in some areas where previously there had been strong opposition to this movement there can be seen on the part of employers benefit in a relaxation of what had previously been an intransigent opposition.

In the area of Commonwealth employment there occurred in the latter part of the seventies two Telecom disputes (the first of which cost Telecom something in the order of \$20 million in lost revenue) in which the issue was the right of management unilaterally to impose new methods of work, with new technology, upon their employees. In that dispute, from a position where a conservative government sought to present that dispute as some anarchical attempt by workers to impose their will upon management, the Australian community came to understand that it is the right of workers to have some say in the management of their affairs, particularly in a situation where their livelihood or their method of working was likely to be affected by the introduction of new technology. Indeed, in that industry it is significant to point out that once we won that dispute a situation emerged where the proposals of the trade union as to ways of bringing about new working methods, as opposed to the proposals of management, were (and still are) conjointly tested through time. Over a period there will be the opportunity to see whether the concepts and ideas of workers and their union as to how best to develop the application of new technology may not be better than that proposed by management.

It is inevitable, in my judgement, that as we move into the 1980s this concept of expanding the frontiers of democracy beyond the political boundaries into the boundaries of the workplace will become more and more an industrial issue. If we were to meet in a decade from now we would be witness to the fact that there would have been a fairly considerable extension of the practices of industrial democracy throughout Australia.

That leads logically to the second issue: the introduction of new technology and there is no doubt that there is going to be an increasing involvement of the trade union movement in this area of concern. The issue, of course, has been highlighted by the bringing down just recently of the Myers Report. The trade union movement has had a mixed reaction to that report. I believe that the right way of describing the Myers Report is in the well-tried way of saying that it is like the curate's egg: it is good in parts and it is certainly bad in parts. The part which I believe is good in the Myers Report and which I think will be taken up by the trade union movement is that part which stresses that there should be an attempt, preferably by test case, to establish standards in regard to the rights of workers affected by the possible introduction of new technology. There should be an assumption by government of the creation of a social safety net to ensure that workers in employment are not left as a residual of the implementation of new technology. Insofar as new technology is introduced on the grounds that it is for the benefit of society as a whole the concept should be translated into reality so that the community accepts the responsibility, with the employers, of ensuring the provision not only for financial support but also for the training and retraining of those who can be affected by these changes.

It is quite obvious that in the 1980s the question of new technology, its impact, the way in which the trade union movement and workers should be involved, both directly with employers and via government and the Arbitration Commission in its introduction, will be an industrial issue. In the Telecom dispute it became an issue of significant importance, not just to the union itself but to the whole community. If, therefore, government and employers do not take a cooperative approach along the lines that basically are recommended by the Myers Report the community is likely to be confronted with that sort of situation again.

The third issue which I believe is going to be of very considerable importance is the question of superannuation. This issue which bridges the period between employment and retirement is one in which the trade union movement is going to become increasingly involved. Let me make it clear that the trade union movement, through the ACTU, supports the introduction of a national superannuation scheme which is portable and which provides protection against inflation. On this issue I believe union activity will increase and it will aim to achieve basically five things: extend superannuation coverage, improve existing benefits, increase portability, eliminate discrimination against blue-collar workers and female employees, and ensure employee involvement in the determination of benefits and the investment of funds. However much some vested interests may wish to fulminate against the trade union movement becoming involved in this area, it is as certain as night follows day that that will become a prominent feature of the industrial relations landscape in the 1980s.

Finally, in respect of those issues which I think will be of importance in the period ahead, the whole question of women in the workforce will grow in importance. We in the trade union movement have been in some respects lamentably slow to understand the significance of the increasing importance of women in our economic and social life. We have though, in recent years, come to understand that importance with initiatives having been taken in respect of equal pay, and the application for maternity leave which was argued with such force and effectiveness and success by Jan Marsh in 1979. I believe that you will see an increasing concentration by the trade union movement upon issues such as child care, permanent part-time employment, parental leave, and leave related to the illness of children and of the employee. All of these issues, which should and must be undertaken by a movement concerned to look after the interests of a workforce which is of the order of 40% female in its composition, will go on in importance in the 1980s.

Now, I want to bring all these things together by way of addressing myself to what still to my surprise emerges as an issue of public debate in this country. You will hear, day by day, from conservative politicians, editorialists, and so on the fantasy that in respect of the trade union movement there is some mystical dividing line on one side of which is the thing called

real industrial issues and on the other side of that non-industrial issues. Only on the side of the line on which fall industrial issues, which are very specifically limited and defined to things like wages and hours of work, is it conceded as being appropriate for the trade union movement to concern itself.

I want to make it quite clear that as far as the Australian trade union movement is concerned, as I come to the stage when I leave it in a formal sense within a month or so, that the one thing, perhaps above all else, of which I am proud is that in the period of the 1970s the reality in Australia has been that we have tended to wipe that line out. We accept and act upon the basis that the trade union movement has a legitimate concern in any areas which involve the welfare of the working people of this country and those dependent upon them. We have a responsibility to use our accumulated and cohesive strength in a way which will not only assist those who are directly in our ranks but also to assist those who are less fortunate and less privileged than ourselves and less able to look after their own interests.

That is the philosophy which directly underlies the involvement of the ACTU and its branch in Western Australian in the current dispute in the north-west of that state, the Noonkanbah dispute. We regard it as absolutely appropriate, and we make no apologies for it, that if we have the power as a trade union movement to assist an under-privileged group whose rights are being trampled upon by a government in that state, that we should use our strength to protect their interests. I am proud to say that in respect of that dispute that the trade union movement have done the job that the Federal Government ought to have done. It is remarkable in this case that there has been a profound silence from Mr. Fraser and the Federal Government. While Sir Charles Court has gone to the bottom of the barrel in his attack on the trade union movement for frustrating his para-military operation in that state, Mr. Fraser and the Federal Government have not been heard to criticise the use of trade union strength in this case, which has stopped the actual drilling there. This is so because on this occasion it is convenient that we should do the job which he is afraid to undertake because he is afraid to take on Sir Charles Court. I use that as an example that we in the trade union movement are not prepared to accept the artificial dividing line that those conservative forces generally in this country would seek to impose upon us.

This brings me to the final point that I want to make to you, and that I call the paradox of Poland. Does it come as any surprise that you have not heard any criticism by any forces in this country opposed to the trade union movement or to the Labor Party, of what is happening in Poland today in relation to the strike action by Polish workers. Not only have you heard no word of criticism from any conservative leader in this country or from the editorialists but rather what, of course, you should hear - praise for what is happening in Poland. It is perfectly appropriate, they perceive, that the workers of Poland should be exercising their industrial strength to extend

the concepts of democracy and freedom into that country, into their workplace, and indeed, into the very concept of there being in that country such a thing as a recognisable free trade union movement.

It is right, according to the Frasers', the Sir Charles Courts', and the editorialists that workers in that sort of environment should be exercising the right to strike, to bring about a freer society. Do you not see the paradox of Poland? Conservatives believe it is right that industrial strength should be used in Poland to bring about greater freedom in that country, greater rights for individuals, to have such a thing as a free trade union movement. They applaud the workers of Poland in their struggle to have a freely operating trade union movement and the right to extend that freedom to encompass the opportunity of bringing about other and greater freedoms for workers in that country. But is it not the height of paradox that if they applaud, as they should, what is happening there, that in a so-called free country these very same people who applaud the creation of a free trade union movement with the right to strike in a communist country, would seek day after day by legislative action, and in other senses to deprive the trade union movement in a democracy of the same rights?

How can Australian conservatives at one and the same time applaud what is happening in Poland and enact legislation in this country, in a democracy, to limit the right to strike and, in fact, to take it away? There is no more pathetic paradox than the paradox of Poland as far as these conservatives are concerned. At the same time as they applaud the invocation of the right to strike and the creation of a free trade union movement with the right to strike in Poland, they would seek to justify in a democracy the bringing in of legislation so pitiful in concept, so outrageous by way of its infringement, on the right to strike in this country, that the International Labour Organisation, as I pointed out to you, has condemned it, and has put us in the ranks of those dictatorships and feudal despotisms of South America.

In conclusion, in honouring the memory of Rex Connor, the essential message that I have been trying to put to you is that he saw the Labor movement both industrially and politically as an instrument not for creating power for union organisations as such, but as an instrument concerned with the enhancement of the happiness of individuals and which sought to release as far as possible the intrinsic capacity of individuals to create their own happiness. Over and above all of their other objectives that is ultimately what trade unions and the Labor Party are about. We in the trade union movement should conceive of ourselves as having that objective, as that being our principal *raison d'être*. We should work hard for it here and we should give encouragement to our brothers and our sisters, whether they be in another part of Australia or in Poland or wherever they be, who are seeking to ensure the maintenance or the creation of a free trade union movement, because a free trade union movement, as Rex Connor understood, was an essential element of a free society. If you haven't got a free trade union movement, one which has the right, if necessary, to withdraw its labour, then you have not got a free society.

I conclude by expressing the view that we will best honour the memory of Rex Connor if, in our respective ways, we do all that we can in this country to ensure that a free trade union movement does exist, and that it has the right and the opportunity not only to protect the interests of people in this country but, as I have already indicated, the opportunity of giving its encouragement to its brothers and sisters wherever they may be in the world who seek for themselves that same legitimate right.