

'The war is a money making show': Working-Class Attitudes to World War II and Australian Nationalism

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This paper will address the conference themes of 'class, power and social structure' through examining industrial and ideological conflict during World War II. The paper will also address the theme of 'class and culture' through an examination of working-class cultural expression as a means of resistance to the government's wartime offensive.

What is overlooked in most histories of World War II is the working-class experience of the war and their understanding of nationalism, particularly as nationalism was cynically exploited by the government to undermine working-class identity and solidarity.

The paper will investigate the experience of one of the most militant sections of the Australian working class: the Miners. Primary source material such as the Miners' journal *Common Cause* and union records reveal opposition to the war and a much more ambiguous attitude to the national sentiment used to justify Australia's involvement.

The Miners provide an interesting case study as the union was led by the Communist Party. Therefore the union leadership initially opposed to the war then became enthusiastic supporters when Russia entered the war on the allied side. It is clear that the Miners' union leadership found it difficult to convince the rank and file to support the war.

The paper will focus upon rank and file attitudes to the war and Australian nationalism particularly during times of industrial unrest.

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