



**History of the Ballarat Trades and Labour  
Council 1856–2000**

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## **Abstract**

The Ballarat Trades and Labour Council (BT&LC) is the second oldest trades and labour council in the world, founded in 1883, although it has existed in various forms since 1856. This thesis examines the history of the BT&LC in terms of five related themes – ideological conflict, solidarity, labourism, masculinity, and spatiality. I approached this research project from the perspective of a labour historian, which also included issues of gender. While being resolute in writing the history of this institution, my aim was also to capture an aspect of Ballarat history that had not been examined before – the role of workers and their families.

The BT&LC sets the parameters of its history from the Eureka Rebellion and gaining the Eight Hour Day for Ballarat stonemasons in 1856 a fortnight after their Melbourne counterparts. Since that time, the BT&LC has built the substantial Trades Hall in Camp Street, which it still occupies and hosted the Seventh Intercolonial Trade Union Congress in 1891 when the decision to seek political representation was formally endorsed. It witnessed the emergence of the new elites and the ideological struggle that became more bitter as the Catholic Church, Protestant Freemasons, and the very active Communist Party battled for supremacy, with it ending inevitably in a divisive public separation in 1955.

The Whitlam years saw their resurgence with a new face to unionism as public sector workers, teachers and nurses became militant and women began to take significant roles. In Ballarat while this has meant political ascendancy since 1980, the success of the political wing has not necessarily been mirrored in the fortunes of the peak union organisation. Ballarat's overall union membership has declined. The old loyalties have been difficult to maintain and the capacity to build new alliances is challenging. However, one thing remains clear: strong individuals who understand the underpinnings of solidarity and unity have ensured that the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council has remained a significant feature of the Ballarat public landscape.

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As ever, Eddie, my husband of 60 plus years and victim of my many projects, did some of the boring (and I mean boring) tasks related to this project, such as digitising documents and scanning BT&LC material dating back to 1856. My sister, Dr. June Senyard, who has supervised many PhDs, gave me practical and thoughtful help, especially when getting started. As always, my family and friends have engaged in this project; I hope some might even enjoy reading what I have written.

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Beau Williams' family also provided helpful additional material, which will remain in the BT&LC archives. Kaye Bellea (formerly Williams), Dulcie Corbett and Heather Horrocks stand out for their practical assistance, and I wish Dorothy Reading and Denis Setches had seen the finished product. Andrew Reeves, who has done more than anyone I know to care and protect the records of the labour movement, was always helpful and inciteful. Numerous friends have commented, including Barry Pullen and Caroline Hogg, which certainly helped my morale, too.

Another personal thread ran through the process for me. I was taught by a remarkable teacher – Dr Norm Saffin. He gave my class at Wycheproof HES a firm grounding in Australian history, a love of Australian literature, which was best demonstrated when the class begged him to keep reading *The Sentimental Bloke* through recess. We learnt of Judith Wright, too, and Australian artists (as well as Paul Gauguin and the French Impressionists). Most importantly, he taught me to enjoy independent research. He taught Peter Beilharz, too, whose book, *Transforming Labour*, is one of the most thoughtful treatises on the modern ALP – and thanks to him, Saffin's own research is now held in the University of Melbourne Archives. Saffin's friendship with BT&LC's Beau Williams' son, Boyd, and his wife, Judy, (and our Carlton neighbours) led him to research the labour movement, including Ballarat Trades Hall, and so more than 70 years later, here were his detailed notes in his distinctive handwriting as a guide for me.

My thanks are also extended to Brenton Thomas, from Fresh Eyes Australia, who provided editing assistance in accordance with the requirements of the *Guidelines for Editing of Research Theses*, which form part of the Australian Standards for Editing Practices

I hope I have produced a document worthy of all their contributions.

## **Statement of Authorship**

Except where explicit reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma. No other person's work has been relied upon or used without due acknowledgement in the main text and the list of references of the thesis. No editorial assistance has been received in the production of the thesis without due acknowledgment. Except where duly referred to, the thesis does not include material with copyright provisions or requiring copyright approvals.

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## List of Abbreviations

The modern spelling of “Ballarat” has been used throughout the text of this thesis, although the early use of “Ballaarat” including to designate state and federal seats was common.

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AEU	Amalgamated Engineering Union
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
ALP	Australian Labor Party (First used in 1902)
AMA	Amalgamated Miners Association of Victoria

AMWU	Australian Manufacturing Workers Union
ANMF	Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation
APC	Australian Peace Council
ARU	Australian Railways Union
ASE	Amalgamated Society of Engineers (Australia), later Australian Society of Engineers
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
ASU	Amalgamated Shearers Union
AWU	Australian Workers Union
BADAC	Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative
BNRW	Ballarat North Railway Workshops
BT&LC	Ballarat Trades and Labour Council
BT&LC	Ballarat Trades and Labour Council
BTA	Ballarat Typographical Association
BTH	Ballarat Trades Hall
BTH&LIC	Ballarat Trades Hall and Free Library Committee
BTH&LIC	Ballarat Trades Hall and Literary Institute Committee
BUA	Ballarat Unemployed Association
CJA	Carpenters and Joiners Association
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CYMS	Catholic Young Men's Society
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
ECA	Early Closing Association

EHDAC	Eight Hour Day Anniversary Committee
FPLP	Federal Parliamentary Labor Party
IAA	Ironworkers Assistants Association
ITUC	Intercolonial Trade Union Congress
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
MHR	Member of the Federal House of Representatives
MLA	Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly
MLC	Member of the Victorian Legislative Council
MTH	Melbourne Trades Hall
MTHC	Melbourne Trades Hall Council
MUA	Maritime Union of Australia
NCC	National Civic Council
NSW	New South Wales
PLC	Political Labor Council
PPL	Progressive Political League of Victoria
RANF	Royal Australian Nursing Federation
SBHAG	Save Bakery Hill Action Group
SMB	School of Mines Ballarat
UAP	United Australia Party
VCE	Victorian Central Executive of the ALP
VPT&LCA	Victorian Provincial Trades and Labour Council Association
VSP	Victorian Socialist Party
VTHC	Victorian Trades Hall Council

WWI      World War 1

WWII     World War 2

# Chapter 1

## A Seed

*(A fertilised, matured ovule of a flowering plant, containing an embryo or rudimentary plant)*

### Introduction

The Ballarat Trades and Labour Council (BT&LC) is the second oldest trades and labour council in the world and is still located in its original building (see

Figure 1). Although officially formed in 1883, it had existed in continuous committees from 1856, when a committee was formed on 29 April of that year to achieve the same goal of an eight hour day as achieved by the Melbourne stonemasons.<sup>1</sup> It deserves to have its story told. The research question that initiated this study was: *How has the ideological conflict regarding the character of Australian society been reflected within the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council and among the workers of Ballarat from 1854 to 2000?* This conflict was examined from many angles, including inside the organisation, and was underpinned by the scrutiny of Ballarat society from a different direction than most other previous research on the city and its surrounds.



Figure 1. Ballarat Trades and Labour Council building.

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1. “Eight Hour Day First Meeting,” *The Age*, May 2, 1856.

On its website, the BT&LC has set the parameters of its history from the time of the Eureka rebellion with good reason given, that this uprising marked a seminal moment in the defining of Australia's political consciousness. In commencing this thesis regarding the BT&LC and the labour movement in Ballarat, my fear was that it might be an obituary at the same time as a history. But I found the analogy of a tree growing from a small seed to a grand old pockmarked and battered rare specimen fits its history much better, still standing firm in the land.

What the thesis identifies is the capacity of the labour movement to change and adapt from 1854 to 2000. The BT&LC participated in the formation of a political party (the Australian Labor Party), which is now more than 100 years old. Ballarat was also the birthplace of one of Australia's oldest and largest unions – the AWU, with the BT&LC providing a training ground for many of its formidable leaders, including the future prime minister, Jim Scullin. But it did not end there. The BT&LC continued to be a centre of militancy when the nation was captive to Menzies' conservatism, and yet resisted the schism when it occurred in the political wing and in some industrial units. In 2000, it was at the centre of one of the nation's major health and safety occupational issues regarding the use of asbestos. While the BT&LC's fortunes have ebbed and flowed, it has adapted to and asserted its role in shaping economic, political, and social change in a way that could never have been envisaged by the generation who had created it. It remains a valuable tool in maintaining purpose and focus for the Ballarat labour movement.

Before starting, some important definitions need to be clarified. While influenced by Marxist thought, Ian Turner's embrace of Australian radical nationalism and his active engagement in the right-wing faction (Labor Unity) of the ALP<sup>2</sup> gave him a very broad spectrum from which he drew these definitions, and they have fitted well with the dimensions of the labour movement in Ballarat.

The first term "labour movement" is used to describe the web of organisations that:

claim to represent the interests or the aspirations of the working class, as well as the individuals who belong to them or who speak in their name. Industrial organizations combine workers in their character as producers; they are the economic organizations, the trade unions ... The political organizations combine

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2. D. B. Waterson, "Turner, Ian Alexander (1922–1978)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2006), <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/turner-ian-alexander-11895>.

workers in their character as citizens and as voters, whether they stand for parliamentary action, insurrection, or the denial of all political action (which is itself a political act). Hence the “industrial” and “political” wings of the movement, “industrial” action (strikes, boycotts, the withdrawal of industrial efficiency) and “political action” (electoral campaigning, pressure group activity, parliamentary activity, propaganda directed towards other than industrial ends).<sup>3</sup>

The term “working class” is used to describe an objective category: the class of women and men who work for wages, as distinct from employers of labour and the self-employed:

This class has certain interests in common, “class interests”, which often conflict with those of the employers of labour, but it does not imply that all or even most of its members are always conscious of these interests. The class is not homogeneous: its members are divided economically by the industries in which they are employed and by the kind and degree of skill they possess, and each of these divisions has its own special interests. Class interests do not always prevail over such sectional interests; the interplay and conflict of these interests is central. Wage-earners are also divided by their cultural affiliations.<sup>4</sup>

## Peak Bodies

While early histories treated the establishment of trades hall councils as significant events, this has not translated into written accounts of their role. No complete history of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council (MTHC) exists, although it was the first in the world. Several works have dealt with periods, strategies and particular events,<sup>5</sup> and these have explored particular aspects.<sup>6</sup> While much of the recent literature ascribes a hierarchy to peak bodies, including defining the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) at the peak, but, of course, it was the last on the scene not formed until 1927. It eventually became the dominant organisation, but not without a struggle to gain acceptance from entrenched powerful unions and peak bodies.

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3. Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics.*, xii.

4. *Ibid.*, xiv.

5. Brian Boyd, *Melbourne Trades Hall 150th Anniversary Booklet* (Victorian Trades Hall Council, 2009); Carlotta Jane Kellaway, *Melbourne Trades Hall Lygon Street Carlton: The Workingman's Parliament* (Melbourne: Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1988); Carlotta Jane Kellaway, “The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance, 1855-1889” (PhD thesis, La Trobe University 1973); Marcella Pearce, *Melbourne Trades Hall Memories* (Melbourne Trades Hall Council, 1997); Catherine Brigden, “A Vehicle for Solidarity: Power and Purpose in the Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1948–1981” (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2003); Catherine Brigden, *Creating Labour's Space: The Case of the Melbourne Trades Hall*, *Labour History* 89 (2005), <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516080>.

6. Stanley Petzall, “The Political and Industrial Role of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, 1927–1949” (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1979, published by University of Michigan, 1982); Kellaway, *Melbourne Trades Hall Lygon Street Carlton: The Workingman's Parliament*.

The common thread that runs through all the literature though is the constant tension between solidarity and unity and the ways in which peak bodies are a tool for maintaining unity and thus the standing of the movement when engaged in the broader society.

The culture of the Ballarat labour movement has been built on public expressions of those two principles - solidarity and unity which has been reinforced in many ways. Labour Day dinners, Eureka Day events, marches, sports days, community singing, smoke nights, debating teams, election night parties, car stickers and the wearing of badges, slogan-bearing shirts and caps have all been part of that complex web. The underpinning of solidarity and unity has also been bolstered by fraternalism, (befitting a brother or brothers; brotherly or being a society of men associated in brotherly union, as for mutual aid or benefit)<sup>7</sup> including using ‘Brother’ as a common honorific, but also reinforcing a masculinist culture has been a strong part of the BT&LC culture.

Ellem and Shields, in “Theorising Peak Union Formation, Purpose and Power: A Discussion Paper,”<sup>8</sup> outline a framework that acknowledges their diversity:

Peak bodies are also remarkably heterogeneous phenomena. Some have a national focus, others a state or regional focus, and still others are local in scope; some are strong, some weak; some have lives which are short and tempestuous, others have managed to outlive all but a few of their founding affiliates. Furthermore, some have remained mere debating forums for affiliate unions; others have grown beyond their founding brief, assuming considerable autonomy in the industrial and political spheres. A select few have come close to being a state within a state, exercising enormous control over both affiliates and the social and political formations in which they are embedded.<sup>9</sup>

BT&LC could have been assigned to almost all of those categories at various times in its history. While most of the literature has explored NSW organisations, New South Wales and Victoria have had quite different political contexts, and NSW regional bodies – such as Broken Hill, Newcastle, Port Kembla, and Wollongong – mainly revolve around mineral extraction, steel production and shipping. These industries use highly unionised

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7. *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, “Fraternalism,” accessed August 3, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fraternalist>.

8. Bradon Ellem and John Shields, “Theorising Peak Union Formation, Purpose and Power: A Discussion Paper,” in *Work; Organisation; Struggle – Papers from the Seventh National Labour History Conference*, 2001, ed. Phil Griffiths and Rosemary Webb (Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2001), accessed August 25, 2020, <https://labourhistorycanberra.org/2014/12/2001-conference-theorising-peak-union-formation-purpose-and-power/>.

9. *Ibid.*, 1.



labour that is concentrated in a limited number of unions. Moreover, the NSW peak bodies have had a very different experience of political representation to that of Victoria, and the reliance on parliamentary gains has been more optimistic. From 1900 to 2000 in NSW, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) was in office for 52 years while in Victoria, over that same period, held office for only 19 years.<sup>10</sup> As well as holding power for much longer periods, NSW contained the sectarian divisions within the party, which meant that the working relationships between the industrial and political wings were conducted in a different environment. So BT&LC, like other Australian peak bodies, is a heterogeneous organisation, while sharing common goals with other similar bodies, has a different pattern of development and still remains an important part of the Ballarat labour movement, 168 years after its first engagement with the broader Ballarat society.

All the major literature does agree that an important role of the peak body is to mediate between the trade unions and the rest of society to present a sense of unity and an aspect of this is the role of the peak body in achieving unity among their affiliated unions-finding the balance where “no union feels it can subordinate the others and no one combination of all the other unions believes it can be subordinated by the remaining union.”<sup>11</sup> Ellem, Markey and Shields’ *Peak Unions in Australia: Origins, Purpose, Power, Agency*,<sup>12</sup> Markey’s *In Case of Oppression: The Life and Times of the Labor Council of New South Wales*<sup>13</sup> and Oliver’s *Unity is Strength. A history of the Australian Labor Party and the Trades and Labor Council in Western Australia, 1899-1999*<sup>14</sup> all discuss while solidarity has been an important objective for the labour movement the achievement of unity underpins it, often a more delicate task and often achieved at arm’s length from the daily responsibilities of individual unions. Part of BT&LC’s role in maintaining unity has meant taking reports of all delegates on industrial matters seriously and throughout the minutes it is clear that these matters received a high priority and

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10. “Past Election Results,” NSW Electoral Commission, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.elections.nsw.gov.au/Elections/past-results>; “Results,” Victorian Electoral Commission, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.vec.vic.gov.au/Results/Default.html>.
  11. Colin Cleary, *Ballarat Labor: From Miner Hesitancy to Golden Age* (Maryborough: Colin Cleary, 2007), 10.
  12. Bradon Ellem, Ray Markey, and John Shields, *Peak Unions in Australia: Origins, Purpose, Power, Agency* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2004).
  13. Ray Markey, *In Case of Oppression: The Life and Times of the Labor Council of New South Wales* (Sydney: Pluto Press Australia, 1994).
  14. Bobbie Oliver, *Unity is Strength. A History of the Australian Labor Party and the Trades and Labor Council in Western Australia, 1899–1999* (Perth: Australia Research Institute, Curtin University, 2003).

considerable engagement, but often providing advice and advocacy rather than obvious involvement in the outcome.

Catherine Brigden has created the most comprehensive and relevant theoretical framework for this thesis on BT&LC and the Ballarat labour movement – *A Vehicle for Solidarity: Power and Purpose in the Victorian Trades Hall Council, 1948–1981*.<sup>15</sup> She examines the relationship between affiliates and the peak body, the place of solidarity, spatiality, internal factional struggles over power and the impact on peak body leadership in the thesis and in numerous related articles. She advances the concepts of “organisational” power and “collective movement” power as a way of defining roles, which fits with the history of the BT&LC. She then develops three themes: power and purpose; industrial and political strategy; and solidarity and exclusion. She also introduces an important sub-theme of the dynamics of space and gender.<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps Brigden’s most important argument relevant to BT&LC relates to the tension of unifying and divisive pressures within the understanding of solidarity and unity, sometimes more colourfully described as “splitters” and “lumpers” – where splitters exploit divisions and lumpers explore unifying factors and similarities. Brigden moves beyond an analysis of externally derived authority to look more closely at the complexities of internal peak union relationships,<sup>17</sup> as do Ellem and Shields in “Theorising Peak Union Formation, Purpose and Power: A Discussion Paper.”<sup>18</sup> Both draw on Hyman and Flanders to develop these concepts in ways which are relevant to this thesis. Factionalism, a feature of political organisations, provides impetus for both unity and division. While factions provide a forum for expressions of solidarity, factional differences and conflict create internal fragmentation and division in the elusive search for unity. In peak bodies, this is often seen as a challenge to authority, and Brigden explores the dimensions of “power over” (the rank-and-file, union officials, employers, the state) and “power for” (the rank-and-file, the labour movement, the working class). BT&LC provides many examples of these forms of power but is distinctive in

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15. Brigden, “A Vehicle for Solidarity,” iv.

16. Ibid.

17. Cathy Brigden, “Analysing Internal Power Dynamics in Peak Unions: A Conceptual Framework.” *Journal of Industrial Relations*. 49 (4) (2007): 483–496.

18. Ellem and Shields, “Theorising Peak Union Formation, Purpose and Power: A Discussion Paper,” Richard Hyman, *Industrial Relations: A Marxist Introduction* (London: MacMillan, 1975); Alan Flanders, *Trade Unions* (London: Stratford Place, Hutchison’s University Library, 1952).

maintaining the power of the unifying forces. Delegates selected by their unions have participated in the democratic election of the peak body office-bearers, including the paid position of secretary, and have accepted the authority of the peak body for more than 120 years, although particular unions have affiliated, disaffiliated and re-affiliated from time to time. In their darkest days, the ‘lumpers’ were able to maintain unity, exercising ‘power for’ in a way that gave loyalty and respect. Yet in another peak body in which BT&LC was a significant participant, the Victorian Provincial Trades and Labour Council Association (VPT&LCA) refused to accept the direction of the MTHC and shut down their organisation temporarily and on another occasion escalating the dispute to a picket at MTH.<sup>19</sup>

Another role for the peak bodies has been the relationship with the ALP which is also examined by Brigden. This role has been evident at BT&LC from 1891 when the Intercolonial Trade Union Congress (ITUC) held in Ballarat took the decision to create a political arm. Cleary restated the connection in the 1990s “from conversations with many candidates and activists, that the BT&LC remained an integral part of Ballarat Labor.”<sup>20</sup> When the local ALP Campaign Committee was controlled by Catholic Action in 1945, the BT&LC supported Secretary Miller to act as Campaign Secretary.<sup>21</sup> ALP leadership also was usually drawn from the BT&LC men- even when the ALP expelled the president of BT&LC, J. Henry in 1951, there was no public reprisals While industrial concerns are usually the focus of individual unions, general issues that require public debate and parliamentary intervention, such as workers compensation and industrial health and safety, have been led by the peak body in Ballarat. As Brigden identifies, the role of a peak body cannot be understood just in terms of authority as is often expected to be the case in hierarchical structures.<sup>22</sup>

Kathryn Steel has formulated a very useful table encompassing the Ellem and Shields model of peak union agency that describes three possible types of agency (mobilization, exchange and regulation), each of which can demonstrated in three modes (industrial, political and social).<sup>23</sup> The resulting matrix when applied to BT&LC (Appendix I)

19. BT&LC Correspondence, May 23, 1986.

20. Ibid., 136.

21. BT&LC Minutes, October 25 1945.

22. Brigden, “A Vehicle for Solidarity,” 6.

23. Kathryn M. Steel, “Industrial Agency in Regional Trades and Labour Councils,” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 54, no. 1 (2012): 77.

produces a very similar pattern of activities to the one she has developed using the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council and suggests an avenue for comparison between Victorian peak bodies.

As the BT&LC has been an expression of its community, so studies that have placed labour organisations in their environment have also been relevant. Lucy Taksa's research on the Eveleigh Railways Workshops, although focused on the capital city of Sydney, which examined the interconnection between workplace, culture and politics in the working-class communities surrounding the workshops between the 1880s and the 1930s,<sup>24</sup> has many similarities to the area surrounding major workplaces in Ballarat and her methodology has applicability. She identifies the cultural building blocks that existed in the workplace, and how they were connected to the institutions of the labour movement and the activities of its leaders. These working-class cultural practices enabled workers and their families to articulate and communicate shared values and aspirations.

Erik Eklund, in *Mining Towns: Making a Living, Making a Life*,<sup>25</sup> also encourages a new way of looking at regional towns and questions a city-centric national history. Capital cities are relevant, but communities outside capital cities have developed deep links to their localities, and are also connected to wider regional, national, and international patterns. His approach is well suited to Ballarat. Much labour history has been focused on the capital cities, and as you move out to the regional areas the analysis is only seen as an adjunct to the bigger story. Yet since 1854, Ballarat workers have been participating in their own right in events – such as the Eight Hour Movement, the Early Closing Movement, the 1890 Maritime Strike, fundraising for the London Dock Workers, – in the formation of major unions and in the political processes that had developed – all without direction from Melbourne.

The definition of “working-class culture”, which must be recognised as both complex and somewhat ambiguous, must also be capable of capturing both formal and informal elements of social and workplace life. Researchers such as Taksa, Eklund and Greg Patmore, who have applied labour historians' traditional interests to a broader Australian context concerned with class, gender, space, memory, and community – have been the

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24. Lucy Taksa, “ ‘Pumping the Life-Blood into Politics and Place’: Labour Culture and the Eveleigh Railway Workshops,” *Labour History* 79 (2000), accessed April 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516727>.

25. Erik Eklund, *Mining Towns: Making a Living, Making a Life* (Sydney: New South Publishing, 2012).

most useful with their concentration on working life in a discrete location. Taksa, in her article “Retooling the Class Factory: Response 3 Family, Childhood and Identities: Working Class History from a Personalised Perspective,”<sup>26</sup> outlines an approach to labour history that also explores how personal associations and subjective experience play a critical role in shaping class identity.

Unlike MTH, where union secretaries and their unions were located in the building housing the MTHC, union secretaries were not housed at BTH. Marcella Pearce writes of a time when MTH had 100 union secretaries located there.<sup>27</sup> In Ballarat, the unions were represented by organisers and delegates who were located in workplaces or offices separate from BTH, with the AWU having had its own purpose-built building in the centre of the town too. In the 1980s several unions placed organisers at BTH as a contribution to the maintenance of BTH, but the casual meeting places such as at the sporting clubs, hotels, churches, Freemasons and clubs like the Chess Club also established in 1856 were all part of their social sphere. The Trades Hall building also was an important part of that informal network, where community singing was broadcast by the ABC, where influential guest speakers would be invited, where special celebratory events would be held, where delegates could meet regularly to discuss and argue about the broader matters facing them. Most importantly the outcomes of those often informal meetings defined the path that Ballarat would take in the broader labour movement.

## Methodology

My starting point has been E. P. Thompson. When he wrote *The Making of the English Working Class*<sup>28</sup> in 1963, he became one of the most influential historians of the latter half of the twentieth century. “History from below” grew in importance and has left an indelible mark on the way labour history is written, with good reason. Sadly, there are no popular Ballarat movies such as *Brassed Off* or *Made in Dagenham*, which are not only about struggle and resistance in the workplace but also about workers’ culture as revealed through leisure, domestic life, recreation, and entertainment. Thompson’s description of a popular culture arising from the people themselves, and a class consciousness that grows

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26. Lucy Taksa, “Retooling the Class Factory: Response 3 Family, Childhood and Identities: Working Class History from a Personalised Perspective,” *Labour History* 82 (2002), accessed April 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516848>.
27. Marcella Pearce, *Melbourne Trades Hall Memories* (Melbourne: Trades Hall Council, 1997).
28. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Books, 1979).

from it, has direct application to Ballarat. He describes a popular culture that consists of traditions, value systems, rites, songs, rituals, artefacts, signs and symbolic vocabulary; not one that is now understood to mean people as consumers of commercial culture. The men who worked at the Ballarat North Railways Workshop (BNRW) and the women at Morley's Mill sang in the same choirs, supported the same football teams, lived in the same streets, frequently rode together to work on their bicycles (and home for lunch), married each other and shared common views of their society.

My approach is from the perspective of a labour historian, focusing on the rise of mass politics and the social and cultural history of the working class in Ballarat, including issues of gender. While resolute in writing the history of the institution, it had to be in the context of the broader influences, attitudes and beliefs that had emerged from a much wider range of sources, largely, but clearly not wholly, from Victoria. The thesis is not concerned with individual unions, but certainly key members of the BT&LC have been significant leaders of their own unions. Some unions have become almost synonymous with the BT&LC, where union leadership was able to use its influence to shape the wider arguments that were engaging the state and national movement – for example, the AWU from 1905 to 1924, followed for the next three decades by the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), whose workforce was concentrated at the BNRW, with its strong Communist Party of Australia (CPA) leadership. The move towards belonging to a peak body did not mean that individual unions stopped conducting most of their business independently but extended the range of their leadership to influence wider debates.

## **Methods**

John Tosh in *The Pursuit of History*<sup>29</sup> writes that an historical investigation can begin with sources to be investigated, or more usually, with a problem, a question to be answered from the sources. To build the history of BT&LC, this thesis started with the research question which encompasses both the BT&LC and the Ballarat labour movement. It utilises documentary analysis of primary sources, oral histories, and personal recollections, including sound recordings, from many people associated with the labour movement in Ballarat. The intention is not only to record the events, but to give

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29. John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History* (London: Routledge, 2013).

substance to the depth of the labour movement in Ballarat. Many of Ballarat's published histories have described a comfortable and parochial middle-class, but there has been an untold history. While the newspapers and minutes tell of meetings, who organised them, and where they were held – the street demonstration in 1932 at the Galloway monument, and funerals (who were the pallbearers) there have been many hidden clues to be uncovered to find they often are still reinforced by snippets of family history passed down through several generations which add further subtlety. One of the main participants at the Galloway Monument on April Fools Day 1931, who left a detailed newspaper account of his actions that night, was also proudly a direct descendant of a Eureka rebel. Access to the 1983 Ballarat Library's *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History* project<sup>30</sup> has provided more than 50 interviews with people, including several leading trade unionists who tell of their lives and their workplaces. By weaving them through the narrative in their own voices, they provide another dimension to a tightly knit clearly identifiable class.

The other dimension is what is now referred to as 'lived experience.' In the 1940s when my husband was growing up in Beaufort Crescent, North Ballarat which ran alongside the North Ballarat Railways workshops, it was a street of tidy weatherboard houses on one side, and a row of fine maple and ash trees on the other side. At 7am. fathers left for work usually at the Flour Mill, the Workshops or Ronaldson and Tippett's. Mothers had the chops and veggies followed by apple crumble ready to eat on the table at 6 o'clock, everyone listened to Martin's Corner at 6.30 pm, a serial about the local corner shop, and often the meals were shared with US soldiers who were billeted with the families. The after-school cricket match in the street had to be interrupted as most of the 700 men rode past on their bikes on their way home after work. The trees opposite were great for climbing contests. Those maple and ash trees were part of an Avenue of Honour originally known as "Monash Avenue", planted by the North Progress Association between 1916 and 1917 to commemorate serving in World War I and was officially named by Lady Peacock.<sup>31</sup> But most references to Ballarat Avenues of Honour take you to the same description: 'In May 1917, Tilly Thompson, a director of clothing firm E. Lucas & Co, suggested planning an Avenue of Honour at Ballarat. The idea was accepted

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30. Peter Mansfield, ed. *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History*. Ballarat: Ballarat City Library, 1983.

31. *The Argus*, September 3, 1918.

enthusiastically with planting beginning on June 4, 1917. The final planting took place on 3 June 1919.<sup>32</sup> But the Beaufort Crescent Monash Avenue was well underway and opened a year before the Ballarat Avenue of Honour, only to have been steadily decimated by local authorities over the years as they had lost any connection to the meaning behind those trees. Just as those trees have disappeared without recognition of their history, often that has been the case with labour history in Ballarat. The methods used in the thesis aim to provide a broader record than currently exists.

My own lived experience from the 1950s has included going to boarding school in Ballarat with the children of the manufacturers, real estate owners and professional ‘class’, observing life in Wendouree Parade and Beaufort Crescent then spending a large part of my working life in the labour movement as an active unionist. As a participant for more than fifty years, including four years as State Secretary of the Victorian branch of the ALP (1990-94), member of the Socialist Left National Executive (1984-1989) and a member of the National Executive of the ALP (1990 -1994) which included equal representation of the political and industrial wings from all states, my observations have been substantiated by more detailed reading of labour movement history relevant to this thesis.

While no part of that past should be ignored, a dispassionate approach has still been impacted by the lack of diverse written primary sources. Tosh’s very helpful chapter, “The Raw Materials,”<sup>33</sup> details the whole range which could be drawn on, but in an organisation such as BT&LC which wished to preserve unity and public standing, the private opinions of the activists are well hidden. The BT&LC minutes were and still are written by the organisation for posterity and as Tosh points out the historian of the Suez crisis of 1956 who could use no other source than the third volume of Sir Anthony Eden’s memoirs would be in an unenviable position.<sup>34</sup>

The minutiae of the BT&LC’s existence are everywhere – the daily local newspapers, the records of the handicaps for the athletes competing in the Eight Hour Sports, and rare records of interactions between people. But as Steel makes clear, such records which reflect the organisation, are shaped by the political context in which they are produced,

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32. Ballarat Avenue of Honour. Victorian Heritage Register – 125276, Heritage Council Victoria, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/62>.

33. Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, Chapter 3.

34. *Ibid.*, 60.



the cultural and ideological assumptions that lie behind it and in practice records may be brief in content, patchy in extent, providing little detail beyond a record of decisions made. They are also the product of the selective thought of their authors, along with their interpretations and biases.<sup>35</sup>

So, while the methods used here, as well as recounting the history of BT&LC aim to give a sense of the milieu of the labour movement, the issues that challenged them, the ideas that excited them, the arguments they won and lost, including using their voices where possible, are still limited by their self-imposed censorship. Unfortunately, this does also reinforce a gendered approach, as women’s voices are much harder to find. I have attempted to compensate for that by acknowledging the women whom we do know were there but lack the factual supporting evidence.

Alistair Thomson makes an important point about using all material for such a study as that for the BT&LC: “We recognise that no historical source – whether first person account, parliamentary debate or statistical record – provides a direct, unmediated and uncomplicated access to the past. Every source is a constructed and selective representation of experience...”<sup>36</sup> While the personal and ephemeral are an important source, they have had to be tested in the same way as other archival material. Nevertheless, an over-reliance on documentary materials, such as minutes, can ignore or downplay the important cultural implications of events.

## **The Argument**

When analysing the research question *How has the ideological conflict regarding the character of Australian society been reflected within the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council and among the workers of Ballarat from 1854 to 2000?* I drew on four related themes: the changing nature of that struggle during the period and the impact on it of solidarity and unity, gender and place.

### ***Ideological Struggle***

The research question has remained the constant thread- the physical clash with authority at the Eureka uprising set Ballarat apart in a particular way and created a sense in the

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35. Steel, “Understanding Regional Trades and Labour Councils,” 133.

36. Thomson, “Life Stories and Historical Analysis,” 102.

labour movement that its members were entitled to participate in decisions that were impacting on their lives wherever these were expressed. Furthermore, they continued to have that expectation whether it was conscription in WWI, monetary policy in the Great Depression, or the separation of church and state in the 1950s. The battle of ideas has gone on in public debates, as well as in pubs, in union organisers' offices and continuously at BTH since it was built.

Three aspects of that struggle were selected for this study. The first aspect is the external struggle between the labour movement, with the society beyond. Contestation regarding Eureka is an example: The two key interpretations of the events are those of Geoffrey Serle and Geoffrey Blainey. Serle claims that Eureka was the triumph of egalitarian values in the new world, whereas Blainey sees the aims and objectives of the uprising as more typical of a liberalist, small-business ethos.<sup>37</sup> The BT&LC has maintained its determination to keep the Serle view prominent in the debate – from having used the Southern Cross flag as a symbol since 1942, to participating in the annual celebration of Eureka Day and other Eureka-related events. Visiting politicians to Ballarat are reminded of Eureka and, in turn, reiterate the importance of the Eureka tradition in creating a democratic culture.<sup>38</sup>

The second was between the industrial wing and the political wing of the labour movement, the struggle over conscription. James Scullin at the *Evening Echo*, in conjunction with the BT&LC, orchestrated the anti-conscription campaign across Victoria in a confrontation with the ALP prime minister at the time, a role Scullin was later to hold himself when he had to face the wrath of the industrial wing in 1931.

The third aspect is the internal struggles within the industrial wing. The bitterest and deepest conflict occurred within the industrial wing regarding the role of the Catholic Church and the rise of Communism. The rise of the CPA resulted in Ballarat forming a branch of more than 300 members, many of whom were delegates and officeholders at the BT&LC, and who remained outspoken and determined advocates for their position in

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37. Keir Reeves, "Contested Historical Views of Eureka," Egold: A Nation's Heritage, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.egold.net.au/biogs/EG00233b.htm>.

38. John Button, *On the Loose* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1996).

the internal struggles within and between unions played out in full public gaze.<sup>39</sup> Yet while the political wing split asunder, the industrial wing remained as one.

### *Solidarity and Unity*

This, then, leads to the issue of solidarity and unity. What these men drew on strongly was the solidarity of the workplace but unity at the end of the day. Solidarity is an elusive term although it is constantly used in a range of sources, reading the context is essential to define its meaning in that setting. Its investigation by late nineteenth-century scholar Emile Durkheim led to a new field of research and the introduction of sociology into the study of human sciences.<sup>40</sup> He argued that sociologists should study features of collective or group life and sociology is the study of social facts, things which are external to, and coercive of, individuals. These social facts are features of the group and cannot be studied apart from the collective, nor can they be derived from the study of individuals. However, labour historians have not been inclined to pay much attention to such theories to explain how it works in the labour movement. It is the opposite to individualism. Brigden's thesis, "A Vehicle for Solidarity," draws on a considerable body of academic analysis on the dimensions of solidarity<sup>41</sup> and is the most useful for this thesis. While solidarity has been used in many other places, in the descriptive sense it refers to existing ties – and types of ties – within groups and is a powerful tool when mediating between groups. It can be identified through contrast or opposition with a larger and different grouping, while "the normative sense of solidarity is used as an assumed and positively valued model of relationships."<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, filmmakers have always been attracted to solidarity as a theme in the labour movement. Demonised and hounded off the screen on its release more than sixty years ago, the film *Salt of the Earth*,<sup>43</sup> is powerful and *Rosie the Rivetter* has its followers, too. Some labour historians are interested in how solidarity is widely valued and used within the labour movement in the *normative* sense, but it has not been explored in the

39. "Bishop Foley Outspoken," *The Courier*, October 5, 1936.

40. Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014).

41. Brigden, "A Vehicle for Solidarity," 5.

42. Ahlam Alharbi, "Towards a Performative Theory of Solidarity Discourse," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2018): Article: 1495044, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2018.1495044>.

43. Sukhdev Sandhu, "Salt of the Earth: Made of Labour, by Labour, for Labour," *The Guardian*, March 11, 2014, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/mar/10/salt-of-the-earth-labour-workers-blacklisted-filmmakers>.

*descriptive* sense in many instances. In the normative sense, solidarity, while used by those who sing *Solidarity for Ever* on some celebratory occasion (and who mostly only know the words of the first verse), what they sing of is power through unity:

There can be no power greater  
Anywhere beneath the sun  
Yet what force on earth is weaker  
Than the feeble strength of one?  
But the union makes us strong.<sup>44</sup>

However, in the descriptive sense, solidarity is built from continuous tension within a group, which is related to the strength of their internal bonds so that when they enter the broader debate, their position can be maintained. But it must be maintained in such a way that at the end of any internal dissent, unity can be achieved across the whole group.

Brigden uses “power over” and “power for” to differentiate the phases. One former union secretary put it this way:

Beau told me, as my father had, that you must always work with the right-wingers but never to trust them out of your sight. When asked, I liken it to being in the army and not getting to choose sides but to fight for your team against all odds or personal feelings.<sup>45</sup>

The underpinning philosophy for the industrial wing has been that, regardless of differences concerning purpose, methods, and strategies, a united front needs to be presented when facing the broader society – a point that is continually made in the narrative of the labour movement. The words of *Solidarity Forever* identify the inherent strength of unionism by speaking of “the feeble strength of one” and finishing with:

In our hands is placed a power  
Greater than their hoarded gold  
Greater than the might of atoms  
Magnified a thousand-fold  
We can bring to birth a new world  
From the ashes of the old  
For the union makes us strong.<sup>46</sup>

While the labour movement is composed of many philosophical and political strands of thought, the most common thread is still that in the unequal contest between employer

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44. “Solidarity Forever” lyrics, accessed November 11, 2020, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity\\_Forever#Lyrics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity_Forever#Lyrics).

45. Henderson, email to author, April 4, 2020.

46. “Solidarity Forever” lyrics.

and employee, strong and weak, rich and poor, strength can only be derived from collaboration and unity with other workers. That is why rallies, demonstrations and marches are still popular tools for emphasising to each other, and the broader society, that numbers count and unity matters above all. But solidarity is not unity. The maintenance of solidarity in any sub-group of the labour movement has been the measure of its status within the broader movement, and in BT&LC the unity demonstrated for most of its history has certainly contributed to its enduring regard in the broader movement.

Bob Hawke, at the 75th anniversary of the ACTU, perhaps spelled out most directly how this operates when he was referring to the union movement during the split between the Groupers and the Militants, and acknowledged the sub-factions (also identified by Secretary Williams) within each group:

Each side had its own watering hole – the Groupers in one corner in the Dover Hotel, Non-Groupers in the John Curtin on the other, with the Victoria Trades Hall across the road in the centre, forming a triangle of turbulence. And within that we had then our own C&MEU – Catholic and Masonic Enmity Unincorporated. Prima facie judgements were made on a man – and it was nearly all men then – by the digital test: did he cross himself, or did he use the secret grip?<sup>47</sup>

Hawke went on to speak of an incident when “Jim Healey, the charismatic Communist leader of the Waterside Workers Federation, and John Maynes, the dedicated and talented secretary of the Clerks Union, a pivotal figure among the Industrial Groupers and the Democratic Labor Party (DLP),”<sup>48</sup> stared down the barriers:

The inviolate line had been crossed, the doors swung open and in walked John Maynes. He wanted to talk to Jim about benefits for his members on the waterfront, which might arise from negotiations Jim had recently completed. The troops wanted to throw Maynes out, but Jim quietened them, invited John to sit down with us and proceeded to advise him on how to get the best deal for his members.<sup>49</sup>

What was being demonstrated here was unity not solidarity – the necessary compromise in the face of an outside threat that unites unionists to achieve the best deal for all workers. Hawke articulates this well:

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47. Robert J. L. Hawke, “ACTU 75th Anniversary Dinner Address” (speech, Melbourne, 25 November 2002), transcript, accessed November, 2020, <https://www.actu.org.au/actu-media/archives/2002/solidarity-forever>.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

But gradually I became aware of a basic and reassuring truth. However bitterly men fought out their ideological differences within both the political and industrial structures of the labour movement, there was a discernible identifying unity of commitment to improving the wages and conditions of the working men and women of Australia.<sup>50</sup>

Solidarity is most usually conveyed via storytelling through which messages are dramatised by praising, choosing, and mentioning specific people, places, events, and quotes. Generations later, a Ballarat episode recounted elsewhere in the thesis is still passed around workplaces, and still the spirit of Eureka is invoked.<sup>51</sup> Achieving unity is not so often discussed widely.

In workplaces, ask any apprentice how they were inducted into the workplace – the standard tricks of nailing the nail-bag to the workbench, or being sent to the shop to buy a bubble for the spirit level. These tricks are still available on the internet<sup>52</sup> and have become part of the rituals that have been passed down through generations so that apprentices can aspire to impose them on the next apprentice as they move up the ladder and prove their solidarity with their workmates.

Because solidarity is such a highly prized feature of unionism, group cohesiveness often becomes the major objective, sometimes maintained at the expense of open discussion. Macintyre recognised it by referring to “an entire tribal ritual of solidarity.”<sup>53</sup> Bertha Walker, writing of the era of Tom Mann, described why he became one of the best exponents of building solidarity in the Victorian Socialist League (VSL) because he used all aspects of men’s and women’s lives to unite them around common goals, whether it was in sporting teams, debating societies or community singing groups.<sup>54</sup> It explains why he is one of the best remembered and revered figures in the labour movement’s past. This was one of the clearest examples of working-class solidarity that had been built outside the workplace and which included families.

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50. Ibid.

51. Tony Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, See Chapter 6, 155.

52. Recoil, “Top 6 Pranks to Pull on Your Apprentices,” accessed January 10, 2019, <https://recoilkneepads.com/blogs/blog/top-10-jokes-to-play-on-your-apprentice>; Climadoor, “10 Hilarious Tradesman Pranks to Pull on the Job,” accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.climadoor.co.uk/blog/hilarious-tradesman-pranks/>.

53. Stuart Macintyre, “The Short History of Social Democracy in Australia,” *Thesis Eleven* 15, no. 1 (1986): 4, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/072551368601500101>.

54. Bertha Walker, *Solidarity Forever: A Part Story of the Life and Times of Percy Laidler – The First Quarter of a Century* (Melbourne: National Press, 1972).

Hartley Grattan in *The Australian Labor Movement*,<sup>55</sup> as an external observer has provided one of the clearest explanations of this significant aspect of unionism and its relationship to the political arm. While acknowledging that the ALP has had to respond to a broader constituency, Grattan stated that:

(It) is not so much a matter of great leaders who have devoted their lives to the cause as a matter of the constancy of the numerous rank and file members who have stuck with the cause through thick and thin. In fact the solidarity of the masses of the trade unionists and Labor Party supporters is really a more important factor in explaining the durability of the movement than its leaders great and small.

Brigden's thesis, "A Vehicle for Solidarity," is an exploration of the concept at MTHC and an important starting point. The tacit acceptance of solidarity and unity has underpinned Ballarat workplaces and BTH and its strength explains why the BT&LC did not split in 1955 when the political wing was torn apart; it explains why 27 unions did not participate at the MTHC for more than two years and did not pay affiliation fees, yet returned to the fold with little consequence; it explains how the left-controlled BT&LC could elect as secretary a staunch Catholic who had been a candidate for the DLP; it also explains how the BT&LC could elect Ted Rowe, one of the most identifiable Communists of his generation, as president for an unprecedented two successive years in 1941 and 1942. However, by the end of the 1950s, the impact of the Menzies era had relegated the BT&LC to an enclave, where they had become increasingly isolated from the mainstream, and which created an opportunity for Ballarat to become firmly in the grasp of powerful local employers and developers in their positions as local government and parliamentary representatives. But how such solidarity is achieved is often difficult to discern, often only revealed in the minutes by the repetition of delegates as movers and seconders of resolutions and has to be searched for in different ways- the guests who have visited, the support given to and received from outside bodies, and the standing the organisation has in the wider community. The MTHC, on several memorable occasions, had been tempted to test its "power over", particularly in the heat of the Grouper dispute, where it went a step further in Bendigo to claim the building as well,<sup>56</sup> but "power for" has prevailed and unity has been restored.

55. C. Hartley Grattan, "The Australian Labor Movement," *The Antioch Review* 4, no. 1 (1944): 56–73.

56. Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton*, 63.

Solidarity and unity have a direct impact on relationships with those no longer “part of the union,”<sup>57</sup> particularly those selected by unions to represent them in parliament and the tension between delegate or representative. While particular union activists dominated the agenda in Ballarat, their political motivations were determined by maintaining solidarity across a broad spectrum of the labour movement, and certainly beyond their individual union’s objectives. Since 1891 labourism been a useful tool to explain the gap that immediately opened between the chosen and those who chose them. Terry Irving describes the debate in the early 1890s when some believed the old system of representation – the responsibility of the member to his constituents, and the right of a politician to vote according to his conscience – had to be abandoned. Workers needed a new system of representation, one that would satisfy “the democratic mind” by keeping “a tight hand upon [Labor’s] delegates in Parliament.”<sup>58</sup> Together with the supreme policymaking role of the annual conference, the pledge, caucus rules, and union participation in pre-selection, using ‘power over’ rather than ‘power for’, immediately placed the political wing in a subsidiary role and failed to create a “delegate” rather than a representative.

The tension between delegate or representative has existed since the ALP was formed. Byrne draws on Vere Gordon Childe in *How Labour Governs*, written in 1923, to understand “the tension that existed at the core of the ALP, a parliamentary party founded by an extra-parliamentary social movement.”<sup>59</sup> Bongiorno’s interpretation of labourism as an independent ALP supported by a strong trade union movement seeking a redistribution of wealth in favour of the working class through the parliamentary system<sup>60</sup> is probably closest to the understanding of most activists. This definition is useful when applied to particular unions, but at BT&LC after the establishment of the political wing there were only rare occasions when that definition explained the actions of those who rejected unity.

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57. Strawbsweb.com, “Part of the Union” lyrics, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.strawbsweb.co.uk/lyrics/alphres.asp#partoftheunion>. “You don’t get me, I’m part of the union, Until the day I die, until the day I die...”
58. Terry Irving, “William Astley (Price Warung) and the Invention of the Labor Party,” in *Transforming Labour – Work, Workers, Struggle and Change: Proceedings of the Eighth National Labour History Conference*, ed. Bradley Bowden and John Kellett (Brisbane: Brisbane Labour History Association, 2003), 177.
59. Liam Byrne, *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin: Their Early Political Careers and the Making of the Modern Labor Party* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2020), 100.
60. Frank Bongiorno, “Labourism,” in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, ed. Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 371.



The annual conference, caucus rules and the pledge did not eliminate “ratting”. Ballarat has had a number of significant “rats” – W. G. Spence, Ned Hogan, Charlie McGrath and Robert Joshua – but their treachery had only been tangentially caused by the basic tenets of labourism. Ratting is an aspect that has not been much studied by labour historians. Jacqueline Dickenson, in *Renegades and Rats*, has made one of the few detailed studies of ALP rats, although she only deals with individuals, and not in their historical context.<sup>61</sup> She says Hughes (and Spence) were prompted by patriotism; the Groupers by religious conviction (although not all Catholic, including Robert Joshua); and Mal Colston by greed.<sup>62</sup>

Political betrayal has had its uses, certainly making sure that the political wing enjoys a plentiful and popular history. While ratting may well have been caused by the “fatal flaws” (a weakness for wine, women, greed, pride or arrogance), the petty jealousies and bitter rivalries, the punch-ups, even black-hearted treachery,<sup>63</sup> it is a constant reminder that the rejection of unity comes at a high price for the individual. Whoever takes up the mantle of being an elected representative is seen as no longer totally of the labour movement; or, at least, vulnerable to suspicion that their allegiance could be tested by their exposure to the trappings of power. They start with that handicap – not a delegate as they no longer qualify, and not trusted as a representative.

It was not envisaged in 1891 that the industrial and the political wings would become so diffused over time. Those unions established in 1891 have generally continued to pay an affiliation fee to the ALP to support the administration of the party, mainly to pay organisers to strengthen the networks of potential voters throughout Australia.

In return, they would have 50 per cent representation on administrative and policy bodies and in the pre-selection of parliamentary candidates,<sup>64</sup> although affiliated unions have also donated to other political parties, including a recent example when one of the oldest affiliated unions, the Electrical Trades Union, made a large contribution to the Greens

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61. Jacqueline Dickenson, *Renegades and Rats: Betrayal and the Remaking of Radical Organisations in Britain and Australia* (Melbourne: Academic Monographs, 2006).

62. *Ibid.*, 9.

63. Dickenson, *Renegades and Rats*, 10.

64. “Seventh International Trades Union Congress Ballarat (1891),” E97/20 – Report of the Proceedings of the Congress, Australian Trade Union Archives, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University (Canberra).

Party.<sup>65</sup> Many unions in newer occupations, especially in “white collar” occupations, such as education, nursing, and community services, are not affiliated with the ALP, although many of their members are ALP members. However, all these unions are affiliated with peak bodies of the labour movement. In writing this history, its boundaries have to be extended well beyond the links of the ALP-affiliated unions to the parliamentary wing, and yet most of the literature on peak bodies refers to the industrial and political wings of the labour movement as if the ALP is the only manifestation of the political aspect.

It was not surprising that by 1985, Prime Minister Hawke, in a speech to the ACTU Congress, made it clear that “it was not the function of the Labor Government to be the handmaiden of the trade union movement – that our overriding responsibilities were to the people of Australia as a whole.”<sup>66</sup> Although he cushioned the message by claiming “I reaffirm, without inhibition, with pride in the unique history, tradition and achievement of the Australian Labor movement, the solidarity between political labor and industrial labour,”<sup>67</sup> Hawke could be using solidarity in the sense that at the end of the day, everyone will stand behind him as he has demonstrated the power to impose his solution in the interests of the labour movement, or he could be using solidarity when he means unity, and the two wings will show a united face to the rest of the world. There is no doubt, however, that he was making clear to the industrial wing that the political wing had power beyond them to pursue a path that the political leadership regarded would be in the best interests of Australia at large. So, the evolution of the political wing has made clear the issue of delegate or representative is now settled but solidarity and unity still strive to maintain their importance to the labour movement. Many of the old forms are used at BT&LC including active campaigning for the ALP at election time, but recognition that your industrial needs will be met by the election of ALP governments requires the same level of skills as used by the many competing interests in the public domain.

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65. “ETU Defends Big Donation to the Greens,” aired August 18, 2010, ABC News, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2010-08-18/etu-defends-big-donation-to-greens/948606>; Victorian Labor, “Unions and Divisions Affiliated to the Victorian Branch, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.viclabor.com.au/about/unions/#>.

66. Robert J. L. Hawke, “Speech to ACTU Congress” (speech, Sydney, September 12, 1985), transcript, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/original/00006718.pdf>.

67. Ibid.

### ***Gender and Missing History***

The aspect of gender is a theme more because of its omission than what is learned of the different interests of male and female workers. As Brigden notes peak bodies, like their affiliate unions, are gendered organisations in which gendered patterns of power consequently influence peak body policy, strategy and purpose.<sup>68</sup> In the histories of the NSW and Western Australian peak bodies, early women activists of the 1890s-1910s era are discussed but then women disappear from the narrative for more than fifty years until the 1970s.<sup>69</sup> That is also the case in Ballarat records, as extensive searching has revealed very little indication of specific gender issues being addressed in BT&LC minutes or any indication of women participating (except for six months in 1944) until the 1980s, so they have remained on the periphery of the literature and the myth-making that is integral to an organisation. Lake extends the argument to discuss sex-blindness:

The gender factor has been obscured in Australian historical writing by a number of phenomena: by the dominance of a narrowly defined political history, by the sex-blind nature of what passes as class analysis and by the centrality in our historiography of organizing concepts such as ‘national character’ and ‘national tradition.’<sup>70</sup>

Lake suggests that these conceptual frameworks obscure one of the greatest struggles in Australian history which was between men and women at the end of the nineteenth century for the control of the national culture. Even prior to WW1 the Higgins Harvester judgement had designated males as breadwinners with the responsibility of supporting a wife and children.<sup>71</sup> A cultural shift after WW1 occurred as the war destroyed so many lives and reshaped the international political order. It was a catalyst for changes in all aspects of life, including ideas about gender and the behaviour of women and men.<sup>72</sup> Economically, returning men displaced many women from their wartime responsibilities, and many households now headed by women due to the loss of male breadwinners were forced to focus on survival.<sup>73</sup>

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68. Cathy Brigden, “Exploring Gender in Peak Union Bodies,” *Reworking* (2005).

69. Markey, *In Case of Oppression*; Oliver, *Unity is Strength. A History of the Australian Labor Party and the Trades and Labor Council in Western Australia, 1899–1999*. No. 28. API Network, Australia Research Institute, Curtin University, 2003.

70. Lake, “Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability,” 130.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute, (eds.) *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Hale & Iremonger, 1982).

73. Lake, “Historical Reconsiderations IV.”

Until recent decades, the BT&LC accepted the social and cultural construction of sex roles without question. When Tony Restarick, a long-term BT&LC delegate thought he knew why women were not in the workforce, he was providing a good example of sex-blindness: “Before the war (WWII), married women didn’t work. Their idea was that you had to work and you got a boyfriend and when you got married, you didn’t have to worry, so you left.”<sup>74</sup> Similarly Jack Sheehan, when asked was his mother politically involved, answered: “Oh, not very, not an activist at all. So, I’m just as pleased she wasn’t.”<sup>75</sup> Failure to recognise that the roles and responsibilities of women and men were assigned to them in specific social, cultural, economic and political contexts has continued to be a feature of the labour movement. The overt masculinity of individual unions became reflected in peak bodies, as the under-representation of women found amongst both the membership and leadership of unions was transferred into inter-union bodies.

The Public Service Act barring all married women from working in the public service, including teachers was not repealed until 1956.<sup>76</sup> The culture is still permeated with masculine images – physical toil, high-viz shirts at the front of a march, verbal aggression, bonding in the pub, and no tears. In this area of adaptation, the labour movement has wilted and just as *Solidarity Forever* is still the anthem, within it is carried the seeds of destruction:

It is we who plowed the prairies  
Built the cities where they trade  
Dug the mines and built the workshops  
Endless miles of railroad laid

The BT&LC minutes do not identify delegates by gender, the only indicator is when the minutes indicate gender specifically as in the case of the first woman delegate in 1944 which is an added difficulty to research gender difference. However sex-blindness still permeates the labour movement with the term “union boss” regularly used to refer to the current secretary of the ACTU, Sally McManus, as is the positioning of her in combative poses.<sup>77</sup> This only happens if the movement itself does not notice. The details of work at

74. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*. 1983.

75. Jack Sheehan, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983.

76. Donna Dwyer, “Justice at Last: The Temporary Teachers Club and the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act 1956,” *Labour History* 91 (2006), accessed November 11, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516157>.

77. Benjamin Law, “The Moment That Helped Inform Sally McManus’s Political Values,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 15, 2020, accessed August 20, 2020,

the BNRW, the Phoenix Foundry, or Ronaldson and Tippetts have mainly governed the accounts of working life in Ballarat, not the Base Hospital, the schools, the Orphanage or the Benevolent Asylum. The Lucas factory features because of the use by management to use paternalism, another aspect of masculinity, to separate workers.

For those few women who have participated in trade union organisations, little attention has been given to their participation. One important article, Helen Forbes-Mewett and Darryn Snell, “Women’s Participation in ‘a Boys’ Club’: A Case Study of a Regional Trades and Labour Council,”<sup>78</sup> addresses this gap: it assesses whether women’s participation has in any way changed the structure of the organisation to be more representative of the gendered workforce. The Ballarat women unionists who have read it agree it could be describing Ballarat.<sup>79</sup> Throughout the BT&LC’s history from 1884 to 2000, three women and 96 men have been president. The first woman to become president of the BT&LC is not acknowledged in the Council Chamber nor is the first woman to be elected to parliament, but there is room on the walls for a multitude of long-forgotten males. At a more profound level, cultures of exclusionary masculinity have been strongly embedded.

However, there is increasing evidence of attitudes changing among the younger and more diverse representatives. An optimistic view of these changes sees the possibilities for increasing inclusion and gender equity within trade unions, but Brigden draws attention to the fact that “the picture of women unionists in peak bodies remains opaque, fragmented and incomplete.”<sup>80</sup> The early Ballarat women activists of the 1890s-1920s are discussed, but after the Lucas dispute, women disappear until the 1970s. While there has been an attempt in this thesis to outline the role that many women have played in the labour movement, the records are sparse and like so much other writing on women in the labour movement, is only able to concentrate on their personal achievements but does not place them in a context of a local or national labour movement culture. By including them the intention is to leave clues for future historians to pursue, such as the fact Bella Guerin

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<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/the-moment-that-helped-inform-sally-mcmanus-political-values-20200417-p54kxi.html>.

78. Helen Forbes-Mewett and Darryn Snell, “Women’s Participation in ‘a Boys’ Club’: A Case Study of a Regional Trades and Labour Council,” *Labour & Industry* 17, no. 2 (2006), accessed November 11, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10301763.2006.10669346>.
79. Dulcie Corbett, interview by author.
80. Catherine Brigden, “Exploring Gender in Peak Union Bodies,” *Reworking* (2005): 67.

was teaching at the same time at Loreto College when Bernard O’Dowd aged 17 was made principal at St. Alipius (a shortlived experience), both schools in the Catholic diocese. He also studied at the School of Mines at the same time as Guerin was teaching first year classes for Melbourne University there. Did they remain connected?

### *Place and Space*

Ballarat’s recent history has been shaped by its geography, from the rich gold bearing quartz that lay below its surface, the abundant volcanic soil which allowed aspiring farmers to start on small holdings and proximity to the agricultural land to the north and west. Those elements all were there before the swarm of mainly Europeans arrived to rewrite its history.

Ellem and McGrath-Champ argue that:

Labor history can indeed gain much from a more explicit engagement with geography and we build on work that we have conducted in synthesizing labor geography and labor relations to argue further that the three disciplines – labor geography, labor/industrial relations and labor history – can work together in ways that are productive for each and all.<sup>81</sup>

In particular they focus on place, space, scale, and spatial fix.<sup>82</sup> These elements all are important in understanding BT&LC as the intersection of the local and non-local, the intersection ‘which is ‘within’ a particular locale and that which is ‘beyond’ the locale... this notion conceives place as permeable, open, interconnected and socially constructed.’<sup>83</sup> While place is commonly understood as a fixed point on a map, there are many ways to look at these other intersections, perhaps most clearly reflected in the Trades Hall building itself. Steel identifies that ‘the roles of regional peak bodies are more obviously affected by place consciousness than is the case for higher-order peak councils because of the links that regional peak union councils have to the local area.’ She also recognises regional peak bodies are part of ‘the ideas and social practices of working-class families, residential networks and local labour organizations.’<sup>84</sup>

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81. Bradon Ellem and Susan McGrath-Champ, “Labor Geography and Labor History: Insights and Outcomes from a Decade of Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue,” *Labor History* 53, no. 3 (2012): 356.

82. *Ibid.*, 356.

83. *Ibid.*, 356.

84. Steel, “Industrial Agency in Regional Trades and Labour Councils,” 78.

Place is significant. BTH is a constant theme as a meeting place, a rallying point, a responsibility and has always been an icon for working people as a place where their interests mattered. Its foundation stone was laid in 1887, and it has been clearly visible to the population ever since. It is one of the major buildings in a group of buildings (many now re-purposed) that tell the story of public life in Ballarat. As Luke Hilakari, secretary of Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) commented recently: “What I like about this hall compared to the one back in Melbourne is how proudly it stands upon this hill. It is like a challenge – we are the mighty union movement.”<sup>85</sup> So why is BTH in that place? It is a reflection of the group of men, many of whom arrived at this location with no sense of place, except as a vehicle to build wealth through the discovery of gold, but who remained to create a community underpinned by the Chartist beliefs in social and political rights that could be legislated to improve their conditions. It is also on the site of the original police camp from where the soldiers left on that fateful morning in December 1854.

Space is the second dimension. As Brigden states, when analysing the Melbourne Trades Hall by quoting Doreen Massey: “Space is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and cooperation.”<sup>86</sup> So in Ballarat the creation of a space provided status and opportunities for demonstrating the benefits of unionism in an emerging city. Significantly, this claiming of space has meant that this thesis has been able to be written now, 160 years later, as the BT&LC still wants its history known. Having their own substantial space in the centre of town has made unions special. The building is the symbol that keeps them together; at worst, a ghetto isolated on an island of moral reinforcement held together by the millstone of responsibility from the inheritance, but at best the reason they are still taken seriously. The Trades Hall building features in Beggs-Sunter’s *Camp Street, Ballarat from Eureka to Federation: A Guide to Its History and Buildings*<sup>87</sup>, and David Miller’s essay *The Ballarat Trades Hall Building*<sup>88</sup> provides detailed information on the origins and construction of the Hall. The fortunes of

85. Luke Hilakari, “Eureka Day Lunch Address,” (speech, Ballarat, December 4, 2020).

86. Catherine Brigden, “Creating Labour’s Space: The Case of the Melbourne Trades Hall,” *Labour History* 89 (2005): 126, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516080>.

87. Anne Beggs-Sunter, *Camp Street, Ballarat, From Eureka to Federation: A Guide to Its History and Buildings* (Ballarat: Ballarat Fine Art Gallery Association, 2001).

88. David Miller, “The Ballarat Trades Hall Building” (Undergraduate essay, Ballarat CAE, 1976).

individual unions may have ebbed and flowed but the constancy of the building has confirmed a continual role for unionism. Importantly, the informal contacts between unionists – the support, advice, encouragement, and the development of solidarity through proximity and shared experience<sup>89</sup> that have been fostered at Trades Hall – have stuck in the minds of those who have passed through its doors. Nor can the leisure and educative activities be forgotten – for example, the pleasant Sunday evenings in the 1920s and the later long-running community singing held there and broadcast on 3AR:

“Community singing cost 5d and the pictures cost 6d, so Mum would take us to Trades Hall to save money.”<sup>90</sup> The election night celebrations (and defeats) stay with people to this day: in 1980 the defeat of Jim Short by John Mildren in the federal general election bringing an end to 25 years of Liberal representation; in 1982 the election of Frank Sheehan to the Victorian Parliament at his fourth challenge and his two subsequent victories; and the night that Steve Bracks, a ‘Ballarat Boy’ led the ALP to victory over Jeff Kennett and the Liberals in the 1999 Victorian general election. The term “Ballarat Boy” was first coined in 1896 when a group of young men, including Andy McKissock, later to become president of BT&LC and ALP senator, travelled to South Africa to join the Matabele Relief Force and called themselves the “Ballarat Boys”.<sup>91</sup>

Ellem and McGrath-Champ also draw on Herod & Wright who describe geographical scale as the relationship between different places and the social actors within these places who operate in and across space: “it is the politics governing our perception of the distance between ourselves and the system of power that enmeshes us.”<sup>92</sup> This would be a fascinating aspect to study in more detail, not available in this thesis. Global connections by BT&LC with Ramsay McDonald, Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, the creation of the regional body- the VPT&LCA, formed to extend the sphere of influence of the regional geography, the relationship with campaigns by the ACTU conducted with BT&LC, the long-time participation in the Ballarat School of Mines, the Benevolent Society and the Ballarat East Free Kindergarten are all examples of how BT&LC has operated across geographical scale.

89. Brigden, “Creating Labour’s Space,” 137.

90. Mavis McTaggart, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983.

91. Kathleen Dermody, “McKissock, Andrew Nelson (1872–1919),” in *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate* (online edition), accessed September 8, 2020, <https://biography.senate.gov.au/andrew-nelson-mckissock/>

92. A. Herod and M. W. Wright, “Placing Scale: An Introduction,” in *Geographies of Power: Placing Scale*, ed. A. Herod and M. W. Wright (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002), 14.



The last of the four aspects is spatial fix - those places where capital embeds ('fixes') in particular ways at particular times to establish or maintain capital accumulation.<sup>93</sup> Ballarat reflects clearly how capital has dictated the geography of the city. Whether that is applied to the location of wealthy beneficiaries of the golden years around Lake Wendouree or the tightly packed weatherboard houses around the BNRW such differences are still apparent and meaningful to the residents. In 1976 city valuations showed that of houses rated over \$3000, 27 were in Wendouree Parade, nine in Sturt Street and one in Webster Street,<sup>94</sup> many in the ownership of the same families who built them from the late 1800s.

Many talk of a space-specific identity: not only were they proud to be "Ballarat" but they were also from the "East", identifying clearly that this was opposed to being from the "West", thereby reflecting a class division that had been predetermined by municipal boundaries until the 1920s. This distinction has continued beyond that time and is still evident in the polling-booth returns at general elections. One of the clearest measures of spatial fix is polling booth figures and in Ballarat the ALP vote is still concentrated where it always has been- Ballarat East, Canadian, Soldiers Hill, all inner-city locations near to the factories and in Redan one of Ballarat's first deep lead gold mining areas on the outskirts of Ballarat between the city and the town of Sebastopol, the home of many miners. A post WWII inclusion is Wendouree West created in 1949 by the State Housing Commission for a workforce to service post-war manufacturing and decentralised industry in Ballarat. Sewering and road making were slow to be completed and the suburb became stigmatised,<sup>95</sup> but the ALP vote remains the highest in the electorate. The social and geographic relationships between workplace and community, and between employer and employee, then lead to the development of particular industrial traditions. These social relationships and interactions combine to form a specific local culture or identity.<sup>96</sup>

However, the preoccupation with local identity can be used against the labour movement. Localism is also associated with a particular geographic place (a bigger dot on the map), which provides employment and social interaction. As Bate identifies: "Although the creation of Ballarat's self-image was largely the work of the middle class, who were more

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93. Ellem and McGrath-Champ, "Labor Geography and Labor History."

94. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 195. Among the owners were 7 managers, 6 doctors, 3 solicitors, 2 directors, 2 farmers, an engineer and a member of parliament.

95. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 195.

96. Steel, "Industrial Agency in Regional Trades and Labour Councils."

likely to profit and gain kudos from it, local loyalties transcended class. Rivalry with Bendigo and Geelong and the distrust of Melbourne cemented localism”<sup>97</sup> and gave power and influence to those who could move easily between the protagonists, especially at the political level. So “localism” has had both positive and negative implications for labour’s relationship with other groups in Ballarat. It can fragment the trade union structure and labour political organisation, an example of which occurred as early as 1889 during the Phoenix foundry strike. As late as 2000, local government leaders, politicians and employers used localism to mitigate working-class militancy on the Bendix asbestos issue. However, local retailers and civic identities have also provided credit, goods, cash, and other forms of assistance to workers during industrial disputes and appeals as they did for the London Dock workers in 1889 and 1890.

In the Ballarat peak body these strands were interwoven in different ways at different times in the 116 years, but what is apparent is that other localities affected by the similar factors had different outcomes. BT&LC kept a strong identity, they retreated but did not succumb to periods of powerful local conservatism. In Bendigo the Industrial Groupers completely routed the Left and regrouping was a long and painful process, in Geelong they lost their space and had to rebuild from the late 1920s, in smaller towns where industry was fragmented, they disappeared after WWII. The Gippsland Trades and Labour Council, first created when electricity generation operations commenced, suffered a serious decline when the State Electricity Commission was corporatized and then privatised in the mid-1990s, but has re-invented itself.<sup>98</sup> In Wagga Wagga, one of the largest inland cities in NSW, similar in size in the 1960s to Ballarat, Eather concludes “the TLC and the unions seemed out of place ...; they were oddities that were tolerated and largely ignored when they did not threaten the dominant social and political norms, but they were treated like a cancer when they did.”<sup>99</sup>

### **Sources**

Taksa identifies three sources for evidence of a shared consciousness. All were used to build this history, and all are based in Ballarat settings – newspapers, biographies, and

97. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 116.

98. Steel, “Understanding Regional Trades and Labour Councils.”

99. Warwick Eather, “‘Exterminate the Traitors’: The Wagga Wagga and District Trades and Labor Council, Trade Unionism and the Wagga Wagga Community 1943–60,” *Labour History* (1997): 119.

memories. The first is newspapers, which tell of meetings, who organised them, and where they were held. Ballarat has had daily newspapers since the 1850s. The first was the *Ballarat Times* in 1854, followed by the *Ballarat Star* in 1855, which merged in 1924 with its competitor, the liberal-leaning *Courier* founded in 1867. The short-term participant, the *Evening Echo*, commenced publication in 1895 as an evening daily newspaper. Founded by Alfred Powell, with its motto “Fearless, Truthful and Just,” the *Evening Echo* located close to BTH in Camp Street made a lasting contribution by recording Ballarat’s history from a labour perspective from the early 1900s to 1929. In 1911 Delegates McGrath and Long moved that the matter of establishing a daily newspaper in Ballarat be referred to the BT&LC Executive.<sup>100</sup> The AWU began to increase its investment in the company, and from early 1912, the *Echo* became a strongly labour paper – the voice of the AWU. It was liquidated in 1929. *The Courier* continues today as the only daily newspaper, although it is a pale imitation of its earlier self as an opinionated but even-handed chronicler of Ballarat events.

Secondly, several biographies and autobiographies exist of labour leaders and Ballarat identities,<sup>101</sup> as well as many entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Burchett’s account of the Great Depression is particularly evocative of what life was like for a young man growing up.

The third source and the most difficult to locate were the personal memories of workers, which provide insight into the broader experiences of working-class cultural practices. Fortunately, the transcripts of interviews, which are part of the 1983 Ballarat Library’s *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History* project<sup>102</sup> fulfil this third source comprehensively. Under the supervision of former chief librarian Peter Mansfield, 196 interviews were conducted by two interviewers with people born between 1890 and 1915 with substantial connections to Ballarat and asked a reasonably similar set of questions.

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100. BT&LC Minutes, March 19, 1911.

101. Liam Byrne, *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin: Their Early Political Careers and the Making of the Modern Labor Party* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2020); John Robertson, *J. H. Scullin: A Political Biography* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1974); Steve Bracks and Ellen Whinnett, *A Premier’s State* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2012); Judith Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2017); Victor Kennedy and Nettie Palmer, *Bernard O’Dowd* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1954); Bary Dowling, *Mudeye: An Australian Boyhood and Beyond* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1995); Wilfred Burchett *At the Barricades* (Melbourne: McMillan Australia, 1981).

102. Peter Mansfield, ed. *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History*. Ballarat: Ballarat City Library, 1983.

The tapes were then transcribed as a written record. Although there is a predominance of interviews with high-profile public figures in Ballarat, more than 50 of them are with people who had worked in mills, factories, behind shop counters, in schools, hospitals, and as SP bookies. In their own voices, they tell of a tightly knit clearly identifiable class that was united by churches and pubs. Several leading trade unionists tell of their lives.

The BT&LC Library has its own archives and holds rare books, histories and an extensive set of minutes of the BT&LC from 1883–2000; (material previously held in the Noel Butlin Archives in Canberra), supplemented by minutes of various committees, reports, correspondence and publicity information. The Melbourne University Archives have a substantial collection including The Eight Hour Day Committee and the A.C. Williams Collection.<sup>103</sup> The State Library collection includes miscellaneous correspondence, photographs and press clippings until 1956. This material has enabled the exploration of the private underpinnings of working-class life in the family, home and community as well as the competing associations that were especially relevant to the sectarian divisions that were present in working-class Ballarat. The oral tradition is an important part of working-class culture, but it is rarely recorded for historical study.

While the *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History* collection is an important new source, the interviews have had to be tested in the same way as other archival material. Nevertheless, an over-reliance on documentary materials, such as minutes, can ignore or downplay the important cultural implications of events. Fortunately, the extensive study of the BT&LC minutes by Cleary in *Ballarat Labor* was an important starting point. But there is no doubt that in Ballarat, reinforced by these interviews, many cultural forms of identity are defined.

However, E. H. Carr’s analogy of fish in the ocean was quite apt for this research study:

Facts are really not at all like fish on the fishmonger’s slab. They are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the

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103. Melbourne University Archives; Ballarat Eight-hours Day Celebration Committee – Records, 1882 - 1922, 1988.0077; correspondence from the Eight Hours Committee as it raised funds to build the Trades Hall, correspondence from the Trades Hall to 1914, financial records 1895 –1940 and miscellaneous materials 1886-1942 A.C. Williams Papers, 1880 - 1970, 1977.0085

ocean[s] he chooses to fish in and what tackle[s] he chooses to use – these two factors being, of course, determined by the kind of fish he wants to catch.<sup>104</sup>

It describes the process that was undertaken – the constant feeling that there might be more productive waters “over there”, or trawling and making a catch, only to find a bigger and better fish was lying in wait under another rock. Searching for evidence on the introduction of the Eight Hour Day for Ballarat stonemasons yielded productive waters – previous research had referred to the formation of the Early-Closing Association (ECA) in October 1856 as the first point where hours worked became a public issue, but a report published in *The Age* at the beginning of May 1856 reported that a large meeting, chaired by the Mayor of the Town of Ballarat, had formed a committee to seek an eight hour day, which was achieved on 8 May 1856, a fortnight after the Melbourne introduction. Similarly, the role of Jack Brown, fraternal delegate from the BT&LC to the MTHC for more than 20 years, only became significant when seeing him in the context of the MTHC as one of the most influential union leaders of his generation and the switch of Vic Stout, secretary of the MTHC, to defend him had major consequences in the battle between the Groupers and the Militants in the 1950s.

Also, with deference to Lytton Strachey, just as we will never know the history of the Victorian Age, the history of the labour movement in Ballarat will never be written; too much is known about it. Throughout its existence, the BT&LC has observed, been observed and participated in the whole gamut of events that have signposted industrial and political change since 1854 in that tumultuous week that culminated in the Eureka uprising.

Strachey points to the dilemma of making a coherent account of events using these sources: “For ignorance is the first requisite of the historian – ignorance, which simplifies and clarifies, which selects and omits, with a placid perfection unattainable by the highest art.”<sup>105</sup> The frustration of not having space to include much of the material collected means that this is not the full story that makes up the totality of the BT&LC: it is a simplified version focusing on the factors that have been identified as being significant. However, in assembling the facts, being aware of their subjective and objective

104. E. Carr and R. Evans, *What Is History? With a New Introduction by Richard J. Evans* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2001), 18.

105. Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians*, ed. John Sutherland (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), Preface 5.

influences, and while attempting to verify and critically assess them, I have presented in this thesis a view of the BT&LC which is diverse and adaptable over a long timeframe and still playing a role in its community which is rich and influential.

### *Literature Review*

The two volumes by Weston Bate – *Lucky City* and *Life After Gold: Twentieth Century Ballarat*<sup>106</sup> are essential resources for understanding the public life of Ballarat. These books provide a more current insight as well as containing substantial data analysis and rigorous research of Ballarat, including where people worked and their conditions. In *Lucky City*, the chapters “Seedbed of Democracy” and “Foundation-stone of Empire and Nation” look at the Eight Hour Day Movement, political life, and the role of the Trades Hall Council. However, in the second volume, *Life After Gold*, workers and their families’ lives are only addressed in the chapter on the impact of the 1929 Depression, “They Made Soup From Nettles”. The unexpected bonus was the *Ballarat and District 1920–1940, An Oral History* project referred to previously.

Author Anne Beggs-Sunter stands out. She has been a lecturer at Federation University since 1974 and has contributed to building a more diverse and detailed picture of Ballarat than any other historian:

Her academic interests are in Australian social, cultural and political history. She has a national reputation as an expert on the Eureka Stockade and its interpretation in museum contexts. She is also deeply interested in the history of Ballarat and its heritage conservation. She has written a number of books, exhibition catalogues and articles for different audiences ranging from specialised academic journals to newspapers.<sup>107</sup>

Her master’s thesis on James Oddie,<sup>108</sup> her numerous contributions on Eureka, including *Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-Constructing the Eureka Legend, Something Borrowed, Something Blue: The Tale of a Much-Travelled Piece of the Eureka Flag, Finally Comes Home*<sup>109</sup> and the anti-conscription debate in WWI, *Ballarat’s Crusading*

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106. Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat, 1851–1901* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978); Bate, *Life after Gold*.

107. “Anne Beggs-Sunter”, staff profile, Federation University Australia, accessed May 20, 2020 <https://federation.edu.au/schools/school-of-arts/staff-profiles/humanities-and-social-sciences/dr-anne-beggs-sunter>.

108. Beggs-Sunter, “James Oddie.”

109. Anne Beggs-Sunter, “Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-Constructing the Eureka Legend” (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002); Anne Beggs-Sunter, “Something Borrowed, Something Blue:

*Evening Echo Fighting Militarism in World War I*<sup>110</sup> have been the most relevant to this thesis.

The only comparable studies of peak bodies are Ray Markey's *In Case of Oppression, The Life and Times of the Labor Council of New South Wales*,<sup>111</sup> and Oliver's *Unity is Strength. A history of the Australian Labor Party and the Trades and Labor Council in Western Australia, 1899-1999*.<sup>112</sup> Jim Hagan wrote an official history of the ACTU titled *The History of the ACTU*,<sup>113</sup> but it only covers the period from 1927 to 1980. A. C. Williams, one of the longest serving secretaries of the BT&LC from 1956 to 1975, has left a large archive of Ballarat activities at the University of Melbourne- "Ballarat in the Depression," "History of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) later the AEU," "A Brief History of the Ballarat Trades Hall", and "Ballarat North Railway Workshops,"<sup>114</sup> which has been invaluable.

There is limited information on the regional component of the Victorian labour movement. The only books are Saffin's *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton 1947–1951*<sup>115</sup> and for its centenary, Geelong Trades Hall produced *100 Years of Struggle: The History of Geelong Trades Hall Council 1909–2009*<sup>116</sup> by Allan Sargent. Recently Steel has provided a comprehensive guide to the literature that is relevant to regional trades and labour councils "Understanding Regional Trades and Labour Councils: Sources for Australian Labour History," and her article "Industrial agency in regional trades and labour councils" has new insights on the Gippsland Trades and Labour Council.<sup>117</sup> Warwick Eather's Labour History article "‘Exterminate the Traitors’: the Wagga Wagga

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The Tale of a Much-Travelling Piece of the Eureka Flag, Finally Come Home," *Overland* 160 (2000); Anne Beggs-Sunter, "Birth of a Nation? Constructing and De-Constructing the Eureka Legend" (Melbourne, 2002); Anne Beggs-Sunter and Paul Williams, "Eureka's Impact on Victorian Politics: The Fight for Democratic Responsible Government in Victoria, 1854–71," in *Labour Traditions: Proceedings of the Tenth National Labour History Conference*, ed. Julie Kimber, Peter Love, and Phillip Deery (Melbourne: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2007).

110. Beggs-Sunter, "Ballarat's Crusading *Evening Echo*."

111. Markey, *In Case of Oppression*.

112. Oliver, *Unity is Strength*.

113. Jim Hagan, *The History of the ACTU* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1981).

114. A. C. Williams, Papers, "Victorian Provincial Trades and Labour Council Association Minutes and Reports 1950–1970," "Ballarat in the Depression," "History of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) later the AEU," "A Brief History of the Ballarat Trades Hall, and Ballarat North Railway Workshops," Reference 1977.0085, University of Melbourne Archives, 1980.

115. Norman W. Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton 1947–51* (Kilmore, Vic: Lowden Publishing Co., 1974).

116. Allan Sargent, *100 Years of Struggle the History of Geelong Trades Hall Council 1909–2009* (Geelong: Book Pal, 2009).

117. Steel, "Industrial Agency in Regional Trades and Labour Councils."

and District Trades and Labour Council, Trade Unionism and the Wagga Wagga Community 1943-60” provides another perspective on the period that BT&LC and the Catholic church fought out their ideological battle.<sup>118</sup>

A recurring theme in labour historiography at a micro level is localism, which Patmore identifies as limiting the influence of labour movement leaders in the interests of local elites.<sup>119</sup> Patmore at Lithgow and Eklund at Port Kembla have both described the clash between localism and class politics. As Eklund describes it:

A tenacious political opponent that was not the capitalist press, an organised employer group, and the forces of state repression, but the ideology of localism and the organisations that gave political expression to it. Localism is defined here as an ideology that elevates local interests above all others, and has the effect of creating alliances or coalitions of classes that obscure class interests and mediate class conflict.<sup>120</sup>

Ian Gray writing of the notion of power in a particular place is useful in considering Ballarat as a community.<sup>121</sup> He identifies relationships among individuals and groups where no apparent conflict is obvious, but a powerful individual or group controls the political agenda by developing and reinforcing social values without conflict or by distracting subordinates from perception of their own interests.<sup>122</sup>

Understanding the division that has always existed between and within the industrial and political wings of the labour movement – between those who want to change the economic and social system and those who want to work within it, the approaches of Robin Gollan in *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia 1850–1910* and Turner’s *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia, 1900–1921*<sup>123</sup> – have been important. *Labour History* has always stressed its connection with unionists and activists and has been an invaluable resource. While feminist critics quite properly point out labour historians’ preoccupations have marginalised female labour and women’s experiences, they have provided few

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118. Eather, “‘Exterminate the Traitors’.”

119. Greg Patmore, “Localism and Labour: Lithgow 1869–1932,” *Labour History* 78 (2000), accessed July 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516698>.

120. Erik Eklund, “‘The ‘Place’ of Politics: Class and Localist Politics at Port Kembla, 1900–30,” *Labour History* 78 (2000): 94, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516700>.

121. Ian W. Gray, *Politics in Place: Social Power Relations in an Australian Country Town* (1951: repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

122. *Ibid.*

123. Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia 1850–1910* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960); Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*.



models of looking at women's role in the labour movement in a broad setting. Too often women have been studied as individuals and not seen in relation to the movement around them. Brigden's work on MTH is a rare exception, as is Raelene Frances's *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria, 1880–1939*.<sup>124</sup> Lake's article *Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context*<sup>125</sup> was enlightening and helpful in understanding not only the role of the 1907 Harvester Judgement which enshrined the concept of women's dependency on male breadwinners but gave legitimacy in the labour movement to a form of masculinity which denied equality. The documentary film, *For Love or Money*, released in 1983, the first compilation of largely archival representations of women's work in Australia, where letters, diaries, photographs, cartoons, poems, songs, newspaper articles and work by feminist historians have been used to provide a broad study was also informative.<sup>126</sup>

Much has been written about the political wing, mainly about the struggle between organised labour and their representatives against the conservative forces, played out in parliaments. For that aspect the overarching resource is, of course, Ross McMullin's *The Light On The Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991*,<sup>127</sup> which not only paints the big picture but also faithfully extracts from a mass of information the stories of the successes and setbacks, splits and social impact. Frank Bongiorno's detailed study of the early ALP in Victoria: *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition 1875–1914* and Peter Belharz's *Transforming Labor: Labour Tradition and the Labor Decade in Australia* provided a recent perspective. Most individual unions have produced histories of their own (some more than one). John Merritt's *The Making of the AWU*<sup>128</sup> was particularly relevant to this study because it combines substantial industrial relations knowledge with a social history of the industry, which connects the broader history to the disparate and dispersed workforce. Colin Cleary's *Ballarat Labor: From Miner Hesitancy*

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124. Raelene Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria, 1880–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

125. Marilyn Lake, "Historical Reconsiderations IV: The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context," *Australian Historical Studies* 22, no. 86 (1986): 116–31.

126. *For Love or Money: A History of Women and Work in Australia*, directed by Megan McMurchy, Margot Nash, Margot Oliver, and Jeni Thornley (1983; Australia: National Archives of Australia, 2017), digitally restored on DVD.

127. Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party, 1891–1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

128. J. Merritt, *The Making of the AWU* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986).

to *Golden Age*<sup>129</sup> traverses the whole labour movement in Ballarat, although the main emphasis is on the political wing. He identifies a significant number of references to relevant BT&LC events and there is a meticulous examination of the BT&LC's records.<sup>130</sup> Shauna Hurley's unpublished thesis, "Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers; The Ideological Battle in Ballarat 1936–1951"<sup>131</sup> is also an insightful elucidation of that period in Ballarat history.

Melbourne Museum, the Victorian Collection,<sup>132</sup> the Gold Museum Sovereign Hill, the Geoffrey Blainey Archive at Federation University,<sup>133</sup> and the Ballarat Library have excellent history sections, with rare documents and books. The Newspaper archive held at The Ballarat Mechanics' Institute include *The Courier* 1861–2004, *Ballarat Star* 1857–1924, the *Argus* 1853–1949, the *Ballarat Times* 1856–1861, and the *Evening Echo* 1895–1923. In Canberra, the Noel Butlin Archives and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) files at National Archives Australia proved useful in demonstrating the connections between key members of the BT&LC.

## Thesis Outline

This thesis traverses a large period of Ballarat's industrial history from 1854 to 2000. Chapter One- A Seed outlines the intertwining themes which underpin my approach. Chapter Two- A Seedling investigates the impact of the physical confrontation with authority at the Eureka Stockade and the underlying ideology these new Ballarat residents brought to the growth of democracy in Victoria. Chapter Three- A Sapling explores the rise of new unionism, organisations of previously unorganised labour reaching out across the countryside but determined to create a fairer society than the ones they had left behind, making their mark by claiming a space in the heart of Ballarat. Chapter Four- New Branches marks the change of direction from depending on others to speak for them to hearing their own voices in parliament as a new nation emerges. Chapter Five- A Dominant Tree describes Ballarat through the dominance of Scullin and the AWU

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129. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

130. Ibid.

131. Shauna Hurley, "Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers: The Ideological Battle in Ballarat 1936–1951" (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1995).

132. The Victorian Collections website is a partnership between the Australian Museums and Galleries Association Victoria and Museums Victoria. It offers a free collection management system for collecting organisations in Victoria,

133. The Federation University Historical Collection is an extensive collection of historical material dating from the formation of the Ballarat School of Mines in 1869.

asserting strong influence state-wide leading the fight against conscription for WWI but the rise of competing forces-communism, sectarianism, and localism looming. Chapter Six- A Tree with a Disease outlines the dramatic arrival of the Great Depression and the only protection the support of family and friends, deserted in every direction except with the hope of the CPA offering nourishment. Chapter Seven- A Co-Dominant Tree tells of an all-consuming battle between the two conflicting ideologies of the period-Communism and Christianity against the background of war threatening our borders for the first time until the inevitable split leaves the tree seriously damaged. Chapter Eight- The Mature Tree is the story of a fight to regain a sense of purpose revisiting what worked in the past but also looking to a new period of assertiveness. Chapter Nine- Conclusion reviews the previous 146 years and has a sneak preview of the future.

## Chapter 2

### A Seedling 1854–1874

*(A young plant that has cotyledons and adolescent leaves)*

England gave us birth, my lads  
Australia gave us bread!  
Then cheer for young Australia  
The empire of the free  
When yet a greater Britain  
The Southern Cross shall see.

Marcus Clarke<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

When gold was discovered in 1851, everything was turned upside down: the certainties of a fertile green environment were gone, the upheaval was everywhere. Compared to other great metropolises of the world, Ballarat had a remarkable and unique beginning: a large influx of people that generated wealth beyond imagination, comparable to Silicon Valley or the oilfields of the USA and the Middle East today. Created in a groundswell of optimism and reckless enthusiasm by a youthful, literate “melting pot of nations”, the physical impact on Ballarat is still clearly visible, with Sovereign Hill towering over the east, Lake Wendouree and its ring of splendid houses, the grand buildings of Lydiard Street, the Botanical Gardens, rows of intact Victorian-style worker housing, large factory sites, and the Chinese section in the Old Cemetery.

Early settlers experienced power “not theirs by inheritance or privilege but by the conquest of their environment ... Inherited capital hardly existed.”<sup>2</sup> The “creation of a community from a population”<sup>3</sup> began almost immediately. By 1853, there were 20,000 diggers on the fields and many skilled tradesmen who had come to Ballarat for the gold stayed on to become citizens and builders of a diverse economy. Gold attracted mostly young and vigorous migrants, most of whom were in their early 20s, and whose “adaptability seemed to reflect not only their youth but also comparatively high levels of

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1. Marcus Clarke, “The Demonstration at the Theatre Royal,” *Argus*, April 22, 1876. First performed in the presence of the Governor at the Eight Hour Day Concert at the Exhibition Buildings, Melbourne.
  2. Bate, *Lucky City*, 148.
  3. Michael W. Evans, “The Whole Digging World: Re-Examining the Goldrush Experience, 1848–1900” (Master’s thesis, Monash University, Melbourne, 1994), 20.

education and skill.”<sup>4</sup> They redefined democracy when universal male suffrage was introduced, and they participated in the election of parliamentary representatives from 1857, one of the first places in the world to have that experience.

The new settlers began to grapple with an issue that had only concerned property owners – the behaviour of their elected representatives. Through the Eight Hours Day and Early-Closing campaigns from the mid-1850s the casual alliances became formalised, dinners were held, toasts were drunk, sports days were arranged, and soon they were organising the biggest gala day on the city’s calendar. They put their trust in sympathetic Liberals who delivered to them by fighting to “unlock the land” against the squatters and merchants in the property-based Victorian Legislative Council. By the 1870s, Ballarat had emerged on the world stage, the fourth-largest city in Australia with at least 50,000 inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Communities of interest centred around workplaces and their neighbourhoods were being formed by the workers and some of those “lads” (now respected citizens) began thinking about a dedicated space to publicly represent their interests. Many of them had a defining characteristic: they had come to Ballarat in the 1850s and had been shaped by the events of Eureka.

## The End of Certainty

White settlement was the end of certainty for the Aboriginal world in what has become the Ballarat we know. Ballarat is part of an area of land under the traditional ownership of the Wadawurrung/Wurundjeri people part of the Kulin nation. While so many labour men lost the confidence of their comrades and none more sadly than Spence, one must admire his view of the world in his accessible *Australia’s Awakening*. His description of the squatters’ approach to the land still resonates today:

When the white man came to Australia, he found in possession the Aboriginal squatter, whose runs were tribal and whose stock were kangaroos and opossums. The white man gave no consideration to the black man’s rights, but drove him off, took up enormous areas, and stocked them with cattle and sheep. The early

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4. Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851–1861* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963), 371–2.

5. “1871 Census,” Australian Data Archive, ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://ada.edu.au/>.

white squatter secured Crown grants, others have since purchased; and thus we had the evil of private ownership of land before we had population.<sup>6</sup>

The consequence of this dispossession was the creation of an immensely profitable economy based upon the exploitation of the land's natural resources and nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in Ballarat. When pastoralists began arriving in 1837, two years after the founding of Melbourne, a sheep station at Lake Wendouree became the first small settlement of white pastoralists in the area.<sup>7</sup> Fred Cahir, in *Black Gold*,<sup>8</sup> takes another step by discounting the traditional story of the goldfields characterised by the assumption that the “Aborigines were swept aside” and provides clear evidence that Aboriginal people were conscious actors and active participants rather than passive onlookers in another culture's game.

In *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia*,<sup>9</sup> several writers argue that while Aboriginal people suffered racial vilification and oppression on the goldfields, it did not prevent their active engagement in what was happening – “Nowhere do we encounter Indigenes as passive victims of gold, as people forced from their territory,”<sup>10</sup> – instead, citing numerous examples of “extraordinary sagacity, agile resourcefulness and the harnessing by shrewd Indigenes of European compulsions.”<sup>11</sup> The Aboriginal community did survive, persisted, and in 1979 members established the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative and in 1996 extended their services “to deliver health, social, welfare and community development programs to local Aboriginal people.”<sup>12</sup> Delegates with Indigenous heritage continue to participate at BT&LC. Not Indigenous, although designated as such by his enemies, was African American Francis Richardson, born on the Ballarat goldfields at Moonambel to parents who came from California to the Australian gold rush. Appointed an organiser for the AWU at St. Arnaud in 1903, but relocating to Ballarat in 1905, he serviced members on many large country projects including the Eildon Dam. He became mayor of Oakleigh and Ted Grayndler and the

6. Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, 8.

7. Bate, *Lucky City*.

8. Fred Cahir, *Black Gold: Aboriginal People on the Goldfields of Victoria, 1850–1870* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013).

9. Iain McCalman, Alexander Cook, and Andrew Reeves, *Gold: Forgotten Histories and Lost Objects of Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

10. *Ibid.*, 12.

11. Cahir, *Black Gold*.

12. “About Us,” Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.badac.net.au/about>.

National President of the AWU attended his funeral in 1937, alongside the President and Secretary of MTHC, Albert Monk.<sup>13</sup> While referred to as Aboriginal, he was African-American and described by his enemy Scott, the Workers' International Industrial Union (WIIU) organiser who seemed to be turning his back on the brotherhood of man when he said– “the AWU organiser, Richardson ‘a black man, black inside,’ ” in a dispute.<sup>14</sup> Richardson would have been a rarity in the circles in which he moved.

## The Public Good

Recently, historians have introduced a new dimension to the interpretation of goldfield events, highlighting that the gold rushes were global events that occurred mainly between 1848 and 1900. David Goodman challenges “the generally celebratory historiography, so fascinated by the topsy-turvy egalitarianism of gold rush society”<sup>15</sup> to probe further the connection between democracy in these settler societies and the shape of gold rushes of which they were part.<sup>16</sup> He poses the prior question, which is one that has very direct relevance to Ballarat: “How did individual wealth-seeking in the nineteenth century gold rushes become associated with democratic politics?”<sup>17</sup>

The furore around the Rudd and Gillard Government’s Minerals Resource Rent Tax in 2012, which was an attempt to tax the super profits being made in our latest and greatest minerals boom, still shows it is a fine line for governments to tread between the public good and private gain.<sup>18</sup> In Victoria in the 1850s, the “public good” argument was identified with conservatism, the beneficiaries being the landholders who were already controlling large tracts of land and who had been recognised in the new constitution, while the romantic young diggers swarming across the countryside brought another view of life with them; they were free, independent and resourceful not subject to colonial control in the way convicts or servants had been.<sup>19</sup>

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13. “Councillor F. Richardson,” *The Argus*, September 24, 1937.

14. Saffin Papers.

15. David Goodman, “Gold and the Public in the Nineteenth-Century Gold Rushes,” in *A Global History of Gold Rushes*, ed. Benjamin Mountford and Stephen Tuffnell (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018), 83.

16. *Ibid.*, 83.

17. *Ibid.*, 65.

18. Ian Murray, “The Minerals Resource Rent Tax Is Dead, Long Live Resource Rent Taxes,” *University of Western Australia Law Review* 40 (2015).

19. Goodman, “Gold and the Public in the Nineteenth-Century Gold Rushes,” 80.

Miners were constantly suspicious that “attempts to discourage gold digging had at their heart an attempt to keep the working man in subservient dependence.”<sup>20</sup> It is well documented that squatters tried to hide word of gold finds being spread.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, within a month of the official discovery of gold in Victoria in August 1851, the new Victorian Government had imposed a licence fee of 30/- a month (£18 year) for the right to dig for gold.<sup>22</sup> Aggravated by the £10 licence paid by squatters to control large tracts of Crown land in Victoria and New South Wales – for which they also received parliamentary representation and the vote<sup>23</sup> – the injustice and unfairness from the miners’ point of view was quite apparent.

The miners’ licence was administered in a punitive way and carried no democratic rights. On 1 September 1851 the early Ballarat goldfields arrivals, including James Oddie, decided among themselves the best arrangements for allocating the ground, with spaces for tents and right of ways.<sup>24</sup> After Commissioner Doveton and the police arrived on 20 September, their arrangements were ignored and they were required to pay a licence fee of 15 shillings for the rest of the month and then a fee of 30 shillings a month.

Immediately, the diggers met and passed resolutions condemning the new frontage system and the licence, with two diggers, Oddie and Herbert Swindells, chosen to put their grievances to the Commissioner who dismissed their deputation, saying he was there to enforce the laws, not make them.<sup>25</sup> As Beggs-Sunter says, “The commissioner gave instructions not to issue Swindells and Oddie with licences because they were considered troublemakers. The seeds of Eureka were already sown.”<sup>26</sup>

### **But First Eureka- The First Step to Democracy**

While there were many global similarities regarding the gold seekers, Ballarat still requires to be analysed according to the set of prevailing circumstances at the time. The

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20. Ibid., 80.

21. Serle, *The Golden Age*.

22. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2013).

23. David Goodman, “Eureka Stockade,” in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, ed. Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998).

24. Beggs-Sunter, “James Oddie.”

25. Alexander Sutherland, *Victoria and Its Metropolis: Past and Present*, vol. 1 (Melbourne: McCarron, Bird, 1888).

26. Beggs-Sunter, “James Oddie,” 23.



physical conflict that precipitated on 3 December 1854 at the Eureka Stockade<sup>27</sup> between the miners and the Police Camp – where the local police contingent was joined by soldiers from British Army garrisons stationed in Victoria – resulted in the death of at least 22 miners and four soldiers and the taking of 113 prisoners<sup>28</sup> –differentiated Ballarat from any other settlement in the Australian colonies. The Ballarat Reform League (BRL) was part of a grouping that had been heavily influenced by the Chartist movement and grew out of the diggers’ anger regarding their treatment on the goldfields by the authorities. While this discontent culminated in Ballarat, its first public manifestation was at Castlemaine’s Monster Meeting in December 1851.<sup>29</sup> It continued at Bendigo’s Red Ribbon Agitation in 1853<sup>30</sup> and spread to most other large fields in Victoria; however, it was on Saturday, 11 November 1854 that an assembly of more than 10,000 miners met at Bakery Hill to protest and it was from this meeting that the BRL was formed, with John Humffray elected as its chairman.<sup>31</sup>

Initially the Chartist movement was split into moral and physical force factions, with the advocates of moral force using the strategies of monster meetings and petitions to government in their efforts to effect political change by constitutional means. The physical force advocates urged armed revolt, which was expressed in the slogan “peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.”<sup>32</sup> The “moral suasion” view was led by Humffray. However, when Governor Hotham perfunctorily dismissed the deputation of the BRL, the “physical force” advocates, represented by Peter Lalor, stepped into a vacuum, which then climaxed in the uprising on 3 December 1854. Although the “physical force” advocates in the BRL only had ascendancy for a short while, they set Ballarat apart in a very extraordinary way. But “moral suasion” soon had the upper hand in the aftermath, and parliamentary processes changed quickly to reflect the democratisation that citizens felt they deserved.

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27. Bate, *Lucky City*. Chapter 4, “Eureka”, is a very detailed account of that period in Ballarat’s history.

28. Anne Beggs-Sunter, “Remembering Eureka,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 70 (2001), accessed April 25, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050109387705>.

29. “1851 Monster Meeting of Diggers,” Chewton Domain Society, accessed December 3, 2019, <https://www.monstermeeting.net/>.

30. “Red Ribbon Rebellion,” Monuments Australia, <http://monumentaustalia.org.au/themes/government/dissent/display/30387-red-ribbon-rebellion>.

31. Bate, *Lucky City*, 64.

32. Julie Kimber and Peter Love, eds., *The Time of Their Lives: The Eight Hour Day and Working Life*, (Melbourne: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2007), 4.

Beggs-Sunter in her thesis, *Birth of a Nation? Constructing and Deconstructing the Eureka Legend*, provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical interpretations of the role of the Eureka Rebellion in establishing a democratic tradition in Australia, and a detailed analysis of the large body of Eureka literature.<sup>33</sup>

R. D. Walshe's chapter in the 1954 *Eureka Supplement* is also explicit regarding the crucial role that the Eureka Rebellion played.<sup>34</sup> He rejects single-cause explanations and notes the blunt view of the former colonial secretary "Alphabetical" Foster<sup>35</sup> to an 1867 select committee: "The whole government were placed in an antagonistic position at the time to the rest of the community ... It was before responsible government."<sup>36</sup> What were the outcomes for those wanting to carry on the tradition in Ballarat? While trade unionism had its beginnings in Australia before 1851, the impetus for collective action was certainly enhanced by the Eureka Rebellion. and Ballarat unionists have been robust and determined to maintain their links to that tradition of the rights of ordinary people to challenge injustices by the state in a direct way. Dr H. V. Evatt declared: "Australian Democracy was born at Eureka"<sup>37</sup> and that "The Eureka Stockade was of crucial importance in the making of Australian democracy."<sup>38</sup>

## New World, New Ways

This was one of the first ideological battles fought in the colonies and while not ignoring the slaughter of miners, was one of the most overwhelming victories. Noel Ebbels notes that "the concessions to democratic government which followed Eureka produced a political framework and an atmosphere which facilitated the development of Australian

33. Beggs-Sunter, "Birth of a Nation?"

34. R. D. Walshe, "The Significance of Eureka in Australian History," *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand: Eureka Centenary Supplement* (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 1954), accessed June 20, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314614108595030>. Walshe also provides an extensive literature review in this supplement.

35. Betty Malone, "Foster, John Leslie Fitzgerald Vesey (1818–1900)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/foster-john-leslie-fitzgerald-vesey-3559>.

36. R. D. Walshe, "The Many Gains That Have Flowed from Eureka," in *The Past Is before Us: Proceedings of the Ninth National Labour History Conference*, ed. Greg Patmore, John Shields, and Nikola Balnave (Sydney: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and Business and Labour History Group, 2005), 483.

37. Michael D. Kirby, "'Eureka and Reform of the Law' – 126th Anniversary of Eureka Address" (speech, Ballarat, December 3, 1980), transcript, accessed June 20, 2020, [https://www.michaelkirby.com.au/images/stories/speeches/1980s/vol6/1980/202-Eureka Celebration Committee- Eureka and Reform of the Law.pdf](https://www.michaelkirby.com.au/images/stories/speeches/1980s/vol6/1980/202-Eureka%20Celebration%20Committee-%20Eureka%20and%20Reform%20of%20the%20Law.pdf). Quoting Evatt.

38. Ibid.

trade unionism.”<sup>39</sup> Beggs-Sunter and Williams also conclude that “the Ballarat Reform League could be counted a very successful political movement – the envy of its Chartist antecedents in Britain.”<sup>40</sup> The BRL drew on the immediate legacy of the People’s Charter in Britain and on the rhetoric of various movements for democratic reform in Europe in the late 1840s to produce its charter. Chartism, which began in the 1830s as a working-class movement in Britain, sought to extend social and political rights that could be legislated to improve their conditions, and which it is claimed reached its peak in the Victorian political agitation of 1852–57.<sup>41</sup> While Messner argues that some aspects of Chartism are not necessarily relevant when extended to the New World, “particularly a society transformed unlike any other by the discovery of gold,”<sup>42</sup> he also argues that the cultural heritage of a society of immigrants cannot be ignored – “the ideas and practices they instinctively turned to when attempting to make sense of a new world.”<sup>43</sup> His comment that it would be difficult to imagine another colony in which the Chartist inheritance was as profound as in Victoria – while also acknowledging that there were other, particularly Irish traditions, at work – is an important one.<sup>44</sup>

The Charter of the BRL began with the following statement: “That it is the inalienable right of every citizen to have a voice in making the laws he is called upon to obey; that taxation without representation is tyranny” and continued by stating the political changes the miners considered necessary: “full and fair representation, manhood suffrage, no property qualification of members for the Legislative Council, payment of members and short duration of Parliament.”<sup>45</sup> While the Charter was overshadowed by events at the Stockade, it is one of the most remarkable documents of our nation. In 2006, it was inducted into the UNESCO Memory of the World register of significant historical documents.<sup>46</sup>

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39. Ebbels and Churchward, *The Australian Labor Movement*, 4.

40. Beggs-Sunter and Williams, “Eureka’s Impact on Victorian Politics,” 21.

41. R. Noel Ebbels and Lloyd G. Churchward, *The Australian Labor Movement 1850–1907: Historical Documents* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983).

42. Andrew Messner, “Land, Leadership, Culture, and Emigration: Some Problems in Chartist Historiography,” *The Historical Journal* 42, no. 4 (1999): 1101, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3020938>.

43. *Ibid.*, 1102.

44. *Ibid.*, 1109.

45. Ballarat Reform League Charter, Victorian Heritage Register Number H2081, Public Record Office Victoria. Reproduced by The Eureka Centre, 2019, accessed May 20, 2020, [http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/places/result\\_detail/13970?print=true](http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/places/result_detail/13970?print=true).

46. *Ibid.*

The Gold Fields' Commission of Enquiry into the immediate causes of the Eureka Stockade held its first meeting on 7 December 1854. By 27 March 1855, the Commission recommended sweeping changes to goldfields administration – an end to the licence system and the introduction of the “miner’s right”, which effectively gave miners the vote. The Miner’s Right, for £1 a year, permitted miners to dig for gold anywhere in the colony, to vote in parliamentary elections, to elect delegates to local courts to settle mining disputes, and to reside on a quarter of an acre reserved for mining purposes.<sup>47</sup> Many properties in Ballarat were still held under the Miner’s Right one hundred years later. Victoria’s new constitution, proclaimed on 23 November 1855,<sup>48</sup> introduced a bicameral parliament that consisted of a Legislative Council and a Legislative Assembly; the establishment of these two chambers continued to perpetuate the colony’s great social and property divide,<sup>49</sup> but gradually incorporated the abolition of property qualifications for members of the Legislative Assembly (1857), although not in the Legislative Council until 1950,<sup>50</sup> the secret ballot (1856), manhood suffrage (1857) and triennial parliaments (1859).<sup>51</sup>

In November 1855, Lalor and Humffray became members of the unreformed Legislative Council and in October 1856 were both elected to the first Legislative Assembly under the new constitution.<sup>52</sup> What is sometimes forgotten is that this is one of the earliest examples of universal white male suffrage in the world. The great majority of European countries had adopted highly inequitable suffrage systems for lower legislative chambers for the 1815–1915 period. Universal male suffrage at age 21 would have enfranchised only about 25 per cent of the European population during the nineteenth century. France was a glaring exception in that universal male suffrage was achieved there after the 1848 Revolution.<sup>53</sup> In Great Britain, it was not achieved until 1918. In the USA, white male suffrage was achieved in 1856 but it became eroded in many states and most African Americans were excluded until their voting rights were guaranteed by the Voting Rights

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47. Goodman, “Eureka Stockade.”

48. Walshe, “The Significance of Eureka in Australian History.”

49. Goodman, “Eureka Stockade.”

50. Barbara Kerr, “The State Franchise in Victoria, 1842–2005,” Victorian Electoral Commission, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.737.2950&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

51. Goodman, “Eureka Stockade.”

52. Bate, *Lucky City*.

53. Robert J. Goldstein, *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2013).

Act of 1965;<sup>54</sup> similarly, in Australia, it was only in 1962 that the Commonwealth Electoral Act was amended to give Indigenous Australians the right to enrol and vote at federal elections, including Northern Territory elections.<sup>55</sup>

## The Legacy of Eureka for the Labour Movement

The prevailing Ballarat position by 1889 was probably quite aptly put by young Ballarat writer, Mary Gaunt, daughter of a judge, who wrote the Eureka story for *Cassell's Picturesque Australasia*.<sup>56</sup> She ended her essay by saying that by 1889, Ballarat had become prosperous and peaceful, with the events of the Stockade all but forgotten. However, Beggs-Sunter's thesis makes an important point: Eureka was kept alive in many places including with that publication starting to tell the story of the emerging nation.<sup>57</sup> Eureka did not disappear into the mists of time and is still held dear in the hearts of those who have come and gone at BTH.

William Hurdsfield,<sup>58</sup> BT&LC president, and chairman of the 1891 Intercolonial Trade Union Congress (ITUC) held in Ballarat, gave the welcoming speech to delegates and made clear the importance of Eureka:

It gives me great pleasure as president of the Trade and Labour Council of Ballarat to afford you a hearty welcome to this the seventh Trade and Labour Congress in the largest provincial city in Victoria. A city of historic fame, gained by those democratic pioneers at the Eureka Stockade who stood for their rights and privileges which men can demand in no better form than organising and combining for the advancement and redress of their various grievances.<sup>59</sup>

Throughout the labour movement, the Eureka story has been a constant reference point. Spence claimed to have heard the gunfire – although he was only eight years old – and

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54. Stanley L. Engerman and Kenneth L. Sokoloff, "The Evolution of Suffrage Institutions in the New World," *The Journal of Economic History* 65, no. 4 (2005), accessed November, 11, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050705000343>.

55. Ibid.

56. Edward E. Morris, *Cassell's Picturesque Australasia*, vol. 4 (London: Cassell & Company, Limited, 1890).

57. Beggs-Sunter, "Birth of a Nation?"

58. Hurdsfield is first mentioned in BT&LC Minutes in April 1889 at the Annual Meeting as a delegate of the Bricklayers Society and was elected with the highest number of votes to the Conciliation Committee and was also elected to the Rules Revision Committee. Later in 1889 he was elected Vice President and in 1891 at the Annual Meeting elected as President. becoming secretary on the death of Wilson in 1892 and remaining until 1910.

59. "The Intercolonial Trades and Labour Congress," *The Argus*, April 24, 1891.

saw it as formative on his thinking.<sup>60</sup> Monty Miller, 15 years old when he was wounded at Eureka, went to his grave with the scars on his legs from the soldier's sword. He married and lived in Ballarat until at least 1866. An organiser of the Carpenters Union as well as a popular lecturer and fluent writer, he often signed his articles "Eureka". In his 70s during WWI, he was arrested, tried for anti-conscription and peace activities, and ably conducted his own defence. John Curtin said he knew of no one who had done more for the labour movement.<sup>61</sup> Captain Lynch, one of Lalor's captains on that fatal day and a pallbearer at journalist Thomas Bury's funeral alongside BT&LC officials in 1900, remained close to BTH all his life.

But there is none better than, Prime Minister Ben Chifley, to sum up how he saw the legacy in its broader setting:

Of the place-names in Australian history, Eureka is eminent. It symbolises the beginning of our early struggles for political equality ... Eureka was more than an incident or passing phase. It was greater in significance than the short-lived revolt against tyrannical authority would suggest. The permanency of Eureka in its impact on our development was that it was the first real affirmation of our determination to be the master of our own political destiny.<sup>62</sup>

Years later Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, one of the staunchest of all politicians in his support for recognition of Eureka, at the unveiling of the original flag at the Ballarat Art Gallery made a telling point. He stated that perhaps the greatest importance of such an event is that people wanted to believe Eureka's message, that by standing truly by each other to defend our rights and liberties, great things can be achieved:

It is a truism, perhaps, that the importance of an historical event lies not in what happened but in what generations believe to have happened. On that score, there can be no doubt of Eureka's importance to the Labor Party and to Australia. History is a process of collective remembrance; and beyond question the events of 3 December 1854 persist in the memory and consciousness of our people.<sup>63</sup>

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60. Coral Lansbury and Bede Nairn, "Spence, William Guthrie (1846–1926)," in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 6, ed. Bede Nairn (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1976) accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/spence-william-guthrie-4628>.
61. Walshe, "The Past Is before Us;" Eric C. Fry, *Rebels and Radicals* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983).
62. Leslie Haylen, *Blood on the Wattle: A Play of the Eureka Stockade* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, Ltd, 1948). Foreword.
63. E. Gough Whitlam, "Unveiling of the Eureka Flag" (speech, Ballarat Art Gallery, December 3, 1973), transcript, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-3092>.

## The Flag – The Southern Cross

It should not be forgotten that the Southern Cross was incorporated into the official Australian flag by its designers in 1901.<sup>64</sup> The role of the flag as a symbol of the labour movement is a complicated one beyond the scope of this thesis; however, what is important is that the Southern Cross, which flew at Eureka, has always been a symbol of rebellion. Henry Lawson visited Ballarat and wrote two poems:– *Eureka!* in 1889 to mark Lalor’s death and, a year later, *The Fight of Eureka Stockade*.<sup>65</sup> It is known that at Barcaldine in Queensland in 1891 the shearers flew the Southern Cross flag as a symbol of their unity with the men of Eureka. This flag has always been part of BTH history. The original flag was gifted to the Ballarat Art Gallery by the descendants of the King family, but for a long time not displayed.<sup>66</sup> In 1936, Egon Kisch, the famous Jewish Communist, made a trip to see it but was dismayed that Captain Wise’s sword was displayed as well.<sup>67</sup> In 1938, Evelyn Shaw asked her mother to obtain a detailed drawing of the flag so that artists in Melbourne could reproduce it as a banner for the Eureka Youth League.<sup>68</sup> At the May Day march in 1938, these banners were part of the procession, probably the first time an authentic replica of the Eureka flag had been publicly seen since 1854.<sup>69</sup> Shaw worked in munitions factories and became one of the first female members of the AEU.<sup>70</sup>

BTH is the owner of what is regarded as the second oldest flag. Hand-made of cotton for the BT&LC by the caretaker, Tom Ellis, it first flew from the flagstaff on Trades Hall on 3 December 1942. *The Courier*, after getting enquiries regarding the flag, reported that it was a replica of the original Eureka Stockade flag: “It (seems) very strange that the town in which Eureka made a name for Australia and its efforts to get freedom from control for the ordinary man, did not recognise the flag that flew while the first move for freedom was fought out against big odds.”<sup>71</sup> The Trades Hall Eureka flag was then used in union marches during the 1940s, but in later years it, too, had been forgotten until in 1981 it was

64. “The Australian Flag,” *The Argus*, September 4, 1901.

65. R. D. Walshe, “Eureka 150,” *The Hummer* 4, no. 3 (2004/05).

66. Beggs-Sunter, “Something Borrowed, Something Blue.”

67. Egon Kisch, *Australian Landfall*, trans. John Fitzgerald, Irene Fisher, and Kevin Fitzgerald (Melbourne: Macmillan of Australia, 1969).

68. Beggs-Sunter, “Something Borrowed, Something Blue.”

69. *Ibid.*

70. Catherine McLay, “Cityscapes in Art,” (blog), “Historic Urban Landscape Ballarat,” accessed April 25, 2020, <http://www.hulballarat.org.au/blog/>.

71. David Miller, “Eureka – A Tale of Two Flags,” (blog), *Random Musings*, December 3, 2012, accessed March 20, 2020, <http://themusingsofclovis.blogspot.com/2012/12/eureka-tale-of-two-flags.html>.

brought to the office of Ballarat MHR, John Mildren, and David Miller took on custodianship until he returned it to its original home.<sup>72</sup> In 1994, it travelled throughout Australia as part of a touring Eureka collection. At that time, the secretary of the BT&LC, Graeme Shearer, said: “The Eureka flag then, as it does now, symbolises the struggle for basic rights and democracy.”<sup>73</sup> This flag is now mounted in the main hall of the BTH building. In 2017, VTHC paid \$32,000 for a fragment of the original flag,<sup>74</sup> another indication of the value still placed on this symbol by the labour movement. Another painting by Peter Charles which symbolises the relationship between Indigenous people and later settlers and combines the Aboriginal and Eureka flags also hangs at BTH.<sup>75</sup>

### Tension Between Delegate or Representative

Lalor was the first of many selected by their peers who did not act in the expected way, leading to despair and exasperation from their erstwhile supporters. The role of the popularly elected representative was important to the voters of Ballarat well before formal parties were grappling with the same issue at the end of the century. Humffray’s election platform included all the points of the BRL Charter, while Lalor shocked Ballarat by voting against manhood suffrage and supporting a conservative land bill. He also favoured a nominated rather than an elected upper house.<sup>76</sup> On 24 July 1857, an estimated 300 attended a protest meeting,<sup>77</sup> which grappled with the role of a popularly elected representative, probably for the first time in Australia. The resolution, overwhelmingly carried, stated:

That this meeting having marked with regret the public acts of Mr Lalor, have been forced to the conclusion that he has shamelessly voted with the Government on every occasion, without in any way regarding the known wishes of his constituents, and, under these circumstances, do consider him no longer worthy to hold the trust he has so much abused.<sup>78</sup>

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72. Ibid.

73. “Ballarat Trades Hall Eureka Flag, 1942,” Victorian Collections, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/5c91976f21ea6711a87f1975>.

74. Caleb Cluff, “Eureka Flag Remnant Will Remain on Public View at Trades Hall,” *The Courier*, December 13, 2017, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://www.thecourier.com.au/story/5118181/vic-trades-hall-buys-eureka-flag-remnant-at-auction-for-32000/>.

75. In 2005 the BTH also became the proud owner of a Peter Charles painting, Charles spent 18 years at St. Joseph’s Boys Home in Ballarat and is now a well-regarded Indigenous artist.

76. Bate, *Lucky City*.

77. *Ballarat Star*, July 25, 1857.

78. *Ballarat Times*, July 20, 1857.



Further, a letter was sent to Lalor calling on him to resign and give back into the hands of his constituents the trust that had been committed to his charge because it was in opposition to what they conceived to be “our dearest and most sacred rights.”<sup>79</sup> The tension between representative or delegate was aired, but the meeting had no doubt they expected Lalor to act as their delegate. When a member of Lalor’s committee indicated he would resign from the committee if he disagreed with Lalor’s position rather than expect Lalor to bow to his wishes, he was met with loud disapproval. As the room was cleared, “one person remarking in our hearing as we passed: ‘Oh, that was nothing of a meeting, there was no sport’.”<sup>80</sup> It was indeed no sport as the same issue has continued to polarise opinion many times in the continuing history of the BT&LC. Lalor escaped the wrath of the Ballarat electors by contesting and winning South Grant (an electorate surrounding Geelong) in 1859 where he often topped the poll until he lost in 1871. He was re-elected from 1874 to 1877, then holding the seat of Grant from 1877 until his death in 1889.<sup>81</sup>

Lalor’s stance in parliament was an early indication of the dilemma faced by elected representatives. He was an early advocate of the protection of local industry and he also supported assisted immigration. Although a devout Catholic, he opposed state aid to religion and supported a national education system if provision was made for religious teaching. He supported reform of the Legislative Council but opposed payment to members. In his own defence, during a speech in the Legislative Council in 1856, he said:

I would ask these gentlemen what they mean by the term “democracy”. Do they mean Chartism or Communism or Republicanism? If so, I never was, I am not now, nor do I ever intend to be a democrat. But if a democrat means opposition to a tyrannical press, a tyrannical people, or a tyrannical government, then I have been, I am still, and will ever remain a democrat.<sup>82</sup>

In the 1870s, Lalor supported Graham Berry, later the 11th premier of Victoria, one of the most radical and colourful figures of colonial Victoria politics, who made the most determined effort to break the power of the Victorian Legislative Council as the stronghold of the land-owning class.<sup>83</sup> But in 1873 Lalor was director of the Lothair Mining Company at Clunes where the attempt to use Chinese workers to enforce a wage

79. *Ballarat Star*, July 25, 1857.

80. *Ibid.*

81. Ian Turner, “Lalor, Peter (1827–1889),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 5, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lalor-peter-3980>.

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Ibid.*

cut led to a serious altercation: the carriages carrying the Chinese being forced back to Ballarat. The staunch defence by the miners and their wives of the existing conditions is regarded as having been a racial confrontation. While racism had certainly been a contributing factor, the cause was the directors' attempts to introduce two extra shifts on Sunday night and Saturday afternoon and for no extra pay, which was a serious attack on the Eight Hour movement.<sup>84</sup> The Clunes action is generally regarded as providing a stimulus for the formation in 1874 of the Amalgamated Miners' Association (AMA) with a constitution to cover all miners in Australia and New Zealand.

These men recognized the strengthening of their campaign by the inclusion of women, an aspect often not understood in the next century.

The excitement and cheering was great, men, women and children joining in the resistance. Nearby was a heap of road metal, and arming herself with a few stones, a sturdy North of Ireland woman, without shoes or stockings, mounted the barricade as the coaches drew up. As she did so she called out to the other women, saying: 'Come on, you cousin Jinnies; bring me the stones and I will fire them.' The sergeant in charge of the police presented his carbine at the woman and ordered her to desist. Her answer was to bare her breast and say to him: 'Shoot away, and be damned to ye; better be shot than starved to death.' With the words she threw a stone, cutting the cheek of the officer.<sup>85</sup>

Oddie often called the 'Father of Ballarat' for his charitable and cultural contributions presented a statue of Lalor to the Ballarat municipality and it was erected in Sturt Street in 1893. It was unveiled by Lalor's original "mate" on the diggings,<sup>86</sup> Duncan Gillies who was now premier of Victoria, which suggested that Lalor still had influential friends who held him in high regard. Although in the month of the Easter Uprising in Ireland in 1916, the attempt to blow up the statue<sup>87</sup> had overtones of sectarianism, occurring as it did during the conscription debate.

The other hero of the BRL, Humffray, also had a checkered career as a politician: "At first he lent his magnificent voice and powerful rhetoric to the Chartist cause but in later controversies remained silent or evasive."<sup>88</sup> On the land issue he upset his constituents by

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84. "Clunes Strike," *The Courier* 22 September 1873.

85. Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, 31.

86. Anne Beggs-Sunter, "The Apotheosis of Peter Lalor: Myth, Meaning and Memory in History," *Australian Journal of Irish Studies* 4 (October 2004): 94–104.

87. "Mysterious Explosion," *The Argus*, June 1, 1916.

88. Diane Langmore, "Humffray, John Basson (1824–1891)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 1972), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/humffray-john-basson-3818>.

voting in 1862 for a 10-year extension of squatting leases. They demanded an explanation at a public meeting, and Humffray's plea that "he only voted with the Ministers to save another Ministerial crisis"<sup>89</sup> did not go down well. Although a prominent member of the Welsh community at Sebastopol, he was defeated in 1864 and remained outside parliament until 1868 when he was re-elected for Ballarat East. Defeated again in 1871 and 1874, he then retired from politics.<sup>90</sup>

### **A Population Becomes a Community**

Although the immediacy of Eureka began to fade, these early frictions demonstrated the citizens who intended to make a new life in Ballarat would have a say in how their society would be organised. They set about shaping it to meet their needs and interests, which Michael Evans aptly described as "a cultural process" through which "a population represented itself as a community."<sup>91</sup>

Victorians of the 1850s believed that the colony had a future of unbounded wealth and greatness in which all should find their share as well as their responsibilities. Material conditions for the vast majority were already in advance of the countries they had left behind. Cultural life was developing. Theatre, opera, musical recitals, and light entertainment were amply provided in Ballarat. While Lola Montez provided notoriety, even the great English actor Gustavus Brooke, at the peak of his long international career, played in Shakespeare at the Victoria Theatre in 1856.<sup>92</sup> The Ballarat Municipal Council was established in 1856, with Ballarat East Town Council following in 1857.<sup>93</sup> By early 1859, following a public meeting, the Ballarat Mechanics' Institute was established to give skilled working men education for life and work with much-needed access to books, newspapers, periodicals, lectures, and scientific demonstrations and a place for social, cultural, and recreational gatherings.<sup>94</sup> Through the efforts of Lalor, a piece of land in Sturt Street was set aside. Much argument ensued between the East and West councils over the future location of a permanent Mechanics' Institute, but finally in 1860 the

89. *The Age*, March 28, 1862.

90. Langmore, "Humffray."

91. Evans, "The Whole Digging World."

92. Bate, *Lucky City*.

93. *Ibid.*

94. Stefan Petrow, "Mechanics' Institutes," *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, accessed May 20, 2020.

[https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion\\_to\\_tasmanian\\_history/M/Mechanics%20Institutes.htm](https://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/M/Mechanics%20Institutes.htm).

foundation stone was laid with full Masonic honours in front of a crowd, estimated to have been 10,000 by the *Ballarat Star*.<sup>95</sup> By 1867, the Ballarat East Public Library also had its own fine building, containing 7000 volumes.<sup>96</sup> By 1871, Ballarat was being described as “‘a perfect Arcadia’: the public gardens and tree-lined streets reminded others of German watering places.”<sup>97</sup> The actors Charles and Ellen Kean found their Ballarat audiences more intelligent than those in Melbourne or Sydney and equal to London’s.<sup>98</sup>

Bate points to important differences between the first 20 years of the growth of the cities of Ballarat and Bendigo that gave Ballarat such a solid start. While the amount of gold retrieved was similar – approximately four million ounces from 1851 to 1861 – Bendigo’s surface alluvial phase from 1852 to 1854 hardly contributed to local facilities, while Ballarat’s early production was highest from 1854 to 1858, when town life was developing rapidly and those who came to dig were ready to settle. By then many Ballarat diggers had become miners, equipped with the knowledge and skills to move to the next phase of mining needed to sink through the “blanket of basalt”, which required capital.<sup>99</sup> To meet these changed conditions, cooperatives of working miners were formed.<sup>100</sup> These cooperatives were distinctive to Ballarat and were in part an attempt to raise the necessary finance and a labour force to prevent the entrance of the much-dreaded “capitalist” with the consequent master/wage-earner relationship, meaning that small operators retained a share in large-scale mining operations.<sup>101</sup> Personal mine ownership was almost unknown, whereas in Bendigo it was dominant.<sup>102</sup> Comfortable houses were built, and the need for food, clothes and domestic goods meant trades flourished, which enabled miners to return to their old trades, adding to the sense of permanency. In the 1860s, the deep leads close

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95. Jill Blee and Phil Roberts, *Under Minerva’s Gaze: 150 Years at the Ballarat Mechanics’ Institute* (Ballarat: Ballarat Mechanics Institute, 2010).

96. William B. Withers, *History of Ballarat and Some Ballarat Reminiscences*, ed. Ballarat Heritage Services (Ballarat: Ballarat Heritage Services, 1999).

97. “1871 Census.”

98. Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883–1889* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1963).

99. Renate Morris, “From Goldfields to Community – Ballarat, 1856–66” (Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 1960).

100. Withers, *History of Ballarat and Some Ballarat Reminiscences*.

101. R. Morris, “From Goldfields to Community.”

102. Ibid.

to the town led to Ballarat out-producing Bendigo from 1861 to 1870 by five million ounces to two million ounces.<sup>103</sup>

With the opening of the Melbourne–Geelong–Ballarat railway line in 1862 Melbourne businessmen looked to Ballarat for new opportunities for investment. Advertisements that had property for sale to “farmers, capitalists and others” were typical.<sup>104</sup> By 1865, the last of the cooperatives were converted to companies with capital and scrip shares, and sharebrokers sprang up overnight, with share-dealing carried out at the corner of Sturt and Lydiard streets.<sup>105</sup> After speculation caused the inevitable “bubble”, the Ballarat Stock Exchange was established; rules were introduced similar to the Melbourne Stock Exchange but the underlying resistance to outside capital was a distinctive feature of Ballarat.<sup>106</sup> Ballarat had another unique advantage – the “ring of rich volcanic soils ... that virtually encircled the city.”<sup>107</sup> By 1859, 50,000 acres were under production within the Ballarat region, with the average yield being 25 to 30 per cent higher than the Victorian average from 1856 to 1859, and these new farmers were democrats and anti-squatter during the land debates of the 1860s.<sup>108</sup>

While Ballarat has been analysed in connection to its ethnic components, which had clearly been woven together in new and different ways,<sup>109</sup> it has not been examined in relation to its working-class culture and the leadership role played by it in shaping that history at a national level. Yet from an early stage, the construction of a working-class identity had begun. Geographic areas, political organisations, working men’s clubs, sporting clubs, churches, masonic lodges, and even illegal betting shops and racecourses

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103. Bate, *Lucky City*.

104. *Ballarat Star*, January 29, 1864.

105. R. Morris, “From Goldfields to Community.”

106. *Ibid.*

107. Bate, *Lucky City*, 118.

108. *Ibid.*

109. Janice Croggon, “Strangers in a Strange Land: Converging and Accommodating Celtic Identities in Ballarat 1851–1901” (PhD thesis, University of Ballarat, 2002); Helen Ware, “The Chinese at Ballarat 1880–1900” (Arts Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987); Russell Jack, *Showing Face: Chinese Identity in Regional Victoria from 1850s to Federation* (Bendigo: Golden Dragon Museum, 2001); Bill Jones, “Welsh Identities in Colonial Ballarat,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 25, no. 68 (2001), accessed August 12, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050109387660>; Robert L. Tyler, *The Welsh in an Australian Gold Town: Ballarat, Victoria, 1850–1900* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010).

were “the theatres of working-class consciousness.”<sup>110</sup> Bert Williams, a long-term worker reminisced:

You very seldom saw a miner past Grenville Street. The old Buckshead hotel on the corner ... That’s where most of the businessmen used to drink, all whiskey drinkers, you know. You would never see them drinking beer. You would never see a miner go past that hotel, all down the east side.<sup>111</sup>

## The Eight Hour Day

Just as democracy was a rallying cry for the diggers, the eight hour day became the next battle of ideas the ‘mechanics, artisans, labourers and others’ chose.<sup>112</sup> In 1856 the Eight Hour Day was achieved for stonemasons in Ballarat just 17 days after the stonemasons had downed tools at the University of Melbourne. At this time when wages were considerably higher than in Britain, the working men’s main concern was hours of work.<sup>113</sup> It would be impossible to account for the success of the shorter-hours movement without considering the atmosphere of political and social radicalism, and the feeling of optimism that permeated this period. For those in the labour movement, it meant better working conditions than the ones they left behind in the Old World. In Britain, the eight hour day was still a rarity in 1890.<sup>114</sup>

Chaired by Oddie, first chairman of the Ballarat Municipal Council, a meeting was held in the Temperance Hall, Bakery Hill, on 29 April 1856, well filled with a “respectable and attentive audience of mechanics, artisans, labourers and others.”<sup>115</sup> When he opened the meeting, Oddie was greeted with great applause and said he was fully convinced that if they conducted the movement in a peaceable and orderly manner that they would have equal success as their friends in the city: “The eight hours question was a very important one. Were it to be generally adopted one-sixth part of labour would be, in a manner of

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110. Frank Bongiorno, “Labour & Politics in Victoria 1885–1914” (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1994).

111. Bert Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 43.

112. “The Eight Hours Question at Ballarat,” *The Argus*, May 2, 1856.

113. Helen Hughes, “The Eight Hour Day and the Development of the Labour Movement in Victoria in the Eighteen-Fifties,” *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand* 9, no. 136 (1961), accessed August 12, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10314616108595191>.

114. *Ibid.*

115. “The Eight Hours Question at Ballarat.”

speaking lost – which would have the effect of raising the wages, the demand for labour would be so very much increased. (Applause).”<sup>116</sup>

Several resolutions had been prepared. The first one, moved by Dr Allison, was carried unanimously: “That as the eight hours system of working as a day’s labour is now adopted in Melbourne, it is the opinion of this meeting that the same be adopted by the mechanics, artisans, and labourers of Ballarat.”<sup>117</sup> He said he was much gratified to meet the labouring classes of Ballarat there that evening upon such a very great and important question. He apologised for his Scotch accent and thought he was amongst the first of the medical profession to take up the matter, but he was not ashamed to be called the “poor man’s friend” and resumed his seat amidst thunderous applause.<sup>118</sup> Samuel Ware, in seconding the resolution, reiterated the need for leisure to cultivate mental powers: “As soon as he sat down to read, he could not keep himself awake as his physical powers had been overtaxed.”<sup>119</sup>

The second resolution: “That as men and employers, this meeting pledges on and after the eighth day of May next to work eight hours only” put the Ballarat meeting firmly in line with the Melbourne meeting, which had adopted the same resolution on 21 April 1856. John Cathie, speaking on this resolution, said: “Man was not meant to be a mere beast of burden. If the owners of horses and bullocks were to work their animals seven days instead of six, they would soon find that instead of getting more labour out of them they would get less (cheers).”<sup>120</sup> A committee was elected and after a few remarks from the chairman in favour of the working men devoting their leisure hours to self-culture, the assembly dispersed.<sup>121</sup> After negotiations, the stonemasons achieved their Eight Hour Day on 8 May 1856.<sup>122</sup> While the immediate focus of workers in Ballarat was the demand for shorter hours, there was also broad social support.<sup>123</sup> The three main arguments put forward were that Australia’s harsh climate demanded reduced hours; that labourers needed time to develop their “social and moral condition” through education; and that workers would be better fathers, husbands and citizens if they were allowed adequate

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116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid.

120. Ibid.

121. Ibid.

122. A. C. Williams, “A Brief History of the Ballarat Trades Hall,” *Recorder* 70 (1964).

123. Hughes, “The Eight Hour Day.”

leisure time. The clergy was anxious for them to attend religious services and “radicals demanded time for education and leisure for men who were shortly to be enfranchised and on whom the future of good government and the welfare of the colony depended.”<sup>124</sup>

Most of the leaders of the movement in Victoria had been trade unionists and Chartists and brought considerable industrial and political experience.<sup>125</sup> James Galloway, an acclaimed instigator of the Eight Hour Day Movement, wrote:

We have come 16,000 miles to better our condition, and not to act the mere part of machinery; and it is neither right nor just that we should cross the trackless regions of immensity between us and our fatherland, to be rewarded with excessive toil, a bare existence, and premature grave.<sup>126</sup>

Although, sadly, he would have a premature grave at the age of 32, Galloway is still a significant figure in Ballarat’s labour history and is honoured by the Galloway monument tendered in trust by the working men of Ballarat to the Ballarat City Council on 21 April 1880.<sup>127</sup> Another example of where space as defined by Ellem and McGrath-Champ matters, this monument has continued to feature many times as the location of meetings on issues of importance to the local labour movement. By 2001, a restoration program was instigated by the BT&LC, which included restoring the water feature.<sup>128</sup> The bluestone plinth, its most important feature, which provides speakers with a platform from which to deliver their orations, has been in continuous use throughout its history. Shearer, a later secretary, significantly also illustrates well the BT&LC’s continuing commitment to recognising and maintaining the labour movement’s ownership of important parts of Ballarat’s history:

We organised its refurbishment in conjunction with the City of Ballarat in whose care it has been. I did this after reading a letter to the editor in *The Courier* one Saturday. A woman wrote a nice letter expressing concern at the condition of the sad looking monument at the bottom of Sturt Street. I thought “That’s our Eight Hour monument she was innocently referring to. We did a newsletter and called for a gold coin donation from unionists. This was done more to educate workers re the monument as the City of Ballarat undertook the works.”<sup>129</sup>

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124. Ibid.

125. Ibid.

126. *The Age*, March 31, 1858.

127. “Eight Hours Anniversary,” *Ballarat Star*, April 22, 1880.

128. *The Courier*, July 10, 2001.

129. Graeme Shearer, interview by the author.



The Ballarat Eight Hour committee – formed on 29 April 1856 and consisting of Oddie, Edward Allison, William Evans, Thomas Greville, Ware, Lyons, John Cathie, and Batten<sup>130</sup> – gives an indication of who would form coalitions within the labour movement. While the Victorian eight hour victory was not the first in Australia, it is considered to be the earliest to establish an officially sanctioned standard for a whole industry across a specific region.<sup>131</sup> While some public figures in Ballarat have been thoroughly documented, the early labour movement leaders have not been, apart from Oddie. As a boy, he had witnessed agitation for parliamentary reform and Chartist demonstrations; as an adult, he was a moulder who was involved in strikes for better conditions, and on his arrival in Ballarat in 1854, demonstrated enterprise, initiative, definite principles, and intense conviction.<sup>132</sup> Although Oddie did not pursue public office after his term as the first chairman of the new Ballarat municipality from 1856 to 1858,<sup>133</sup> he did continue to play an active role in Ballarat by working on public projects. Cathie became a member of parliament in 1859 and Allison, the gaol doctor, remained a strong ally until his death in 1861.<sup>134</sup> William Evans had the closest and most continuous relationship with the labour movement: he was employed at the Union Foundry and by 1861 he had become the inaugural president of the Ballarat Branch of the ASE serving as president, secretary, trustee, and Branch Delegate.<sup>135</sup> In 1887, at the opening of the Trades Hall building, he was treasurer of the BT&LC. In August 1904, he was presented with an illuminated testimonial by the ASE, which is now held at the University of Melbourne Archives.<sup>136</sup> Beggs-Sunter summed up this generation:

What emerges from a study of James Oddie and the gold generation of Ballarat is something unique. The combination of British radical ideas and artisan experiences, with the great social experiment of goldfields life, produced a group of men and women who created a community based on a spirit of civic duty, benevolence and philanthropy. That generation, which came to Ballarat in the

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130. “The Eight Hours Question at Ballarat.”

131. Hughes, “The Eight Hour Day.”

132. Beggs-Sunter, “James Oddie.”

133. G. A. Oddie, “Oddie, James (1824–1911),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 5, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1974), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/oddie-james-4318>.

134. Nicola Cousen, “Dr James Stewart: Irish Doctor and Philanthropist on the Ballarat Goldfields” (PhD thesis, Federation University Australia, 2017).

135. A. C. Williams, “History of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) later the AEU.”

136. Congratulatory testimonial for William Evans, Amalgamated Society of Engineers Ballarat Branch, Reference 1977.0084, University of Melbourne Archives, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://gallery.its.unimelb.edu.au/imu/imu.php?request=search>.

1850s as hopeful young men and women, stayed into the 1880s and 1890s to create the city and institutions we know and cherish today.<sup>137</sup>

The celebration of the Eight Hour Day was the most obvious expression of the labour movement's community of interest. From 1858, the eight hours festival, with its procession, was a focal point of working-class life in Ballarat. Achieving the Eight Hour Day meant workers had a powerful sense of the dignity of their labour. Their banners reflected that, and this was affirmed by the participation of local dignitaries in the Eight Hour Day procession. It became an occasion for celebration by those who had won the right and an inspiration for those yet to achieve it, and later a focus for raising money for the new Trades Hall building. This early example of labour movement solidarity set an example that has been maintained by BT&LC, who have continuously held a Labour Day Dinner every year since 1858 (the 164<sup>th</sup> Dinner recently celebrated in 2022). The Eight Hour Day Anniversary Committee (EHDAC) started preparations months in advance. They appointed procession marshals, conducted the ballot to decide each union's place in the march, decided on the Art Union raffle prizes (one year, first prize was a piano, the second prize a buggy), borrowed the marbles for the raffle from the Mechanics' Institute, resolved the handicaps of the athletes entered in the footraces, decided on the menus for the banquets, negotiated cheap railway excursion fares, and organised the performers for the concerts and the location of the Sports Day, which fluctuated between the City Oval and the Eastern Oval and presumably including the Victorian Goat Racing Championship in 1922.<sup>138</sup>

The Eight Hour Day event gives some indication of the network of the connections that had been established within the working-class milieu, which were otherwise opaque. The first celebration held in Ballarat was on 21 April 1858 with a grand procession and banquet, with the Operative Masons holding pride of place. At the dinner, held at the Clarendon Hotel, the chair was taken by Dr James Stewart, chairman of the Municipal Council, who proposed the toast to the Eight Hour Day Movement. Allison, a close friend of Stewart and prominent at the first Eight Hour Day meeting in 1856, was there and proposed the toast to the apprentice masons. Toasts to the architects, builders and contractors, carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, the miners, and, finally, the press

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137. Beggs-Sunter, "James Oddie," 5.

138. Ballarat Eight Hour Day Celebration Committee, Records from 1882 to 1922, University of Melbourne Archives.

concluded the list, after which the complimentary “health drinking followed and the evening terminated amid the utmost harmony.”<sup>139</sup>

In 1862, the Eight Hour Day Anniversary Committee (EHDAC) and the Early Closing Association (ECA) expanded their activities to include a sports day, where several important events occurred, not least of which was an Indigenous man, Charlie, winning the one-mile race that had a prize of £2: “The lubras being with Charlie were very noisy in their advocacy of their lord and master’s claim to the prize, and we suppose went off triumphing in his success.”<sup>140</sup> The march was marshalled by Mr Sprackland, one of the oldest advocates of the Eight Hour Day Movement in the state.<sup>141</sup> First came the Ballarat Brass Band, followed by the Association’s flag, inscribed with the words “ Eight Hours Labour, Eight Hours Recreation, and Eight Hours Rest,” the United Operative Masons, with their handsome banner bearing the date of their establishment followed by the Carpenters and Joiners with their Eight Hour banner. The procession finished with the flag of the ECA, which was inscribed with the Latin phrase *Respice Finem* (Consider the end: Live so that your life will be approved after your death). The Sports Day included dancing, Australian Rules football demonstrations (not yet being played as a competition), quoits, foot running, pole vaulting, hurdles, and putting the heavy stone. Then at 7 pm a torchlight procession wended its way to the Earl of Zetland Hotel, where a significant dinner took place to signal the intention of erecting a Trades Hall building. The chairman, and secretary of the EHDAC, Mr Campbell, addressed 160 people stating that they would do all they could to support 7 pm closing:

This was more than a placard announcement, they would not shop with persons who kept open after seven o’clock. Furthermore, that evening the chairman said they should form a permanent committee, which would have many things to do; among others, to apply to the Government for a piece of ground for a Trades Hall. Mr Harrison, a member of the CJA, moved “that a committee be formed for the purpose”. This was seconded and agreed to, but no steps were taken towards the selection of the committee.<sup>142</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly after such a hectic day and evening, no record remains of whether the committee was formed. They ultimately triumphed on both aims, although it

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139. *Ballarat Star*, April 22, 1858.

140. *Ballarat Star*, April 22, 1862, special supplement.

141. *Ibid.*

142. *Ibid.*

still involved a six-day week. The Eight Hour Day remained their most persistent concern and the field in which they were most convinced that they had led the world.<sup>143</sup> They did.

In Ballarat after the stonemasons achieved their Eight Hour Day, the need to regulate shopping hours became the main concern. On 2 October 1856, the ECA was formed to represent the broader group of workers (with a subscription and a committee to be selected from among its members) to deal with businesses keeping their shops open until 8 pm.<sup>144</sup> Resolutions were passed “with much feeling and spirit stating that this meeting considers ten hours a day sufficient for the transaction of all legitimate business.”<sup>145</sup> The committee called a meeting of employers – again chaired by Oddie – and a form of agreement pledging employers to close their shops at 7 pm throughout the year (except Saturdays) received a number of signatures on the night. It was followed up by deputations who reported to a public meeting in November 1856 that all principal storekeepers in the grocery and drapery trades had signed except for one firm, Hemingway & Jones, to which a further deputation of Humffray and Oddie was sent without success.<sup>146</sup> Allison was there again to speak to the resolution moved by Mr Tilt, a journalist, and followed up by Humffray that the matter be taken to the public by means of circulars and public meetings. The most revealing comment by Tilt was that they were founding a society in this colony, and in so doing whilst they might retain many of the institutions and observance of the old country, they were not bound to adopt its abuses.”<sup>147</sup>

By the end of the 1850s, the eight hour day was mainly achieved by the skilled building trades and occupations. The ECA remained a strong vocal group, led by employees of bakers, drapers, and boot and shoemakers as well as lawyers’ clerks.<sup>148</sup> When some drapers continued to open late and not let employees join the ECA, a pamphlet was circulated asking ladies to boycott shops that were open after 7 pm. The Carpenter and Joiners Association (CJA) asked its members not to trade with those drapers “as our

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143. Eric C. Fry, “The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia” (PhD thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 1956).

144. *Ballarat Star*, November 15, 1856.

145. *Ballarat Star*, October 4, 1856.

146. *Ballarat Star*, November 15, 1856.

147. *Ibid.*

148. *The Argus*, September 8, 1860; *The Argus*, July 3, 1861.

society is willing to aid in the amelioration of our brothers in toil”<sup>149</sup> – another example of a population starting to represent itself as a community and it certainly being reinforced by 1859. The theme was reiterated many times, including at the General Short Hours Association soiree in 1863. The *Ballarat Star* reported President Robert Lewis’s comments:

The ladies and gentlemen of Ballarat would make this movement a success. They had converted a former wilderness into a beautiful city and therefore he was sure it would be a success but made mention of the wife of a respectable man who had ordered a bonnet on Saturday and insisted on having it that night, keeping the milliner up till 12 o’clock. That woman had two children. Now he hoped they would all shop early on Saturdays, and go home at a reasonable hour and prepare for the following Sabbath (applause).<sup>150</sup>

Many forms of pressure were used by the committee, including employing a bellman to signal 7 pm in the main thoroughfares outside non-compliant shops.<sup>151</sup> On 23 November 1864, with the mayor accompanying deputations to visit the tradesmen, the report to the Friday Half-Holiday Association stated only one refusal. Posters were also provided for shop windows for those supporting the campaign.<sup>152</sup>

## The Early Unions

Bongiorno’s view that the language of trade unionism in Victoria in this era was still being influenced by the “moral force of Chartism – self-improvement, mutual aid and respectability”<sup>153</sup> – and that it was perhaps even more entrenched in the mining districts than in the metropolis can certainly be substantiated in Ballarat. New World workers also drew heavily on the Old World for their forms of organisation and their objectives that came with dreams and aspirations to rise above the excesses of exploitation they had experienced in Europe. Robin Gollan notes that when trade unionists agreed on the single aim of hours of work, it was an important step on the road to a trade union political party.<sup>154</sup> While the craft unions were quick to establish themselves in Ballarat by

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149. Ibid.

150. *Ballarat Star*, November 21, 1863.

151. *Ballarat Star*, November 23, 1864.

152. Ibid.

153. Frank Bongiorno, *The People’s Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition 1875–1914* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 13.

154. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*.

identifying hours of work as an issue common to all unionists, they gave strength to the collective interests of all workers rather than to separatist and sectional interests.<sup>155</sup>

Changes in the mining industry and growth in other fields of employment resulted in the rapid development of the trade union movement. Trade unions had been legalised in England in 1824.<sup>156</sup> Trade unions, as defined in Sydney and Beatrice Webb's *The History of Trade Unionism* (1894), are continuous associations of wage earners concerned to protect and enhance their conditions of employment.<sup>157</sup> But, of course, they are much more than that as described in the Webbs' own preface, which portrayed the way in which the value and the esteem the members have for their own union was beyond monetary advantage:

Surviving leaders of a bygone trade unionism have ransacked their drawers to find for our use the rules and minutes of their long-forgotten societies... In many a working man's home the descendants of the old skilled handicraftsmen have unearthed "grandfather's indentures," or "father's old card," or a tattered set of rules, to help forward the investigation of a stranger whom they dimly recognized as striving to record the annals of their class.<sup>158</sup>

So when their sons and brothers arrived in Australia, they were already well entrenched in the tradition of unionism and they also understood the importance of solidarity and unity. Twenty of the members of the Australian Society of Engineers (ASE) who were victimised for their activities in England were assisted by the society to migrate to Australia, and while aboard the ship travelling to Australia, formed a branch in 1852.<sup>159</sup> Ballarat workers soon established their own branch of that union. On 30 March 1861, a meeting was held at the Scottish Hotel to form a Ballarat Branch, later to be renamed the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), and much later, the Amalgamated Metalworkers Union (AMWU). The initial membership was 22 as the change-over from alluvial to quartz mining had led to employment for skilled tradesmen, blacksmiths, fitters, and other engineering workers. Evans, the inaugural President, continued to have a significant role in the labour movement at BT&LC until the end of the century.<sup>160</sup>

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155. Ibid.

156. Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (London: Longmans, Green, 1894).

157. Ibid.

158. Ibid., xii.

159. Brian McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement: 1850–1975* (Melbourne: Drummond, 1979).

160. A. C. Williams, "History of the ASE Later the AEU."

The earliest union recorded in Ballarat was the Carpenters and Joiners Eight Hours Association.<sup>161</sup> An advertisement on 27 January 1857 indicates a functioning organisation that had already secured a subscription arrangement to the Ballarat Hospital whereby members in need of medical assistance could collect tickets of admission to the benefits of the hospital by showing their membership cards.<sup>162</sup> The masons and the carpenters would not tolerate political activity within their organisations and shared the antipathy of the nineteenth-century liberal towards political partisanship. An advertisement placed by the CJA in 1857 stated that trade matters were their sole concern.<sup>163</sup>

After 1860, the CJA membership increased significantly,<sup>164</sup> and the employers formed the Builders and Contractors Association.<sup>165</sup> In 1862, the CJA decided to extend their activity and established a fund for those members who had accidents or setbacks, reflecting the impact of the remarkable building boom that had been occurring in Ballarat. Employers cooperated with the CJA so that in 1864 the Black Hill Company dismissed 32 men in compliance with the union's sick club committee because workers had fallen behind with their subscriptions of one shilling per week.<sup>166</sup> Most unions functioned as benefit societies, generally forming themselves into a separate "friendly society", and building up considerable funds for accident, death, and funeral benefits. This function of the trade unions was particularly important in the colonies where men were often separated from their friends and families.<sup>167</sup>

The Ballarat Typographical Association (BTA), formed in 1857, has a particular claim to recognition. It managed to regulate the local printing trade effectively for the rest of the century and probably has a unique record for an Australian union maintaining a "closed shop" during this period<sup>168</sup>. Fitzgerald goes as far as to say: "If defensive in policy, the Ballarat Typographical Society remained, probably until the seventies, the one true effective working class organisation in Victoria."<sup>169</sup> The members insisted on their

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161. *Ballarat Star*, January 3, 1857.

162. *Ballarat Star*, January 21, 1857. W. F. Pleydell Sen. Main Road, William Northeast Specimen Hill, W. Stones, near the Union Hotel and W. F. Pleydell Jun., Bakery Hill.

163. *Ballarat Star*, November 19, 1861.

164. *Ibid.*

165. *Ballarat Star*, April 30, 1861.

166. *Ballarat Star*, June 10, 1862.

167. Hughes, "The Eight Hour Day."

168. Ronald Fitzgerald, *The Printers of Melbourne: The History of a Union* (Melbourne: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1967).

169. *Ibid.*, 22.

independence when the decision was made in Melbourne to form the Victorian Typographical Union in 1867, only agreeing that the three branches of Geelong, Ballarat and Melbourne could form a central board of delegates, and remained reluctant to hand over cash or control. In a joint project with the Victorian Typographical Union, the Ballarat branch bought the *Evening Mail* to compete with the *Evening Post* whose proprietors were threatening the principle of a standard rate that had been maintained for over a decade. After operating the paper for a few months, proving their point and without consulting Melbourne, the Ballarat branch sold it to the journeymen working on it, which led to the breakdown of the Victorian Typographical Union in 1871. The BTU maintained its independence until it joined the federal body in 1917.<sup>170</sup> Richard Belford, who had acted as the secretary of Victoria's first printers' union in 1851, was decisive. He came to Ballarat in 1855, founded the *Ballarat Star*, and played a prominent role in public life before leaving to become the government printer in Queensland in 1860.<sup>171</sup>

In 1854 another event of significance for Ballarat occurred – the opening of Victoria's first railway line. Very soon Ballarat was the centre of locomotive construction in Australia,<sup>172</sup> and by 1861, those ASE tradesmen who were working in foundries had moved on from sharpening miners' tools and repairs to building the waterwheel for Anderson's Mill, Smeaton, and the first locomotive for the Geelong–Ballarat line.<sup>173</sup> While the majority of the work was for mining companies, the railway lines under construction needed bridgework, carriages and engines and the rates of wages remained comparatively high throughout the 1860s, despite attempts at reduction. A meeting of mining managers in 1866 called by the secretary of the Ballarat Stock Exchange for the purpose of cutting wages failed due to the opposition of many old diggers who were now prosperous mining company directors.<sup>174</sup> Strong opposition also occurred to attempts to employ Chinese workers at lower wages.<sup>175</sup>

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170. Ibid.

171. Ibid; "Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Project: Richard Belford," Federation University Australia, accessed November 11, 2019, [https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Richard\\_Belford](https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Richard_Belford).

172. Robert Butrimis and David MacArtney, *The Phoenix Foundry, Locomotive Builders of Ballarat: The History of a Ballarat Engineering Company* (Melbourne: Australian Railway Historical Society, 2013).

173. Bate, *Lucky City*.

174. *Ballarat Star*, February 16, 1866.

175. *Ballarat Star*, October 2, 1859; March 11, 1864.



An element in the formation of labour movement consciousness was the early division of Ballarat into geographical areas based on wealth accumulated in the first 20 years after the discovery of gold. Again, this is a clear example of ‘spatial fix’. Ballarat citizens’ access and opportunity were not being equally shared. From the beginning of the gold era, “the way was open for the unhappy division of Ballarat into two competing municipalities whose rival interests and contrasting ways of life stemmed from different environments and different histories.”<sup>176</sup> In the next 50 years, this became an entrenched element in Ballarat’s culture. Nellie Berryman was asked what was it like living in the East: “Oh, yes, that’s what annoys some people. Even nowadays they say, ‘Out the East, do you live out the East?’ They look down on the East. There wasn’t really anything only that I think there might have been more mining in the East.”<sup>177</sup> The antipathy between East and West is also well described by Bill Roberts: “The City Fire Brigade and the East Fire Brigade used to hate one another. They used to do all kinds of things so as each one would get to a fire first ... they were always at loggerheads.”<sup>178</sup> The East still has the hallmarks of its spontaneous origins – a spider’s web with its focus on Bakery Hill and Main Road, the major roads radiating out and the minor ones, such as Otway and Rodier, the lateral strands. Up on the plateau, the roads were laid out in approved surveyor rectangles, with sites for the hospital, post office, courthouse, gaol, mechanics’ institute, benevolent asylum, and major churches selected and Wendouree Parade up to three chain in width was immediately developed for recreation and the botanical gardens were reserved in 1858.<sup>179</sup> Main Road in the east was a quagmire in winter, although until the 1860s the street was the hub of Ballarat’s activity, supporting a wide range of nationalities, each having their own favourite shops and meeting places. But when the train replaced the coaches from 1862, the new arrivals no longer were put down there.<sup>180</sup>

The old antagonism to working men organising also still resonated with some in the Ballarat community. In September 1858, the *Ballarat Star* reported:

The handicraftsmen of Ballarat are gradually adopting the associative organizations so generally prevailing throughout England. The mill-wrights, the engineers and iron workers met ... at the Yarrowee Hotel on Thursday evening to form a trade society, We trust the association will see the necessity of

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176. Bate, *Lucky City*, 165.

177. Nellie Berryman, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 71.

178. Bill Roberts, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 12.

179. Bate, *Lucky City*.

180. *Ibid.*

discountenancing those principles of action which have made similar associations at home, so injurious to the best interests of employers and employed.<sup>181</sup>

## Conclusion

This beginning set Ballarat apart from most major Australian cities, which later became centres for union peak bodies. For the first 30 years of European settlement in Ballarat's history, the citizens thought of themselves as independent of any more latterly established hierarchy of towns with Melbourne at the centre. While Melbourne was the established administrative centre, the wealth created in the gold towns of Ballarat and Bendigo gave them a sense of independence and purpose, quite different from the cities that gradually developed from the ports, for the settlement of the interior for agricultural and mining purposes.

The declaration in the Eureka oath that “We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other and fight to defend our rights and liberties”<sup>182</sup> was a brave and hopeful statement, which did bear fruit in the years ahead. While many left to follow the next big “rush”, many stayed behind to continue as miners as well as to take up occupations to service the new wealth created by gold. At first their collective purpose was informal, an alliance of “like-minded mechanics, artisans and laborers” who met together to establish the Eight Hour Day principle. While these leaders from 1854 had made alliances with other public figures based on mutual respect, negotiated solutions and rejection of precipitous actions, these relationships were underpinned by the leaders' beliefs in themselves as citizens in a new kind of society. The broad support for the Eight hour Day movement and the Early Closing campaign with key public figures is well documented. The fraternal nature of the relationships left a fine legacy for Ballarat as many of the same participants worked together to create bodies such as the City Free Library, the Old Colonists' Club, the Mechanics' Institute, the Ballarat Orphanage and the Ballarat Benevolent Asylum – all organisations that had been based on accessibility for all and not tied to religious beliefs or sectional interests. The early establishment of the Eight Hour Day celebration with the processions, the sports meetings and the dinners quickly reinforced an ethos of an active labour movement.

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181. *Ballarat Star*, September 18, 1858.

182. “Eureka Stockade 1854: Rebellion of Goldminers at Eureka Stockade, Ballarat, Victoria,” National Museum Australia, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/eureka-stockade>.

## Chapter 3

### A Sapling 1875-1890

*(Immature tree with a slender trunk and the principal attributes are trunk flexibility and smooth bark)*

Ballarat has always kept  
Advancement well in view  
Recognized the leader bold of innovations new  
And now our fame brighter shine  
When 'tis recorded far and wide  
The shops all close at 9  
It rests alone with you.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The 1870s brought a new dimension to the labour movement, with increasing emphasis on legislative change and a new kind of unionist. While the young sapling was energetic there were many areas of growth to be explored. Three major initiatives between 1873 and 1900 showed the opportunities it embraced. The first involved protection of the most vulnerable workers – women, young workers, and miners, who were the beneficiaries of industrial legislation. The factory acts initiated in Ballarat, in cooperation between the ECA, *The Courier* and Major William Collard Smith, led the approach for Australia.

The second initiative was the formation of organisations that represented groups of skilled workers who had not come through an apprenticeship system as the craft unions did. These miners, shearers, tailoresses and draymen saw the advantages their fellow workers had from being part of a collective purpose. One of the earliest unions representing these workers was the Amalgamated Shearers Union (ASU), founded in Ballarat in 1886, which led to the formation of the AWU, still one of the largest unions in Australia.

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1. Saffin Papers. Poem entered in South Street Competition.

The third initiative was the collaboration of these unions with the traditional unions to establish their own building for a peak body in Ballarat, as was occurring in Melbourne, the first “People’s Palace” in the world. The erection in 1887 of such a prestigious building in Ballarat in a prime location must have been a source of great pride and put down solid roots for the future.

### **The Factory Acts, the Miners and Female Labour**

The passing of the Factory Acts cemented liberalism in Ballarat and explained to some extent the lack of pressure from the labour movement to move to direct parliamentary representation. By the 1870s, the policy of protection of local industries by tariffs was entrenched in the trade unions. Protection legitimated the contribution of workers to the economic development of the colony and at least gave the impression that the interests of labour and capital were similar. Free trade was associated with landed monopoly and grasping middlemen.<sup>2</sup> For the labour movement this also meant opposition to Chinese labour, which translated into the White Australia policy after Federation. David Syme – the owner of *The Age* and the most powerful advocate for liberalism, particularly the plank of protection – made good use of his newspaper to keep these issues at the forefront of all Victorians minds. *The Courier* also emerged as a strong supporter of liberalism and protection, and in 1874, lauded the election of Major Smith and Joseph Jones, with the headline: “Liberal Causes Stronger than ever in Ballarat and Sebastopol.”<sup>3</sup>

Fry asserts that Ballarat deserves the credit for success of the Factory Acts campaign-

It was a local effort, a product of that remarkable goldmining corner of Victoria which had produced the Eureka Stockade and was to set in motion the new style of industrial unionism through the miners' and shearers' unions. The locality is significant, for the mining districts were the stronghold of democracy and radicalism in Victoria until the growing urban working class of Melbourne took the lead.<sup>4</sup>

This was the first Australian campaign for factory legislation and was centred on the working conditions of female workers in Ballarat, “a circumstance to occasion some surprise.”<sup>5</sup> The recognition of females as significant participants in the labour movement was an important one. While it was still before the formation of the BT&LC, the

2. Paul Strangio, *Neither Power nor Glory: 100 Years of Political Labor in Victoria, 1856–1956* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Publishing, 2012).

3. “Liberal Causes Stronger Than Ever in Ballarat and Sebastopol,” *The Courier*, March 17, 1871.

4. Fry, “The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia,” 155.

5. *Ibid.*, 166.

campaign was actively supported by the ECA and the CJA. Domestic service had been the major opportunity for women having to earn their own living, but middle-class families who employed live-in domestic servants began complaining about the scarcity of servants and the inexplicable preference of working-class girls for industrial work.<sup>6</sup> What they failed to understand was the introduction of the treadle sewing machine in the 1850s for household use meant that many women who had begun to seek employment in factories were, in fact, capable seamstresses who had developed their skills using the home sewing machine. By doing piecework, they could also work from home.<sup>7</sup> In April 1873, *The Courier* took up the case of the “sewing girls” to limit the hours of labour in workrooms (referring in particular to a Ballarat firm employing 273 hands).<sup>8</sup> It detailed the women’s hardships, where they were routinely overworked and underpaid, working up to 16 hours a day.<sup>9</sup> While *The Courier* was noted for its liberal views, the *Argus* was not. It reported on the Ballarat concerns at length but, editorially, did not favour legislation beyond that dealing with ventilation and overcrowding in workrooms. The matter remained a minor one in Melbourne but a major one in Ballarat.<sup>10</sup> The Ballarat *Courier* said:

While the young men of the shop can jauntily walk away to their homes at six and seven o'clock in the evening, their sisters in trade are kept upstairs until nine, ten, eleven, and often up to midnight, working at the sewing machine or plying the needle, in an atmosphere heated to a degree dangerous to health by numbers and gas lights. Their growth and development are stunted by stooping over their work for fifteen and often eighteen hours a day, and their morals are corrupted, by the late hours at which they wend their ways home, and the hard life with which, to their immature minds, they seem to be threatened.<sup>11</sup>

However the young men did not walk off home in May 1873. Many of the women were juniors but they were assisted by the ECA and supported by the men from their workplaces.<sup>12</sup> The ECA’s issue had been the length of the working day, but they realised the conditions the women faced were unfair and their participation in this campaign was substantial, as was the role of the CJA in supporting them financially. The ECA wrote to Major Smith MLA asking to discuss the introduction of a bill in the next session to limit

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6. Margaret Bevege, Margaret James, and Carmel Shute, *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982).

7. Diane Bell, *Generations: Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1987).

8. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

9. Fry, “The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia.”

10. “The Sewing Girls of Ballarat,” *Argus*, May 12, 1873.

11. *The Courier*, April 10, 1873, 2.

12. Fry, “The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia.”

the hours of labour of all sewing women employed in workrooms throughout the colony. Drawing strength from the democratic reforming tradition of the goldfields, it appealed widely for support on humanitarian grounds. It also wrote to the ECAs of Melbourne, Sandhurst, Geelong, Castlemaine, Echuca, Pleasant Creek and Clunes, asking them to seek agreement of members representing those towns and distributed petitions and circulars addressed to clergymen, bankers, employers in the soft goods trade, and the leading men of the district to obtain their support. The list of mainly goldmining towns approached indicates how they saw common political interests, as those towns stabilised and developed a range of industries. Their May meeting concluded with this resolution: “That the association pledges itself to devote the whole of its energies to place the above subject on a sound, satisfactory, and humane basis.”<sup>13</sup>

Having thrown itself into the campaign with gusto, the Ballarat ECA, soon found there was a cost: two of its office-bearers, Wooten and Fraser, being dismissed by their employer Christie and Co., the main company identified with the poor conditions. The *Ballarat Star* ironically made the point that Wooten now knows the meaning of the motto *nemo me impune lacessit* (no one provokes me with impunity).<sup>14</sup> However the CJA, stepped in with financial backing for the ECA<sup>15</sup> and the two “sacked” men received assistance when the ECA met on 6 June 1873. They were presented with testimonials and a purse of sovereigns each in recognition of their efforts on behalf of the sewing girls, emphasising the benefits of establishing a new era. The chairman said: “They could all remember the power which wealth used to exercise over labour in the old country, but the late triumphs of trade combinations had enabled the poor mechanic now to be better clothed, better fed, and better collared.”<sup>16</sup> While harmony with capital was the public message, in meetings such as this, the excesses of capital in the “old country” were not far from their minds, and Wooten and Fraser were able to start a drapery shop with their purse and the support of some backers.<sup>17</sup> The concept of solidarity was already well embedded into the Ballarat worker ethos.

Australia’s first factory act (the Supervision of Workrooms and Factories Statute) came into operation on 1 January 1874, becoming the first factory act enacted in the colonies;

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13. *Ballarat Star*, May 1, 1873. The deputation members were Messrs. Wooten, Fraser, Jones, Downs, and Turner.

14. *Ballarat Star*, May 7, 1873.

15. *Ballarat Star*, May 14, 1873.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *The Courier*, June 7, 1873.

however, in practice it was limited in its effectiveness.<sup>18</sup> The Legislative Council had amended the definition of “factory” to mean a place where 10 or more people worked (which excluded many smaller workrooms) and enforcement was an ongoing problem: local councils were influenced by manufacturing interests and inspections were often inadequate.<sup>19</sup> The *1874 Factory Act* avoided the general eight hour principle, as well as reform of apprenticeship and outwork, but Victorian factories were now under stricter control than those of any other colony.<sup>20</sup> When a dinner was held in Ballarat to celebrate the passing of the Act, those specially singled out for thanks included John Woods, the Member for Stawell, an old English Chartist who was regarded as a radical; Longmore, a working-class spokesman; Berry, leader of the radical forces in the 1870s; and local MLA R.T. Vale, who had supported an eight hour bill in parliament three years before.<sup>21</sup>

The 1874 Factory Act was followed by the 1882-84 Royal Commission on Employees in Shops chaired by Collard Smith. Their three reports and evidence are not confined to shops but covered most urban industries of the time. It heard 166 witnesses, inspected 65 factories or workplaces at Geelong and Ballarat as well as Melbourne.<sup>22</sup> While women earned much less than their male counterparts many still preferred factory work to domestic service. In 1884, a witness at the Royal Commission was asked why females preferred factory work to domestic service and he gave four compelling reasons: they are more independent; they have their Sabbaths, Saturday afternoons, general holidays, and evenings to themselves; they can live with their parents, relatives, or friends; and they were never brought up to undertake domestic labour.<sup>23</sup> He left out others – some were raising children alone as breadwinners through death or desertion of their partner, and they needed to have their free time to look after their families, too. They needed money just like male breadwinners; they just had greater difficulty in asserting their rights.

Many also enjoyed the camaraderie of the workplace. Walking or riding their bikes to and from home with their friends, including going home for lunch was a bonus to compensate for their working conditions. Mabel Chung went to work at the Woollen Mills in Mt

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18. Debra Reeves, “The Origins of the Eight Hour Day in Victoria” (Melbourne: Victorian Department of Parliamentary Services, 2017), accessed November 19, 2019, <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/send/36-research-papers/13812-heritage-note-no-1-2017-the-origins-of-the-eight-hour-day-in-victoria>.

19. Ibid.

20. Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich*.

21. Fry, “The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia,”

22. Ibid.

23. Royal Commission on Employees in Shops, *Report on the Operation of the Victorian Factory Act 1874: Together with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, Etc.* (Melbourne: Victorian Parliament, 1884).

Pleasant. Her father was very cross, and her mother told her it wasn't a very nice place at all, but it was five days a week and not on Saturdays:

I found it was quite a nice place. We used to walk over those hills at Mount Pleasant down there. While we were walking over there, all the miners would be coming over this way to go to the mines. We used to cross each other every morning and every night. Lots of girls like myself worked there, yes, and they were all nice girls. There might have been a couple you know, that tell the yarns and that, but no one takes any notice of that kind. They were all lovely girls, bosses were pretty decent too.<sup>24</sup>

In 1879, Whitten's boot factory in Ballarat, equipped with the latest machinery, employed 50 men in its making room and 20 women in the preparation and sewing of uppers, soles and heels.<sup>25</sup> In Ballarat, Geelong and Bendigo, women were employed more extensively on "male" tasks but were still only paid "women's" rates.<sup>26</sup> A Ballarat tailor, in evidence to the Royal Commission, attributed the scarcity of men to the reluctance of lads to be apprenticed in what was seen as women's work.<sup>27</sup> By 1881 in the clothing and textile sector, females comprised approximately 90 per cent of the workforce, the cost of female labour being about half of that of male labour.<sup>28</sup>

After two years of interviewing witnesses and inspecting factories and workplaces around Victoria, including Ballarat, the Royal Commission produced its final report in 1884 with 39 recommendations,<sup>29</sup> including that the eight hours system should be one of the "fundamental principles" of a new bill. It also recommended the registration and inspection of factories; measures to regulate ventilation, lighting, sanitary conditions and meal breaks; limits to the working hours of those under 16 years of age; restrictions on apprentices; and the prohibition of the "sweating" system of outwork.<sup>30</sup> The commission report was well received by the trade unions, although there were tensions; when the MTHC set up a committee to give evidence, some conservative unions, including the bricklayers, walked out in protest at such concern with general working conditions rather than those only of the superior trades.<sup>31</sup> At a Chamber of Manufacturers' meeting in April 1884, the report was described as a libel on all their members, dividing employers and

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24. Mabel Chung, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983.

25. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

26. *Ibid.*, 45.

27. Royal Commission on Employees in Shops.

28. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

29. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*.

30. Royal Commission on Employees in Shops.

31. Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich*.



their employees into “scoundrels” and “saints” respectively.<sup>32</sup> The Bill recommended a system of registration for factories, the appointment of inspectors, limiting youth employment and limits to the hours of all workers. It also made the first of many attempts to limit the employment of outworkers, often called ‘sweated’ workers. Although the resulting Bill was also amended in the Legislative Council, the *Factories and Shops Act 1885* did establish a registration system and an inspectorate. It was less successful in suppressing the widespread practice of sweating however.<sup>33</sup> In 1896 the Victorian Factories and Shops Act was eventually passed, the most comprehensive of all the colonies, also including a special provision against the use of Chinese labour aimed at decreasing the “unfair” competition from such workers.<sup>34</sup>

Within a decade, Fry noted:

In the field of industrial legislation, Victoria was the leading colony from the gold rushes to 1890. The two Victorian factory acts of 1874 and 1885 were the clearest alignment of political forces and the greatest working class political influence.<sup>35</sup>

The newly formed BT&LC however regarded the Melbourne boot factory dispute impacting on Ballarat unionists in 1884 as outside its purview, although it did discuss the concept of establishing new cooperatives.<sup>36</sup> Delegates continued to be involved in the tailoring trade, interest undoubtedly heightened by the Tailoress Strike in 1882 and the formation of the Victorian Tailoresses’ Union, which however was weakened by the end of the decade by the use of outworkers and lost influence.<sup>37</sup> Then the *Portland Guardian* in 1890 reported that “the Tailoresses Union of Ballarat has decided to run its establishments in accordance with the principles of unionism.”<sup>38</sup> This was an active matter for discussion at BT&LC throughout 1890 after being brought to the attention of their Conciliation Committee because of a dispute with the Master Tailors. The support included holding a public meeting and a request to all societies to support the Shops that employ Union Tailoresses.<sup>39</sup> In 1897 the first Wages Board for Clothing was appointed with five unions covering three exclusively male unions and two for women. The

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32. Ibid., 103.

33. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

34. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*.

35. Fry, “The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia,” 153.

36. BT&LC Minutes, December 5, 1884.

37. Bradon Ellem, “A History of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union” (PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 1986).

38. “Information for Working Women,” *Portland Guardian*, October 13, 1890.

39. BT&LC Minutes, 3 April 1890, 25 April 1890, 9 May 1890, 25 May 1890, 6 June 1890, 20 June 1890, 5 August 1890, 29 August 1890.

Victorian Tailoresses' Union covered stock workers and the Tailoresses Union of Ballarat originating in 1890 in Ballarat covered the order hands.<sup>40</sup>

Fry observed of Victorian conditions:

They provided the most informative case study of Australian liberalism of the second half of the nineteenth century, a liberalism so strong there that its displacement by labour politics after 1890 lagged and the centre of gravity of working class politics moved to Queensland and New South Wales.<sup>41</sup>

At least until the 1890s, the democratic and egalitarian sentiments that continued from the goldfields period led to Ballarat's workers delegating their political representation to middle-class liberal reformers who were waging war with the colony's pastoral, merchant and banking interests on the key battlefronts of land settlement, industry protection and democratic reform.<sup>42</sup> Political divisions typically took the form of a contest between the two Victorian Houses of Parliament, where the question of their respective powers was a major issue in every crisis – the Legislative Assembly with manhood suffrage and the Legislative Council with its property franchise.

The Ballarat labour movement asserted itself early and successfully on issues related to urban wage-earners, and it also established a significant connection to Major Collard Smith. In 1856, he was elected to the newly formed Ballarat West Council, becoming its chairman in 1860: "By then, with E. A. Wynne, he had founded a bank and was a leader in mobilising the vast investment needed to develop Ballarat's mines."<sup>43</sup> Smith was elected to the Legislative Assembly for Ballarat West in August 1861, then resigned in 1864 as MLA and councillor, only to return again to fill both roles in 1871. Bate describes Smith as being a pragmatic liberal democrat, whose sincerity and personal disinterestedness were never in question; although he was wealthy, a director of the Phoenix Foundry and an employer, he believed in social justice. His ministerial strength lay in his skill as a negotiator and energetic administrator.<sup>44</sup> Serle referred to Collard Smith as "the masterly opportunist politician who successfully rode the storms of Ballarat

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40. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

41. *Ibid.*, 153.

42. Strangio, *Neither Power nor Glory*.

43. Weston Bate, "Smith, William Collard (1830–1894)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (Australian National University, 1976), accessed November 19, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smith-william-collard-4619>.

44. *Ibid.*

politics for twenty-five years, the local entrepreneur and indignant radical reformer made an odd combination”<sup>45</sup> and noted him as deserving of further study.

Smith’s pride in Ballarat was matched by the community’s acceptance of him as one of its most popular public figures. Smith’s membership of the Orange Order, which was established in Australia in 1845, a Protestant Christian fraternity promoting the ideals of the Protestant faith and culture (so elements of sectarianism were already a feature of Ballarat political life) undoubtedly gave him connection to trade union leaders. The support of the Orange Lodge, membership of the Loyal Liberal Organisation and later the National Reform League also defined Smith’s connection to Premier Berry, under whom he served as Minister for Mines (1875), Mines and Public Instruction (1877-1880) and Education (1880-1881). Later he fell out with Berry apparently over Federation and clearly over factory reform and was not a member of the coalition ministries of the 1880s. His championing of Federation, however, earned him a place in the Federal Convention in 1890.<sup>46</sup> But Smith bridged many divides, particularly through his marriage to a Catholic woman. His house still stands in the grounds of St. Patrick’s College, Ballarat. The alliance with Smith stood the labour movement in good stead when they moved to use the parliamentary processes in shaping Ballarat.

The other beneficiaries of early legislation were the miners. By 1871, the goldminers in Ballarat were no more than 10 per cent of the population,<sup>47</sup> and already many were suffering from miners’ phthisis (silicosis), a result of working in underground goldmines with quartz dust. Silicosis and its effects are graphically described by several sources. Monica Dooley recalled: “Shocking cough. And the men went to nothing, it was terrible to hear, you could hear them coughing miles away. I can remember a whole lot of them going like that, they stayed too long.”<sup>48</sup> Muriel Williams recollected: “He said he was all right, but he wasn’t long. They all died, couldn’t get their breath, you know. Oh, they looked terrible, went to skin and bone before they died really.”<sup>49</sup>

With mining in decline, the first short-lived Ballarat union was formed in 1870, more concerned with working conditions, especially improvements in safety due to the high accidents and disease rate and the eight hour day. Indicative of the nature of the coalitions

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45. Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich*, 103.

46. Bate, “Smith.”

47. R. Morris, “From Goldfields to Community.”

48. Monica Dooley, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 183.

49. Muriel Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 43.

at this stage, neither the convenor, R. Baker, nor the president, James Vallins, was a miner, and the secretary James Powell<sup>50</sup> accepted the post “from a love of the class to which he belonged.”<sup>51</sup> He was the proprietor and editor of the *Ballarat Star* from 1882 to 1884, and later wrote for *The Courier*.<sup>52</sup> By 1871, Major Smith MLA had already influenced legislation that stipulated that miners should not work on Saturday night.

In 1873, Smith was greeted with great applause at the meeting of striking mineworkers from the South Clunes and Lothair mines. Smith was quite blunt. He said whether he offended personal friends or not, he had determined to take the “side of the weak against the strong”. If mines could not pay wages, or shareholders did not have faith in their investment, the mine had better be abandoned.<sup>53</sup> In 1874, a conference of miners held in Bendigo resolved that all miners should unite under the AMA.<sup>54</sup> The association then drafted a bill restricting employment for all miners to eight hours a day for a maximum of 48 hours per week. It also included requirements for proper ventilation in mines and the inspection of machinery as well as making it unlawful for women to work in mines. In conjunction with Smith, the AMA’s bill became the basis of the *Regulation of Mines Act 1877*.<sup>55</sup> Along with the introduction of the Act, a course of unique lectures on mine safety was held at the Mechanics’ Institute, placing Ballarat “in the enviable position of leading Australia in the introduction of health and safety measures in the workplace.”<sup>56</sup>

## The People’s Palaces

A key step was taken in the 1870s that changed the face of unionism in Ballarat. The decision to form a peak organisation and to establish premises that would be the exclusive home of the unions still makes a firm statement about the importance of the labour movement in Ballarat today. In 1858, the *Argus* lauded the establishment of the MTH as “an institution founded upon co-operative principles, self-supporting and designated to supply its members with enlarged opportunities of social intercourse, of mental culture,

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50. Bate, *Lucky City*.

51. Anne Beggs-Sunter, “Powell, James Alexander (1836–1921),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 11, ed. Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988), accessed April 25, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/powell-james-alexander-8087>.

52. Ibid.

53. “Clunes Strike,” *The Courier*, September 22, 1873.

54. Spence, *Australia’s Awakening*.

55. The Regulation of Mines Act 1877, [http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist\\_act/troms1877315/](http://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist_act/troms1877315/).

56. “Centenary of School of Mines supplement,” *The Courier*, September 22, 1976.

and of rational recreation.”<sup>57</sup> While the *Argus* is long gone, these symbols of the labour movement in Ballarat and Melbourne still fulfil the criteria it set.

Melbourne Trades Hall had been offered a land grant from the premier in 1856 following the success of its Eight Hour Day campaign. The original building was replaced in 1874 by the marvellous edifice that is there today. John Reed, the architect responsible for Melbourne icons such as the Town Hall and the State Library of Victoria certainly set a high benchmark for other “people’s palaces.”<sup>58</sup> It is the world’s oldest trade union building. This would have been an added incentive for the Ballarat unions to build their own in 1887 after the establishment of the United Eight Hours Association in 1874.

Ballarat is the second oldest trades hall in Australia and the BT&LC still occupies the original building. The foundation stone for Brisbane’s first Trades Hall building was laid in 1891.<sup>59</sup> The Sydney Trades Hall building did not open until 1895,<sup>60</sup> Adelaide’s opened in 1896,<sup>61</sup> and Hobart occupied an early building from 1883 but it was not purchased by the Tasmanian trade union movement until 1924 and incorporated into the Commonwealth Law Courts in 1974.<sup>62</sup> Broken Hill established its Trades Hall building in 1898,<sup>63</sup> Newcastle in 1896,<sup>64</sup> and in the twentieth century, Perth,<sup>65</sup> Townsville, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Port Adelaide, Port Pirie, Kalgoorlie, Launceston, Freemantle, and Ipswich<sup>66</sup> followed.

The extensive number of trades halls, especially in mining towns, demonstrated the determination of those communities that their presence was meant to be noted,<sup>67</sup> and Ballarat had led the way. Ballarat also provided the incentive for the formation of similar

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57. “Trades Hall and Literary Institute,” *The Argus*, January 2, 1858.

58. Kellaway, *The Working Man’s Parliament: Melbourne Trades Hall*.

59. Brisbane City Council, “Explore the Classic City Centre,”  
[https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/city\\_centre\\_heritage\\_trail\\_final.pdf](https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/city_centre_heritage_trail_final.pdf).

60. “Sydney Trades Hall,” Heritage NSW, accessed November 11, 2020,  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=2424112>.

61. “Adelaide Trades Hall,” State Library of South Australia, accessed November 11, 2020,  
<https://collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/resource/B+10499>.

62. “Edward Braddon Commonwealth Law Courts Building, Hobart, Former Trades Hall,” Studylib.net, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://studylib.net/doc/17793389/edward-braddon-commonwealth-law-courts-building--hobart-->.

63. “Broken Hill Trades Hall,” Heritage NSW, accessed November 11, 2020,  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=5045422>.

64. “Newcastle Trades Hall,” Heritage NSW, accessed November 11, 2020,  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=2170269>.

65. “Trades Hall,” Heritage Perth, accessed November 20, 2020,  
<https://heritageperth.com.au/properties/delaney-gallery-fmr-trades-hall/>.

66. Andrew Reeves, *Another Day, Another Dollar: Working Lives in Australian History* (Melbourne: McCulloch Publishing Pty Ltd, 1988).

67. *Ibid.*

peak bodies in Bendigo and Geelong. An enquiry from the Bendigo AMA and Accident Fund to Ballarat in July 1884 seeking information on principles of representation, how the peak body was supported, the times of meeting, how the body was governed, and copies of rules indicated a new realisation of the role of a peak body:

The Association very often gets application made to them for support on different questions. Still there is something wanting to give it proper effect. I believe this want to be a trades hall committee whereby the whole could be brought together, so that gentle and steady pressure can be brought to bear when it is needed ... I am hopeful of the success that has attended the same in Ballarat and hope to see it fully as successful here.<sup>68</sup>

A similar request was received from Geelong. A letter dated October 3 1887 states:

Dear Sir

I have been instructed by the newly formed Geelong Eight Hour Anniversary Committee to write to you asking you to supply us with copies of your rules, etc. and to give us any information at your disposal, with regard to the working of your committee- we have six societies.<sup>69</sup>

In 1885, the Bendigo Trades and Labour Council was established and granted the use of an early mining warden's court. In 1913, a large two-storeyed section was added, and in the 1940s the early hall is thought to have been demolished and a replacement hall constructed.<sup>70</sup> Geelong had a more tortuous history. Their first attempt fell victim to the 1890 depression and maritime strike but a revival occurred in 1909 when delegates were appointed to a new council and a building was opened in 1929.<sup>71</sup>

In 1879, April 21 was declared a public holiday to celebrate the Eight Hour Day and the Victorian Parliament passed the Trades Unions Act in December 1884, which was modelled on the English legislation.<sup>72</sup> It gave unions legal standing, enabling them to hold property and control their own affairs.<sup>73</sup> In Ballarat, a successful fundraising campaign to erect a monument in memory of James Galloway, the Eight Hour Day pioneer, had already occurred. The foundation stone of the Galloway Monument was unveiled in Sturt

68. Amalgamated Miners Association and Accident Fund, Sandhurst, to Secretary Trades Hall Committee Ballarat, July 22, 1884, BT&LC Records.

69. Letter from Geelong, BT&LC Records. October 3, 1887.

70. "Home Page," <https://bgothc.com.au/>, Bendigo Trades Hall Council and Literary Institute Inc., accessed 11 November 2020 <https://bgothc.com.au/>.

71. Sargent, *100 Years of Struggle*, 48–51. A building was opened in 1890 but by the late 1890s, unions in Geelong were almost non-existent. When an act of parliament in 1897 revoked the land grant, the building was transferred to the Country Fire Authority. In 2008 all the original buildings were cleared away to make way for a new fire station complex.

72. D. Reeves, "The Origins of the Eight Hour Day in Victoria."

73. Ibid.

Street by the mayor on 21 April 1880 following the largest Eight Hour Day procession to that date. The Eight Hours Association Committee, inspired by the success of this campaign, decided to establish a building fund into which the proceeds from subsequent anniversary events would be directed.<sup>74</sup>

## **The Ballarat Trades Hall Building**

The creation of a formal peak body in Ballarat occurred in July 1874 when representatives of unions formalised a United Eight Hours Association from the EHDAC and began meeting at the Buck's Head Hotel in Bridge Street.<sup>75</sup> On 25 May 1883, the Ballarat Trades Hall and Literary Institute Committee (BTH&LIC) was formed, with the Eight Hours Association (EHA) members becoming the first delegates representing 18 unions,<sup>76</sup> and the Trades Hall building was opened in 1888 with its own council chamber. It was a place which demonstrated that their interests mattered. Its symbolic location, clearly visible to the population on the edge of the escarpment, still makes a clear statement regarding its place in Ballarat history as one of the major buildings in the Camp Street precinct— the others being the former Magistrates Court, the Fine Art Gallery, the former Post Office, the Mining Exchange, the former Public Library and the Old Colonists' Club.<sup>77</sup>

The push to build reflected the unions' desire to have a social presence as well as a determination to survive. Clearly some realised that by forming a peak body, inter-union activity could extend their collective power built on the achievements of the shorter hours campaigns and the celebrations that went with the processions, the banners, the picnics, and the dinners. While many, including James Graham and Daniel Fern, also had been part of the establishment of the Mechanics' Institute and the Old Colonists' Association,<sup>78</sup> they had been looking towards having their own building since 1862 and the

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74. Miller, "The Ballarat Trades Hall Building." This unpublished essay was a very useful resource in providing the background for this chapter; Williams, "A Brief History of the Ballarat Trades Hall." Members of the Committee: V. Chadwick, J. W. Mills, J. Ballantyne, J. W. Graham, and W. Williams.
75. Ballarat Trades Hall Council, Eight Hour Day Anniversary Committee Minute Book, April 6, 1883.
76. BTH&LIC Minutes, May 25, 1883. Unions not listed. In 1884 a list was included with a report of the Eight Hour Day procession- Tinsmiths, Moulders, Coachmakers, General Blacksmiths, Miners, Painters, Engineers, Bootmakers, Plumbers, Plasterers, Stonemasons, Carpenters, Brickmakers, Labourers, Engine Drivers, Engineers.
77. Beggs-Sunter, *Camp Street, Ballarat*.
78. "Old Colonists' Association," Federation University Australia, accessed November 11, 2019, [https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Old\\_Colonists%27\\_Association](https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Old_Colonists%27_Association).

establishment of the new Trades Hall building in Camp Street became a striking marker of the role of organised labour.

Sadly, it is not easy to build a detailed picture of the men whose efforts to unite the workers of Ballarat culminated in the building of such a fine edifice for the BT&LC,<sup>79</sup> although some details are available about some of them and their photos still hang in the BTH.<sup>80</sup> James Graham, secretary of the EHDAC in 1883 when the building was initiated, was already a long-standing resident because his membership of the Old Colonists' Club required at least 25 years residence in Ballarat.<sup>81</sup> It was Graham who suggested combining EHDAC and the City Free Library Committee to form the BTH&LIC and he was appointed secretary.<sup>82</sup> He sought leave from the BTH&LIC in October 1884,<sup>83</sup> to turn his attention to the Old Colonists' Association where he became their long-standing secretary<sup>84</sup> and first captain of the Ballarat Rowing Club. George Williams, president at the opening in 1887, was a member of the AMA and the son of a former mayor of the City of Ballarat. The first trustees were stonemason Ralph Surtees, who died in 1908 in Perth after having gone to Bloemfontein in South Africa to work, James Ballantyne, chair of the EHDAC in 1883, William Morrison, Robert Clydesdale, and James McIntosh. The first meeting of the new entity was held on 1 June 1883,<sup>85</sup> with £300 deposited at 6.5 per cent interest, £50 for six months and £25 being placed in a savings bank towards a trades hall and literary institute.<sup>86</sup> Eighteen unions were noted as joining the peak body.<sup>87</sup>

The BTH&LIC then approached the city council to find a suitable site to build an amalgamated trades hall and library. At the Annual General Meeting in May 1885 a further £1100 was deposited.<sup>88</sup> In July 1885 the secretary of lands stated that land in Armstrong Street next to the city baths had been temporarily reserved for a trades hall and

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79. BT&LC Minutes, September, 30, 1887. The following are listed as active participants: J. W. Graham; T. S. Bailey, secretary; J. Martin; R. Surtees; R. Clydesdale; W. Morrison; R. Smith; T. G. Dyer; J. L. Anderson; G. Hunter; J. Smith; Desnoy; Tweedale; Anthony; Emery; Pierce; Stofield; Sproat; Friend; Wilson; Field; H. T. Graham; Sutherland; Ewins; Davie; Hagar; Paton; McMillan; Huggett; Davis; Booth; Dunstan; Rose; Porter; Hiam; Bourke; W. Ballantine; A. Smith; J. Smith; Muir; Anthony; Anderson; Hunter; Dyer; Robertson.

80. A. C. Williams, "A Brief History of the Ballarat Trades Hall." This committee consisted of Williams, Anderson, Surtees, Tweedale, Evans, and Robinson.

81. *Ballarat Star*, November 17, 1888.

82. BTH&LIC Minutes, May 25, 1883.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ballarat Star*, May 11, 1898.

85. BTH&LIC Minutes, May 25, 1883.

86. *Ibid.*

87. BTH & LIC Minutes, May 9, 1884.

88. BTH&LIC Minutes, May 29, 1885.



literary institute.<sup>89</sup> Negotiations continued, actively supported by Major Smith MLA for the amalgamation with the City Free Library Committee, including how the building design could accommodate both organisations.<sup>90</sup> While amalgamation with the city free library was still under consideration, the continuation of discussions was only supported for a further three months on the casting vote of the president.<sup>91</sup> Austin McCallum put it rather more directly: “An earthquake-like shudder passed through the conservative bodies of Ballarat. It was the unions who backed off.”<sup>92</sup> A sequel suggests the marriage would not have been a happy one. Well after the death of Vallins in 1904, a notice at the Ballarat Free Library entrance in 1914 said: “For subscribers and ladies only. Public entrance ground floor”. The mayor refused to amend the directive so the BT&LC asked the chief secretary to direct, as he did, that the institution should be entirely free and that no upper rooms should be reserved.<sup>93</sup>

A decisive step was taken in August 1886 when a committee member provided information relating to “a piece of land but it was desirable that the utmost care should be taken that the matter should be kept private at present”.<sup>94</sup> He said the current site in Camp Street could be “secured on most favourable terms at nominal cost.”<sup>95</sup> A special meeting held on 27 August heard the sub-committee report that the site was presently in the possession of the Friendly Societies Dispensary, and after discussions £20 was agreed upon to “defray the expenses incurred in securing the land.”<sup>96</sup> The report continued:

On Monday it was discovered that the Temperance people had determined to apply for the land and had arranged for a deputation to the Minister (of Lands) on the following Wednesday. On Tuesday, after consultation with the president of the Dispensary it was considered absolutely necessary that we too should interview the Minister, and your President, Mr Robertson and Mr Pittard, the president of the Dispensary Committee, be authorised to proceed to Melbourne to support our claim on the land and the Honourable Henry Cuthbert, the Minister of Lands was telegraphed and asked to arrange for an interview, which he kindly did.<sup>97</sup>

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89. BTH&LIC Minutes, July 12, 1885.

90. BTH&LIC Minutes, September 11, 1885.

91. BTH&LIC Minutes, July 23, 1886.

92. Austin McCallum, *A History of Ballarat Libraries* (Ballarat: Central Highlands Regional Library Service, 1978), 26.

93. BT&LC Minutes, May 29, 1914.

94. BTH&LIC Minutes, August 13, 1886.

95. Ibid.

96. BTH&LIC Minutes, August 27, 1886.

97. Ibid.

The deputation with Major Smith MLA met with Minister Cuthbert, another Ballarat resident, who had come from Ireland in 1855,<sup>98</sup> and was told that the Dispensary Committee was prepared to hand over the land to the BTH&LIC, who, in return, would surrender the temporarily reserved Armstrong Street site. Meanwhile a crossed cheque for £20 was forwarded to the Dispensary Committee in anticipation of the arrangements being successful.<sup>99</sup>

At the next meeting, the secretary of lands notified the BTH&LIC that it could at once start building on the land and the building committee was empowered to obtain designs from local architects.<sup>100</sup> The building committee drafted the following specifications:

The amount to be expended upon the building – about three thousand pounds; foundations to be bluestone; front of building – Grampians freestone; walls of brick, building to be three storeys high, hall (with gallery) capable of holding 600 or 700 persons; also stage, proscenium, retiring rooms and rooms for caretaker; hall to be lighted from the roof; a total of about fourteen rooms comprising reading room, a library, a smoking room, lavatories and large and small committee rooms; all staircases to be of stone, a slate roof; all workmanship and material to be of the best quality.<sup>101</sup>

By 28 October 1886, the closing date for tenders, five designs had been received.<sup>102</sup> The building committee recommended to the November meeting that the design submitted by Messrs James and Piper, at an estimated cost of £3,000, be accepted and construction tenders were then invited.<sup>103</sup> But one fact seems immutable, even 150 years later: the building committee received 11 tenders for the building's construction, the lowest for £5,589. This cost dilemma took a further eight months to resolve.

The BTH&LIC changed its name to the Ballarat Trades and Labour Council (BT&LC) at a meeting on 11 February 1887.<sup>104</sup> The BT&LC had also learnt that certain rules would have to be adopted to comply with the provisions of the Trade Unions Act, which was

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98. M. Martina Benson, "Cuthbert, Sir Henry (1829–1907)," in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 3, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), accessed November 19, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cuthbert-sir-henry-3306>. Elected to the Legislative Council in 1874 and the original promoter of the Buninyong Gold Mining Company.

99. BTH&LIC Minutes, August 27, 1886, Special Meeting. Noted that MPs Smith, Jones, Vale and Russell sent letters of support.

100. BTH&LIC Minutes, September 10, 1886. The members of the building committee who were elected after a ballot were the president, the secretary and Robertson, Surtees, Tweedale, Evans and Morrison. Mr Figgis, a local architect, also submitted plans for the new hall, which were forwarded to the building committee.

101. BTH&LIC Minutes, September 10, 1886.

102. BTH&LIC Minutes, October 28, 1886.

103. *Ibid.*

104. BT&LC Minutes, February 25, 1887.

done at the April meeting.<sup>105</sup> Alterations to the original design of the building were accepted, new tenders were called for, and the City of Melbourne Bank agreed to advance £2000 if required.<sup>106</sup> On 24 June 1887 at another special meeting, the building committee recommended that of the 17 tenders received, Leitch and Atkins' bid for the sum of £2,128/15/0 should be accepted, which was well within the BT&LC's budget. A motion accepting the building committee's recommendation was carried unanimously.<sup>107</sup>

However, another problem arose at the August meeting. The secretary reported that a serious attempt had been made to claim a portion of the frontage of the Trades Hall land for right-of-way purposes supported by the divisive C. E. Jones MLA, "long remembered for his description of the local Irish as the 'savages of Bungaree'."<sup>108</sup> A combined deputation from the BT&LC and the Australian Natives Association (also affected by the claim) visited the minister of lands to refute the claim. The secretary reported: "The result of their labours was that the minister intimated that no alteration would be made of the original site"<sup>109</sup> and congratulated the deputation for successfully "defeating an attempt which would otherwise have resulted in serious loss and annoyance to the Council."<sup>110</sup>

Within three months, on 30 September 1887, a special meeting was held to plan the laying of the foundation stone. All trades and unions represented on the BT&LC were invited, and a banquet was planned for the evening with the ticket price of 5/- to allow as large a representative gathering as possible. The list of "gentlemen" who would receive invitations was drawn up. It included the mayor and councillors of the City of Ballarat

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105. BT&LC Minutes, April 6, 1887.

Rules

That the place of meeting for the business of the Council would be the City Hall, Sturt Street, Ballarat; and that the registered office would be at 10 Errard Street South.

That societies would be required to appoint their representatives to the Council prior to the last Friday in July of each year and that this representation would cease after the second Friday in July of the following year.

That the books and accounts of the Council would be open to the inspection of the members and any person having an interest in the functions of the Council.

That the Council would not be dissolved so long as there were three unions with an aggregate number of fifty members desirous of carrying on the Council.

That, in the event of the dissolution, any real or personal property belonging to the Council would be applied to the payment of all debts and liabilities, after which any funds remaining, the Hall and all property would be vested in the hands of the City of Ballarat and the Township of Ballarat East until such time as a new Trades Hall Council was started.

106. BT&LC Minutes, May 20, 1887; Special Meeting, May 27, 1887, and June 10, 1887. A new building committee of Dyer, Anderson, Martin, Clydesdale and B. Smith was elected.

107. BT&LC Minutes, June 24, 1887.

108. Geoffrey Bartlett, "Jones, Charles Edwin (1828–1903)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), accessed November 19, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jones-charles-edwin-3868>.

109. BT&LC Minutes, August 10, 1887.

110. Ibid.

and the Township of Ballarat East, members of parliament for the City and the Town, the presidents of the Melbourne and the Sandhurst (Bendigo) trades hall councils, as well as the architects and contractors. A dinner committee was elected and a local caterer was appointed to provide for the expected one hundred guests at 2/6 per head, with an additional 1/6 to “satisfy all liquor requirements”. Mr S. Morgan, a well-known local amateur vocalist, had consented to arrange the musical program and the supply of cigars was to be left in the hands of the officers.<sup>111</sup>

The BT&LC also agreed that a statement would be placed under the foundation stone recognising the men who had been responsible for the project.<sup>112</sup> The report of the laying of the foundation stone refers to a sealed bottle containing the statement, as well as copies of the *Star* and the other daily newspapers published in Ballarat and one of each of the current “coins of the realm” being placed in a cavity near the foundation stone.<sup>113</sup>

On 15 October 1887, President Williams mounted the stone and addressed those present:

The absolute necessity of having such a building had long been manifest, and the members of the various trades unions must be gratified at seeing it so near completion. It must be beneficial to the members to have a place where they could meet together, and, by mutual assistance, improve their position and their moral tone ... As regarded the establishment of trades unions in the past he thought they were necessary to fight against wrongs and redress grievances that were seriously felt. They had then been opposed by men who were afraid that to allow working men such power as they claimed would lead to anarchy.<sup>114</sup>

He went on to say that he believed the feeling against the unions was fast dying out, and employers and workmen both recognised that conciliation would stop disputes and it was his duty to pass a well-deserved tribute to the old pioneers, who had worked so hard for the establishment of unionism in days when such work was a struggle and a risk.<sup>115</sup> Major Smith MLA, now also mayor of the city, expressed great pleasure at being present at the ceremony during his year in office and that he was also privileged each year to act as the marshal of the procession on Eight Hour Day. Mr Piper, of the firm of James and Piper,

111. BT&LC Minutes, September 30, 1887.

112. BT&LC Minutes, September 30, 1887. The list identified J. Ballantyne, W. Evans, J. W. Graham, Hiam, Bourke, R. Surtees, W. Ballantyne, A. Smith, J. Smith, Muir, Clydesdale, Anthony, Morrison, Anderson, Martin, Hunter and Dyer and listing the present officers of the Council – G. Williams, President; W. Evans, Treasurer; T. S. Bailey, Secretary; J. Martin, R. Surtees, R. Clydesdale, W. Morrison and R. Smith, Trustees; T. G. Dyer, J. L. Anderson, J. Martin, R. Clydesdale and R. Smith, Building Committee. G. Hunter, J. Smith, Desnoy, Tweedale, Anthony, Emery, Pierce, Stofield, Sproat, Friend, Wilson, Field, H. T. Graham, Sutherland, Ewins, Davie, Hagor, Paton, McMillan, Huggett, Davis, Booth, Dunstan, Rose and Porter as the men responsible.

113. “The New Trades Hall,” *Ballarat Star*, October 17, 1887.

114. *Ibid.*

115. *Ibid.*

the architects, presented President Williams with a silver trowel, inscribed: Presented to George Williams, Esq. on the occasion of his laying the foundation stone of the Trades' Hall, Ballarat. James and Piper, Architects, October 15, 1887.<sup>116</sup>

Spirits were high at the banquet held later that day. MPs Ham and Russell spoke, and in his second speech for the day, the MTHC president, H. A. Harwood, said that his Council worked for peace and therefore would not sanction aggression against capital but protection was a different matter:

At the same time the interest of the employers and of the employees did not always agree, and the Council had sometimes to show a bold front and maintain the rate of wages for the white race. The presence of the Chinese race was a distinct menace to white labour of all sorts.<sup>117</sup>

So, the emphasis on this day was again overflowing with harmony and goodwill between capital and labour, as long as both interests were protected. On 22 May 1888, another social gathering was held to celebrate the opening of the Hall.<sup>118</sup> By September it was reported that 16 societies were meeting there,<sup>119</sup> and that the Ballarat Operatic Company offered to put on a performance of *HMS Pinafore* to aid the building fund.<sup>120</sup>

Renovations and internal restructuring over the years have altered some features, but, today, the building and the major internal features remain intact, which is in accord with the original design. In 1926, £2000 was spent on internal remodelling and sewerage with a loan provided by the Victorian Unions Cooperative Loan Fund.<sup>121</sup> The re-roofing that occurred in the 1980s was an important step. The restoration of the facade in 2018 repaired the damage that had been caused by the ravages of Ballarat's weather and removed the layers of oil-based paints that had been preventing the original render performing its intended purpose. So, 132 years later, it proudly stands there, true to its original design:

It is a three-storey brick building set on a sharply angled site. Its rendered facade is executed in a grandiose mannerist design using giant Corinthian orders and broken pediments. The hall is located on the ground floor with offices at the front and the central bluestone stair leads to more office space on the 1st floor and a

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116. Ibid.

117. Ibid.

118. BT&LC Minutes, April 13, 1888.

119. BT&LC Minutes, May 22, 1888.

120. BT&LC Minutes, September 14, 1888.

121. *The Herald*, July 21, 1926.

meeting room on the second. With the exception of the facade, the building is simple, functional and unadorned.<sup>122</sup>

### **The Role of the new Peak Union body**

BT&LC was in unchartered territory. They had the building, the community status and a large body of support from the emerging labour movement but what was their role? They clearly had the support and encouragement of MTH. In 1886 the President of MTC and future Labor leader “Billy” Trenwith had visited and there were regular exchanges of correspondence.<sup>123</sup> Their budget was never large. The secretary was employed for £1 per week and he employed a cleaner. This has remained the pattern with some administrative support added and the occasional project officer. By 1889, the BT&LC had established a disputes committee as well as finance, rules revision, and building sub-committees.<sup>124</sup> By 1890 William Hurdsfield from the Bricklayers Union, had become a prominent delegate to join Anderson, John Wilson, Bailey (ASE) and Porter (AMA) capable of participating in any forum and maintaining close links with the local Liberal politicians, although this strong relationship would later be a barrier between the craft unions and the AWU.<sup>125</sup> In 1891 there were 16 unions affiliated.<sup>126</sup>

The disputes committee had begun to take on a role in the resolution of disputes, although not without meeting some resistance, as occurred in the Phoenix Foundry Dispute. This strike demonstrated the three-way tension that now existed between the union organisation, the local branch of the union, and the BT&LC. Local authority over the workers was at stake as was the standing of the BT&LC. The local union branch vacillated between relying on their union alone and mediation by BT&LC at the local level. The dispute was widely reported and the outcome was undoubtedly a victory for the local power that had been vested in the BT&LC, which was confident in its right to control its own destiny. The dispute was first raised at BT&LC in March 1889, then referred to the Disputes Committee in April.<sup>127</sup>

The Phoenix Foundry in Ballarat was the one of the first Victorian firms to benefit from a change in government policy in the early 1870s that had been designed to stimulate

122. “Ballarat Trades Hall,” Victorian Heritage Register – H0657, Heritage Council Victoria, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/62>.

123. Z545 Box 2. Melbourne University Archives.

124. BT&LC Minutes, March 15, 1889; August 30, 1889.

125. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

126. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*. Quoting the Commonwealth listing 23 unions were affiliated with BT&LC.

127. BT&LC Minutes, March 15, 1889, April 6, 1889.

Victorian manufacturing through preferential tendering. After gaining a contract to build 10 goods locomotives, the foundry's first engine was delivered to the Victorian Railways in 1873 amid great rejoicing. In 1886, the Ballarat branch of the Ironworkers' Assistants Association (IAA) was formed.<sup>128</sup> In 1889, a dispute arose regarding a circular sent to Phoenix from the IAA that requested an increase in wages from 6/- a day to 6/9 and inclusion of overtime allowances. Local conciliation conducted by the BT&LC disputes committee reached agreement with management, but the local union rejected the settlement, and the labourers immediately went on strike with the authority of the IAA.<sup>129</sup> On 15 April 1889, the foundry paid off more than 500 workers and suspended operations. By this time, Phoenix had a government contract to build 60 locomotives, with 13 manufactured and delivered, so they had a buffer to withstand the IAA's pressure.<sup>130</sup> The *Argus* reported "that the directors were quite sanguine about establishing a non-union shop as was the case in Melbourne."<sup>131</sup>

On 1 May 1889 at the Phoenix Foundry, it might not have looked quite so straight forward as more than 400 men and boys congregated to protest against the new labourers who had gone onsite. Mounted police were brought in, which created new divisions. Henry Hunter, a carpenter, was arrested for using language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace and one of the newly engaged labourers was dipped in a water trough.<sup>132</sup> The men, after some delay, got the union's permission to withdraw the circular on condition that the directors agreed to concessions that had been negotiated with the BT&LC disputes committee. So, on the evening of 8 May 1889, those unions involved in the strike met at Trades Hall to consider the proposals, taking until 11.30 pm to accept the terms:

Great satisfaction was expressed on all hands, and ringing cheers were given by a large crowd outside the Trades Hall when the result was made known. An adjournment was subsequently made to Pobjoy's Unicorn Hotel, where Mr Sheldon, president of the Ironworkers' Assistants Union, proposed the health of the president of the Trades Hall Council.<sup>133</sup>

As a result, the directors increased the minimum rate of wages and agreed to pay overtime, or a minimum wage of £2 0s. 6d. weekly, and penalty rates. They declined to

128. Butrims and MacArtney, *The Phoenix Foundry*.

129. BT&LC Minutes, March 15, 1889, March 29, 1889, April 12, 1889, April 26, 1889.

130. "The Strike at Ballarat," *The Argus*, April 17, 1889.

131. "The Strike at the Phoenix Foundry: History of the Situation," *The Argus*, April 29, 1889.

132. "The Ironworkers' Strike at Ballarat," *The Argus*, May 2, 1889.

133. "The Ironworkers' Strike at Ballarat: Resumption of Work at the Phoenix Foundry," *The Argus*, May 1, 1889.

discharge all non-union men, but offered no objection to getting these men into the union, and work resumed on 9 May 1889.<sup>134</sup> The BT&LC had demonstrated an important point – they had to be considered in any workplace in Ballarat.<sup>135</sup> This strike represents one of the clearest examples of Brigden’s analysis of the power of peak bodies.<sup>136</sup> Organisational power – “power over” (the rank and file, union officials, employers and the state) – and collective movement power – “power for” (the rank and file, the labour movement, the working class) – see-sawed for the duration, and while organisational power won decisively, unity was proclaimed with pride of place in the Eight Hour Day parade for the Ballarat IAA. Its new banner (see Figure 2Figure 3) commissioned from Kift & Smith, a Ballarat firm, no doubt a celebration of the successful conclusion of the dispute, was first paraded through Ballarat’s streets in 1890.<sup>137</sup>

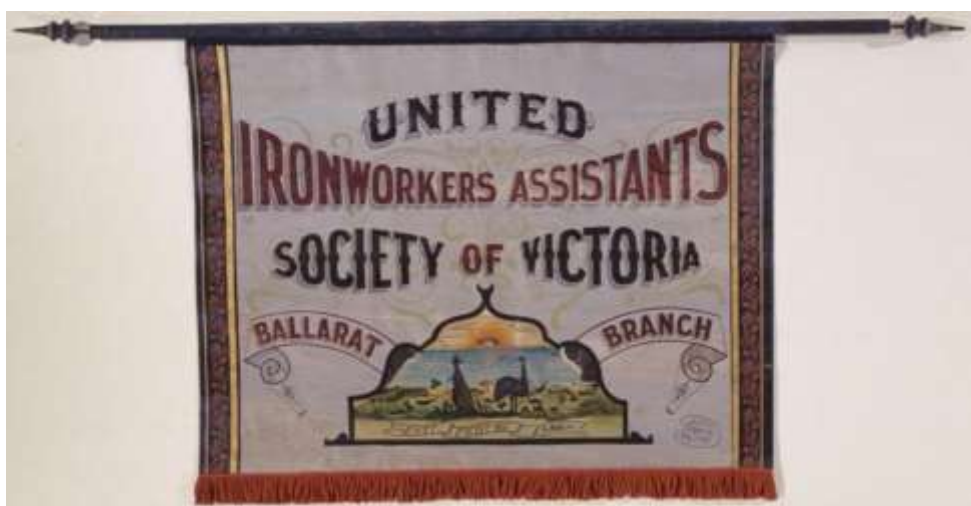


Figure 3. Banner – United Ironworkers’ Assistants Society of Victoria, Ballarat Branch Eight Hour Day. Source: Museums Victoria.

Another priority usually assigned to peak bodies is the political role, but in this dispute it was summarily conceded by the BT&LC. The secretary of the BT&LC, T Bailey, who was a foreman at the Phoenix, was the first candidate seeking to contest a political position for the Ballarat West seat with BT&LC endorsement. Three foremen were dismissed for having taken part in this campaign because they were deemed by management to be occupying an invidious position, owing to the introduction of politics into the foundry, and they asserted a change would have been absolutely necessary in the

134. Ibid.

135. BT&LC Minutes, May 10, 1889. Thanks to Secretary Wilson for services to IAS. June 7, 1889. Donation to Ironworkers Assistants Strike Fund.

136. Brigden, “A Vehicle for Solidarity.”

137. “Museums Victoria Collections,” Museums Victoria, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/items/476034>.



interests of the company even had the assistants' strike not occurred. BT&LC and Bailey did not proceed with the nomination.<sup>138</sup> The Phoenix Foundry continued to receive government contracts for railway stock until the decision to build all locomotives at Newport meant the demise of the foundry in 1905.<sup>139</sup> The next stage in Ballarat's railway history was the opening of the Ballarat North railway workshops (BNRW) in 1917.

From its beginning, BT&LC support for striking workers has been seen as a major concern. In 1888 a special meeting was held to strike a levy to support the Newcastle Coalminers.<sup>140</sup> Then BT&LC moved to assert its role as a peak body by taking on a fundraising role for the London Dockworkers. The evidence is still seen today in the council chamber where the portrait of Cardinal Manning has held pride of place since 1893 – a statement of commitment to engage at every level of the labour movement, including in international issues. The portrait has a significant connection with Tom Mann and his pivotal role in the Great London Dock Strike of 1889, which probably affected his decision to come to Australia in the 1900s and his connection with Ballarat until his death. The London Strike Committee also included Ben Tillett who later visited Ballarat and H. H. Champion, who emigrated to Melbourne and married Elsie Goldstein, sister of Vida. By 1888, in England only 5 per cent of workers were union members. However, when the London dockers went on strike for an extra penny an hour (6d. to 7d.), by the end of August 1889 it was estimated that 130,000 men had withdrawn their labour.<sup>141</sup> The Strike Committee organised mass meetings and established 16,000 pickets outside the dock gates.<sup>142</sup>

The Amalgamated Stevedores Union called for support for the dockers as many dockers and their families were starving and employers were confident of forcing them back to work. Then money started to arrive from Australia, including Ballarat. BT&LC secretary John Wilson asked sympathisers and unions to support the London Dock Laborers' Relief Fund and continued to report to meetings throughout 1889. The cheque records, pay-in slips, Wilson's memoranda and sub-totals, Burns' receipts, the Melbourne balance sheet, Bennet's letters on transmitting the money are all still part of the BT&LC collection.<sup>143</sup>

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138. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

139. Buttrims and MacArtney, *The Phoenix Foundry*.

140. BT&LC Minutes, August 6, 1888.

141. "The Great London Dock Strike, 1889," libcom.org, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://libcom.org/history/1889-the-great-london-dock-strike>.

142. Ben Tillett, *A Brief History of the Dockers' Union: Commemorating the 1889 Dockers' Strike* (Nineteenth Century Collections Online; Twentieth Century Press, 1910).

143. BT&LC Minutes, August 8, 1889, September 13 & 27, 1889, November 28, 1889, December 20, 1889.

On September 6, he paid £168/13/00 into their account at the London Chartered Bank of Australia, the first of 21 payments meticulously recorded by Treasurer Evans.<sup>144</sup> The total of Ballarat contributions was £1971/10/10<sup>145</sup> (\$237,000 in today's purchasing power)<sup>146</sup> as part of the Australian contribution of £30,425, nearly two-thirds of the total of £48,736 raised to support the strikers.<sup>147</sup> The money arrived at just the right time and meant that the concerns regarding the feeding of the strikers and their families had been alleviated. The dockers scented victory.<sup>148</sup>

The London lord mayor formed the Mansion House Committee and called in Cardinal Manning, Catholic Archbishop of Westminster. Manning said that sometimes intervention on behalf of the poor was essential for continued social peace: "Where there is no proportion, or no known proportion between enormous and increasing profits and scanty and stationary wages, to be contented is superhuman."<sup>149</sup> The Mansion House Committee, thanks to Cardinal Manning, persuaded employers to meet practically all the dockers' demands. After this successful strike, the dockers formed a new General Labourers Union and in London alone, nearly 20,000 men joined. The success of the dockers' strike was a turning point in the history of trade unionism in England. From a trade union membership of 750,000 in 1888, it grew to over two million by 1899.<sup>150</sup>

What is of particular interest when looking back at this event 130 years later is the technological change that had been introduced by the overland telegraph. In this age, we marvel at the speed of the internet (sometimes) and the immediacy of responses from a global perspective, but Kevin Livingston contended that "technological nationalism"<sup>151</sup> had brought Australians together "by making use of the communications technology of the telegraph to achieve an imagined community"<sup>152</sup> from pre-Federation days. The best known example of the "imagined community" was of telegraphists from 1888 onwards clearing their lines on the first Tuesday in November to provide notification of the winner

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144. Norman W. Saffin, "Portrait of Cardinal Manning in Ballarat Trades Hall," *Labour History* 8 (1965).

145. *Ibid.*

146. "Measuring Worth Is a Complicated Question," Measuring Worth. com, accessed April 25, 2019, <https://www.measuringworth.com/index.php>.

147. P. F. Donovan, "Australia and the Great London Dock Strike 1889," *Labour History* 23 (1972), accessed April 25, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27508058>.

148. *Ibid.*

149. Vincent A. McClelland, *Cardinal Manning: His Public Life and Influence, 1865–1892* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 142.

150. "The Great London Dock Strike, 1889."

151. Kevin T. Livingston, "Technological Federalism and Technological Nationalism," in *Becoming Australians: The Movement Towards Federation in Ballarat and the Nation*, ed. Kevin T. Livingston, Richard Jordan, and Gay Sweely (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2001), 125.

152. *Ibid.*, 127.

of the Melbourne Cup to newspaper offices all over Australia and New Zealand.<sup>153</sup> But it also enabled the case of the London dock-workers to be widely known. Not only were substantial amounts of money able to be transmitted quickly but also trade unionists had been brought together as an international body able to draw readily on each other in times of crisis. The presence of the BT&LC took pressure off individual unions needing to divert resources to gather support. In February 1893, when the BT&LC meeting heard of Cardinal Manning's death, motions of regret and the commissioning of two paintings of George Higinbotham and Manning were passed.<sup>154</sup> When or why Higinbotham – journalist, politician and, by 1886, chief justice – was introduced into the decision is not clear, but in 1890 he had subscribed to the Maritime Strike fund, enraged by the employers' refusal to negotiate. He saw unionists fighting with unequal odds against entrenched interests: "Diehards demanded that the artillery should drag him from the Supreme Court and shoot him."<sup>155</sup>

Manning's portrait was painted by George Grant, a "Ballarat Boy", who became significant in another aspect of labour history as the painter of many of the wonderfully colourful and detailed union banners now held at the University of Melbourne archives.<sup>156</sup> In April 1893, McAllan, president of the Carpenters Union, was in the chair for the unveiling joined by a "goodly number of unionists and friends."<sup>157</sup> and the refrain was reiterated that as unionists they had no ill-feeling for capitalists; they asked only for consideration and common justice.<sup>158</sup> Grant's father acknowledged the compliments paid to his son, to whom, he said, the work was one of love.<sup>159</sup> The Higinbotham portrait by Chuck of Sturt Street<sup>160</sup> was presented by BT&LC's solicitor, Newton Wanliss. The fate of that portrait is discussed in a later chapter. Cardinal Manning still has pride of place in the Ballarat Council Chamber. In that same year, Grant also presented a portrait of Thomas Bury, known as "Tom Touchstone", which hung alongside that other George

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153. *Ibid.*, 16.

154. BT&LC Minutes, January 15, 1892. Hurdsfield, E. Hall, Phillips and John Wilson were appointed to a committee to consider all aspects of the proposal.

155. Gwyneth Dow, "Higinbotham, George (1826–1892)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 4, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1972), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/higinbotham-george-3766>.

156. A. Reeves, *Another Day, Another Dollar*.

157. "The Cardinal Manning and Chief Justice Higinbotham Memorial Pictures: Unveiling and Presentation," *Ballarat Star*, April 14, 1883.

158. *Ibid.* W. Harrison, president of the BT&LC and representative of the Woollen Mills Union unveiled the portrait.

159. *Ibid.*

160. Saffin, "Portrait of Cardinal Manning in Ballarat Trades Hall."

Grant painting of Cardinal Manning<sup>161</sup> but is now in the Gold Museum Collection as part of the Ballarat Historical Society Collection.<sup>162</sup>

## New Unionism

While the labour movement was still led by the craft unions, a dramatic surge in new industries – such as clothing, tanneries, breweries, woollen mills, and food processing – meant that larger, factory-style employment became more common from the 1870s. Whereas trade unionism had been the preserve of skilled tradesmen, the extension to workers organised as industrial or general bodies, rather than along occupational lines, had begun to occur. Brewers, tailoresses and curriers were very skilled but had not come through formal apprenticeships. They had learnt their skills in new environments but saw the advantages other workers had received from their collective purpose. However, they lacked the bargaining power of the crafts, so membership subscriptions had to be low and without the “benefit” policies, a feature of the craft unions, leaving these new unions more reliant on industrial action to improve their members’ wages. Gollan makes the point that these new unions tended to see themselves as organisations representing a class rather than a trade and that their activities extended throughout all the colonies.<sup>163</sup>

In Ballarat specialist locations were emerging. Near the railway station, large bluestone warehouses had been built, retail stores had opened in Sturt Street, coach builders and saddlers had been established in Armstrong Street, the Phoenix and the Victoria foundries occupied a whole block between Sturt and Dana streets, and agricultural implement makers were prominent in Creswick Road.<sup>164</sup> The impressive Sunnyside Woollen Mill buildings, which were constructed in 1872, 1874 and 1886 and have been included on the National Trust Register, are still considered to be the best surviving examples of 19th-century woollen mill architecture in Victoria.<sup>165</sup> Near these major workplaces and also starting to shape the streetscape were those “detached dwellings of weatherboard, bricks and stone standing on their own block of land and growing from one or two rooms to

161. BT&LC Minutes, September 29, 1932.

162. “Portrait: Thomas Bury ‘Tom Touchstone’,” Object No. 78.0413, Ballarat Historical Society Collection, Sovereign Hill Museums Association, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://ehive.com/collections/4819/objects/222240/portrait-thomas-bury-tom-touchstone>.

163. Peter Matthews and Gordon Ford, *Australian Trade Unions: Their Development, Structure and Horizons* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1968).

164. Bate, *Lucky City*.

165. “Ballarat and District Industrial Heritage Project: Ballarat Woollen Mill,” accessed April 25, 2020, [https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Ballarat\\_Woollen\\_Mill](https://bih.federation.edu.au/index.php/Ballarat_Woollen_Mill).

three or four,”<sup>166</sup> which are still recognisable today, and which became the typical home of the Ballarat worker and his family.

The establishment of the Amalgamated Shearers Union (ASU), which became the largest and the most decisive event in changing the face of unionism in the 1890s and 1900s occurred under the leadership of William Guthrie Spence. A militant, a great negotiator and a successful organiser of bush-workers but flawed in his broader understanding of the industrial and political landscapes that were operating at the time, he is still an important figure in the Ballarat story. Born in Scotland, the son of a stonemason, Spence came to Creswick in 1853, and by 1914–15 he had become the Commonwealth Postmaster-General.<sup>167</sup> Another to face the predicament over the role of the elected representative, Spence wrote extensively and provides detailed and exciting accounts of his life and times.<sup>168</sup> He had no illusions regarding the need in the New World, as in the Old World, “to protect workers from exploitation and that the workers themselves through trade unions have had to fight for all they have, and have had against them all the powers of law and law makers, of pulpit, press and platform.”<sup>169</sup>

However, perhaps most surprising was his early recognition of the importance of women to the movement:

The unemblazoned courage of the wives of trade unionists locked out or on strike can never become known or appreciated until the world becomes humanitarian instead of commercial. The grit that enables men, women, and children to go hungry to bed every night ... are the true heroes and heroines of the world.<sup>170</sup>

Spence first came to prominence in the local area with his role in the AMA. In June 1874 the mining unions held a conference in Bendigo and they determined that all unions would unite as the AMA.<sup>171</sup> However by 1878, there were only three AMA branches, with a total of 250 members; then Spence, as secretary of the Creswick Miners Union, together with president John Sampson (grandfather of Robert Menzies), led 600 men into

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166. Fry, “The Condition of the Urban Wage Earning Class in Australia,” 6.

167. Lansbury and Nairn, “Spence.”

168. Spence, *Australia's Awakening*; William G. Spence, *The Ethics of New Unionism* (Creswick, Vic: Martin and Grose, Printers, 1892).

169. Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, 10.

170. *Ibid.*, 12.

171. Australian Trade Union Archives (ATUA), accessed November 11, 2020, <http://www.atua.org.au>. The Maldon Miners' Association, Buninyong Miners' Association, Blackwood Miners' Association, Clunes Miners' Association, Haddon Miners' Association, St Arnaud Miners' Association, Sandhurst Miners' Association, Stawell Miners' Association, Malmsbury Miners' Association were foundation members.

the AMA, which resulted in both men later being “black-balled” by the mine owners. Spence was elected as a delegate from the AMA to the BT&LC in 1887 as indicated in a letter in his own handwriting, which is still in the BT&LC records:

Dear Sir  
Your favour of the 23rd ultimo was duly laid before our committee (Amalgamated Miners Association) on Saturday night, and I have pleasure in informing you that Ex-President T. Phillips, President A. W. Hunter and myself were appointed to represent this branch on the Trades & Labour Council Ballarat. Mr Hunter will attend on Friday next.  
Yours W. G. Spence.<sup>172</sup>

In June 1890, it is also recorded in the minutes that he “gave a detailed account of the progress made in Queensland and the victory achieved by the Shearers Union.”<sup>173</sup>

After his efforts with the AMA, Spence was called on to help the shearers form a union. Several attempts had been made to organise workers in the pastoral industry prior to 1886, but all had failed due to the itinerant nature of the workforce. In 1886, a reduction in price had been notified, and those who usually went shearing were ready to take concerted action. Spence describes how David Temple, who was working in the goldmines, came to him:

When the notice of reduced shearing rates appeared he said to his brothers that it was not worth while going out shearing unless they had a union like the AMA. The young man’s mother, a practical Scotchwoman, said to David: “Why don’t you start a union, then?” He said he did not know enough of such work, and all previous attempts had failed. His mother replied, “Why don’t you go to Mr. Spence? I am sure he will help you.” He took his mother’s advice and called on me.<sup>174</sup>

In May 1886, Spence wrote to *The Courier*, urging shearers to become organised, which then led to the appearance of supporting letters from shearers. On 3 June 1886, David Temple opened an office in Ballarat and commenced enrolling members and Bateman, then editor of *The Courier*, wrote a leading article that set out the grievances of the shearers. On 12 June, an advertisement appeared in *The Courier*: “A meeting of shearers will be held at Fern’s Hotel, Sturt Street, this (Saturday) evening at 8 o’clock. Business – re-establishing a shearers’ union. All shearers particularly requested to attend. David Temple, Sec.pro tem.”<sup>175</sup> At that meeting, objects and rules of the ASU were adopted. Spence was elected chairman, David Temple secretary, and a committee of nine including

172. Spence to Mr Bailey, Sec Trades Hall Ballarat, December 5, 1887, Reference 1977.0084, University of Melbourne Archives.

173. BT&LC Minutes, June 20, 1890.

174. Spence, *Australia’s Awakening*, 12.

175. Ibid.

the licensee of the Fern Hotel and later the George Hotel, Daniel Fern as treasurer (also treasurer of the Old Colonists' Association). By the end of 1887, there were over 9000 members with branches covering New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia.

Temple was the backbone of the union in the 1880s and maintained continuous correspondence with branch secretaries:

As he was the “practical shearer”, policy formulation was his responsibility. While Spence did most of the talking to pastoralists, it was Temple who put head office proposals to annual conferences and explained policy decisions to the membership. In his dealings with pastoralists and members, he was patient and courteous.<sup>176</sup>

Temple and other organisers went from station to station enrolling members for an entrance fee of 2/6 and yearly contribution of 5/-. Unfortunately Temple's association with the AWU did not end well and his resignation was accepted at the 1890 Conference.<sup>177</sup> In 1894, this union amalgamated with the General Labourers Union, established in 1891, to form the Australian Workers Union (AWU).<sup>178</sup> The Queensland Shearers Union, established in 1887, and the Queensland Workers Union merged in 1891 to form the Amalgamated Workers Union of Queensland, and in 1904 amalgamated with the AWU, to form a union with a combined membership of 34,000.<sup>179</sup> In 1901, the Creswick branch was renamed the Victoria–Riverina branch and the office was moved from Creswick to St Arnaud. The formation of the AWU would have a major effect for the BT&LC in the next decade.<sup>180</sup>

## Conclusion

In Ballarat, labour movement leaders of the colonial period had adapted the liberal tradition to suit their own purposes.<sup>181</sup> They had been granted prime real estate for their own building, they managed the largest gala day of the year to celebrate the Eight Hour Day, they had assisted in the creation of dozens of unions for workers outside the craft unions and they had asserted their right to settle local disputes. The new unions began to look to other independent political organisations to achieve their broader aims through

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176. Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, 106.

177. *Ibid.*, 268.

178. “AWU Timeline,” Australian Workers Union, accessed March 19, 2020, <https://www.awu.net.au/our-union/history/>.

179. *Ibid.*

180. *Ibid.*

181. Bongiorno, *The People's Party*.

legislation, as opposed to the craft unions' support for the Liberals. The typical Australian was no longer the bushman, although the ethos of the bush worker maintained a potent influence over the national character. When Paterson wrote *Clancy of the Overflow* in 1889, he was powerfully perpetuating the bush myth:

I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy  
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between the houses tall,  
And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city  
Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all.

And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy,  
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go<sup>182</sup>

But in Ballarat an urban working class was establishing itself. Members of this class would play an increasingly important role: building their houses; playing cricket, football, and tennis; attending church on Sunday, going to the Burrumbeet Races on New Year's Day, having a bet with an SP Bookie at one of the hundred or more hotels, competing in the South Street competitions; riding their bikes to work and coming home for lunch. Knocking off with still some of the day left for leisure, they would go to Pleasant Sunday Evenings at Trades Hall and participate in the Eight-Day Procession and the Annual Sports Day. It is hard to believe they thought too much about what they were missing: riding around after Clancy, living an itinerant, lonely and uncertain life.

It was later persuasive for politicians to build the Anzac lore of mateship and egalitarianism already developed around the concept of mateship among the shearers under the Tree of Knowledge as the symbol for the formation for the ALP. But as Lake asserts: "Just as the independent freewheeling bushman was being enshrined as Australia's cultural hero, the balancing of the sexes was resulting in more men entering wedlock."<sup>183</sup> In Ballarat family life and the mateship of their own meeting place at BTH, of their churches, sporting bodies and their lodges which united Protestant workers belonging to Freemasons, Druids, Rechabites, Buffaloes and Oddfellows, and the Catholics with their own fraternal societies providing support systems of considerable strength and durability which cemented the labour movement in Ballarat.

182. Andrew B. Paterson, *Clancy of the Overflow* (Sydney: D. J. Harwood, 1992).

183. Lake, *Historical Reconsiderations IV*, 122.



## Chapter 4

### New Branches 1891-1914

*(Branches are essential to trees, as they form the canopy, and hold the leaves up to the sun, enabling photosynthesis to occur but not nearly as useful as the whole living organism that is a tree)*

Australian Labor folklore has it that the national party began its existence by some supernatural stroke of good fortune at a shearers' strike meeting under the Tree of Knowledge at Barcaldine, Queensland, in 1891. A good yarn, mouthed repeatedly at ALP fundraising quiz nights and by party leaders in Queensland, and even nationally, but not good history. The development of a national party of labour was a slow process, not divinely inspired. Parliamentary Labor developed autonomously in each of the colonies, and it was not until Federation in 1901 that Labor candidates elected to the national parliament could seriously be considered as part of a national party. The bush union movement in Victoria has at least as much entitlement to claim some part in the eventual development of a national party as has its counterpart in Queensland.

—Lyle J. Allan<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Bolstered by the regulatory system, national union density in the early twentieth century led to a rapid unionisation of the workforce and an increase in the institutional power of labour. Markey notes that “the functional basis for these strategies was reinforced by socialist influence in the new unions.”<sup>2</sup> While gains for workers achieved by the alliance with liberals had been obvious, unrest was coming from many directions. Another new branch was asking for some space and was becoming more insistent. From the 1890s, “socialists, anarchists and single taxers set up stalls at almost every radical venue, peddling newspapers, books and pamphlets from parks, wharves and street corners.”<sup>3</sup> In 1887, the Australian Socialist League (ASL) had formed and its newspaper, the *Radical*, was the first regular socialist newspaper.<sup>4</sup> Ballarat was home to many early participants in the Socialism debate who were contributing to the political and intellectual ferment – people such as O’Dowd, Edward and Will Dyson, the Lindsay brothers, and Spence. However, largely undocumented in the Ballarat records, although acknowledged in other

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1. Lyle J. Allan, “Provincial Trades and Labour Councils,” (2010), unpublished manuscript.
  2. Ray Markey, “New Unionism in Australia 1880–1900,” *Labour History* 48 (1985): 15.
  3. Bruce Scates, *A New Australia: Citizenship, Radicalism and the First Republic* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 51.
  4. Jim McIlroy, *Australia’s First Socialists* (Sydney: Resistance Books, 2008).

places, was the remarkable group of women socialists who spent their formative years in Ballarat and made their mark throughout the colonies and, indeed, abroad.

In 1891, Ballarat Trades Hall was chosen as the only non-capital location to host an intercolonial trade union congress. It was confirmation of its standing at that time as an equal partner in the major debates of the labour movement. After that congress's decision to seek direct representation in parliament, the effort intensified. While Victoria had lagged in implementing this decision, the arrival of Tom Mann built momentum. In 1904, Ballarat elected a clean sweep of ALP members to the state parliament and a new era began.

New branches started to gather strength, particularly when the AWU arrived back in Ballarat. In 1905, the AWU relocated the Victoria–Riverina Branch to Ballarat from St. Arnaud, and within a very short time, had gathered a formidable team. It led the growth of the newly formed ALP in country Victoria, undoubtedly building on its experience in NSW, where it had substantially shaped that state and had 16 endorsed unionists already elected to the NSW Parliament. By 1916 BT&LC took on one of its biggest tasks- the challenge to the ALP Prime Minister Hughes who was determined to impose conscription on the Australian population. On the industrial front a new responsibility for BT&LC was the introduction of independent arbitration, which was closely connected to protection.

### **The Role for a Political Wing**

A major catalyst for a change of direction was clearly the Maritime Strike of 1890, identified by many, including Spence, as the vehicle by which the Employers Union unleashed its ambition to wipe out Australian unionism with one blow. Spence described how the Employers Union sought cooperation with the Mine-Owners' Association of Victoria, whose headquarters were in Ballarat, but claimed that the association declined, as it was on good terms with the AMA.<sup>5</sup> Although the strike failed, it provided the impetus for the union movement to decide that it needed its own political wing.

Momentum was certainly growing in Ballarat in September 1890 when the BT&LC carried a resolution “to draw up a platform for the immediate federation of all the bodies

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5. Spence, *Australia's Awakening*.

within its jurisdiction for the political, industrial and social advancement of the working class and the ruling of the country by legitimate representatives of the people.”<sup>6</sup>

The maritime strike had involved at least 50,000 workers in Australia and perhaps another 8,000 in New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> The use of the militia was disturbing. When the government called out the troops and enrolled special constables the lines were clearly drawn and the word went out that Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Price had ordered his men to “fire low and lay them out”, bringing back shades of Eureka. Deakin was chief secretary and Judith Brett in her recent definitive biography of Deakin describes it as a massive overreaction on the part of the government, and “Deakin had pushed for it.”<sup>8</sup> Since Deakin was a respected able administrator, practised in the art of compromise and active promoter of the Factory Acts,<sup>9</sup> this was particularly distressing for workers.<sup>10</sup> *The Courier* editorial raised an issue, which has not been remarked on elsewhere, of the new divisions that had emerged in large population centres that condemned the government’s action while small meetings in the remote areas had eulogised them:

The country riflemen were taken to Melbourne because it was considered that they had no sympathy with the trade unionists and Col. Price should have known that his words appealed to that class hatred so many residents in the country have towards artisans and labourers connected with the Trades Hall Council.<sup>11</sup>

## The 1891 Intercolonial Trade Union Congress

While there have been many claims regarding where the parliamentary party of the workers began, it depends on the question you ask: Was it the first man elected in the name of the working class, but that would have to be Charles Don in 1859, or was it Thomas Glassey, the first man in Queensland to declare himself a labour candidate and be elected in 1888, or Trenwith, MTH president, elected in 1889 and part of the power struggle at the MTH to overthrow the old guard resisting any concerted union involvement in politics?<sup>12</sup> In an ABC interview Professor Bradley Bowden was prepared to say that there is no evidence - not a single reference to the Tree of Knowledge in *The*

6. BT&LC Minutes, September 19, 1890.

7. Bongiorno, *The People’s Party*.

8. Judith Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 164.

9. R. Norris, “Deakin, Alfred (1856–1919) “ in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 8, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/deakin-alfred-5927>.

10. Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*, 164.

11. *The Courier*, October 9, 1890.

12. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

*Worker* – which was the union movement’s newspaper from the 1st March 1890 (1st ed.) right through to the early 1900s. But he went on to say he is not sure exactly how it came into being, “... people started to associate that the Labor Party was formed in association with the great strikes and it [the Tree of Knowledge] had a certain symbolism – so somehow this myth arose and it’s had a great significance ever since.”<sup>13</sup> When the ALP national executive decided to celebrate the centenary of the ALP in 1891, they formed a sub-committee and commissioned Ross McMullin to write *The Light on the Hill*, telling him that the date was already decided as 1891. Robert Hogg’s recollection, as a member of that committee, was that it was based on the election to the NSW state Parliament of union candidates.<sup>14</sup>

In one sense it is not important where the ALP began, it came together in different ways in every colony and only after Federation did it emerge as a party in the Federal parliament. It was not known as the ALP in 1904 when it formed Australia’s first federal Labor government and first labour government in the world. While not claiming Ballarat created the modern ALP, it was at this congress the ‘modus operandi’ was established for a national approach to seeking parliamentary representation. While Victoria lagged behind Queensland and New South Wales in implementation mainly due to its support for protection and the alliance with Syme and the Liberals, this should not lead to the conclusion that Ballarat should be written out of the history to consolidate the *Bulletin* view.

One fact cannot be denied. It was in Ballarat in April 1891, at the seventh ITUC, that the decision to adopt a scheme of federation was made by the trade union movement, including securing representation in parliament. The 1891 ITUC was attended by 127 delegates, representing all colonies except Western Australia and New Zealand. A large group of 115, including one woman, Sara Muir, were proudly photographed in attendance.<sup>15</sup>

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13. Julia Harris, “Tree of Knowledge and Tree of Myth,” ABC Western Queensland, June 2, 2006, accessed September 8, 2020, <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2006/06/01/1584675.htm>.

14. Robert Hogg email to author.

15. “Ballarat Trades Congress,” *The Australasian*, May 2, 1891.

This particular congress gathering was regarded as the first truly representative ITUC.<sup>16</sup> The Ballarat delegates represented unions and their peak body.<sup>17</sup>

Concern over the effectiveness of labour bargaining power was reflected in the congress papers. Issues relating to the political organisation of the labour movement and the restructuring of trade union organisation under the Australasian Federation of Labour were of major importance.<sup>18</sup> The first ITUC had met in Sydney in 1879. Its report stated that “it was established that the labour organisations of Australasia were practically unanimous in holding certain opinions in social politics.”<sup>19</sup> There were eight congresses in total from 1879 to 1898. Gollan’s analysis of the Ballarat Congress is significant: “The constitution of the Australian Labour Federation adopted at this congress provided for a greater degree of unity of the trade union movement than had ever existed in any country.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly Ross McMullin in *The Light On The Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991* notes: “In April the ITUC at Ballarat approved the proposed ALF (rejected at the 1889 Hobart congress), and unanimously resolved that ‘every effort should be made to obtain direct representation of Labor in Parliament’.”<sup>21</sup> BT&LC president Hurdsfield, also appointed chairman of the seventh ITUC, gave the welcoming speech on April 23, 1891, making it clear the importance to him of the need for a political organisation representing workers:

The organisation politically of the workers is a most important subject as the great power of organised wealth has ways of using it. It is for you to say in what way these men are to be organised, if by a party of men selected in each district to properly coach and instruct them in the various subjects that affect their welfare

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16. 1891 International Congress Ballarat, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU Archives Program. Ballarat delegates W. Hurdsfield, J. Wilson (BT&LC), W. H. Carpenter (Boilermakers), J. Champion (Typographical), W. Brown (Ironworkers Assistants), J. W. Marsden, J. Sheldon (late of the IAA Union now Tailoresses), D. Betts (Labourers Protective Society), F. L. Graham (Operative Bootmakers), E. Meagher, E. Hobson (Painters), T. Bailey (Engineers), G. Bell (Saddlers & Harness Makers), H. Gilhooley (Operative Bricklayers), G. Hunter (Ironmoulders), T. H. Lawn, J. B. Burton (Amalgamated Miners Association of Australasia), T. Phillips (Creswick Miners Association), W. G. Spence, D. Temple (Amalgamated Shearers Union), James Slattery (Casterton Shearers Union).
  17. “The Intercolonial Trade Unions Congress: List of Delegates,” *Argus*, April 16, 1891.
  18. Noel Butlin Archives Centre, “Intercolonial Trade Union Congresses,” ANU Archives Program, accessed April 25, 2020, <http://archives.anu.edu.au/files/document-collection/intercolonial-trade-union-congresses-web-final.pdf>.
  19. *Ibid.*
  20. Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, 106.
  21. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 9.

so that in times of election men may know the views and understand the tactics adopted by many of our representatives.<sup>22</sup>

A motion affirming the desirability of federation in all matters affecting labour throughout Australasia was unanimously adopted and a subcommittee was appointed to draft a scheme for submission to the congress. Delegates of each colony selected their own representatives on the committee, Trenwith (already a member of parliament); John Hancock radicalised by his involvement in the 1890 Maritime Strike and about to enter parliament, the first endorsed MTHC candidate and ex-president,<sup>23</sup> and E. Hobson (from Ballarat) of the BTA were the three Victorian delegates. The committee sat for 14½ hours (outside the ordinary sitting hours of the congress from 9 am to 5.30 pm), and after 10 days the congress was presented with its report and the draft scheme of federation: “To the agreeable surprise of the committee,”<sup>24</sup> the scheme was dealt with in the remarkably short space of time of about six hours and was ultimately adopted with only three alterations. Another report reflects a somewhat more tenuous process. From shortly after 10 am until 5.30 pm there was a series of “wranglings and misunderstandings,”<sup>25</sup> and at least seven points of order were raised during the debate: “Several times the members were completely in a fog”<sup>26</sup> and the remark made by Spence when speaking to the question of female suffrage: “that if all the men stayed at home and let the women carry on the government, they would make a better job of it”<sup>27</sup> still makes him a man before his time.

The full document includes preamble, name, constitution, objects, payments, organisation, general council, general executive, special general executive meetings, provinces, provincial councils, provincial executives, organisation of districts, district council. and objects, can be accessed in *A Documentary History of the Australian Labour Movement 1850–1975*.<sup>28</sup> However one of the objects of the constitution needs stating:

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22. “The Intercolonial Trades and Labour Congress: Session at Ballarat, Second Day,” *The Argus*, April 24, 1891.

23. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

24. “Parliament of Labour: Doings at the Ballarat Trades and Labour Congress,” *Worker*, May 16, 1891.

25. “Ballarat Trades Congress.”

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement*.

“(d) To secure the direct representation of Labour in Parliament and promote such legislative reforms as will ensure social justice to Australian workers.”<sup>29</sup>

The Trades and Labour Council of New South Wales was requested to convene the first meeting of the General Council of the Australasian Federation of Labour, the hope being expressed that no time would be lost in the matter. The *Worker* expressed its view:

This general council meeting will if the congress just closed did nothing else, by the adoption of this scheme of federation it has earned for itself a reputation which will be handed down to posterity on the scroll of history.<sup>30</sup>

For this event alone, the BT&LC and this ITUC deserves to be recognised as a key participant in shaping Australia’s political culture. This is not to detract from the determination of the shearers to take a stand against the powerful squatters They were certainly brave and suffered serious consequences and should be celebrated in the labour movement.

While the *piece de resistance* was the Federation of Labour, the role of the only female delegate, Sara Muir, a tailoress for 23 years and an active unionist is worth noting.<sup>31</sup> Her remarks highlight a problem that still exasperates the union movement as she spoke in favour of a resolution that a registered trademark be used by employers of union labour on all goods produced in the colonies. Delegate Fraser threw down a challenge, saying he did not believe that there were 20 union-made coats in that room. Sara Muir interjected: “That’s true” and in rising to speak was loudly applauded. But she had some tough words for them:

Gentlemen, eight years ago the Melbourne Tailoresses Union struggled hard to get this trademark, but we were sat upon by a few men – I cannot call them unionists – and when we mentioned the matter we were pooh- poohed and told that it was ridiculous to take such a step for female unions. I hope this congress will get this registered trademark and assist and support female labour.  
(Applause)<sup>32</sup>

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29. Ibid., 343.

30. “Parliament of Labour: Doings at the Ballarat Trades and Labour Congress.”

31. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

32. “The Intercolonial Trades and Labour Congress: Session at Ballarat, Second Day.”

## The Early Steps

In May 1891, following the ITUC, the MTHC called a convention to form the Progressive Political League (PPL),<sup>33</sup> with delegates Hurdsfield and Wilson representing BT&LC.<sup>34</sup> In June 1891, the NSW Trades and Labour Council endorsed 42 unionists to stand for 30 seats in the NSW colonial parliament and won 16. *The Courier* enthusiastically endorsed this development, commenting in their editorial (most likely written by Williams) on 19 June 1891 that “the successes of Labour candidates are noteworthy and we commend the self-sufficient, freedom of contract, no compromise capitalists to take stock of the matter and heed the lesson.”<sup>35</sup> On 22 June 1891, a further editorial noted the remarkable situation in the “mother colony,” adding that all sorts of dreadful evils are predicted if labour should become strong in the legislature, but pointing to similar dismay when the ballot box superseded open voting and the prediction of the downfall of British industry when women and children were kept out of the mines:

Our laws have been so largely made by the theorists, by the men who have studied in the same schools, learned the same lessons and have gone through the same uniformed modelled mentality that we want a little of the hard-working and practical working man. The working men of Victoria are organising the Progressive Political League of Victoria and the objectives are clearly stated and acceptable. The curse of Melbourne is its gross and bloated capital, which has been built and pampered at the expense of the colony. We counsel the working men to form their own organization. The group should have common goals but should not be centralised.<sup>36</sup>

This editorial is a fascinating insight into the prevailing attitudes then and suggests the sturdy independence and a right to participate in their society had not dissipated. The first meeting of the Progressive Political League of Victoria (PPL) in Ballarat under the auspices of the BT&LC was held in August 1891.<sup>37</sup> The initial impetus for the PPL, however, faded, but in 1894 the Bricklayers Union congratulated BT&LC on the success of its nominee-Kerr in Grenville. After that election Don Egan from the Bendigo Trades and Labour Council and George Prendergast, later to be an ALP premier, wrote to the

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33. *McMullin, The Light on the Hill*. Ballarat Bendigo, and Geelong Trades Halls, ASU, AMA, and Social Democratic League.

34. BT&LC Minutes, June 5, 1891. An executive of Hurdsfield, president; Wilson, secretary (current secretary of the BT&LC); Painters’ delegate, E. Hobson, (correspondent to the *Commonwealth*, the first PPL newspaper from 1891–93 and member of the Intercolonial Congress Federation drafting committee at the ITUC), W. Harrison Vice-Presidents, and E. Carling Treasurer were elected.

35. *The Courier*, June 19, 1891.

36. *The Courier*, June 22, 1891.

37. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.



BT&LC urging it to run a “straight Labor candidate” in a coming by-election:<sup>38</sup> “At a later meeting, there was a discussion on whether it was the intention of the Council to organise a political party on the basis of the People’s Party of Bendigo.”<sup>39</sup> In June 1894, a broader alliance brought together by the MTH, was held and was attended by Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong and Horsham TLCs, AMA, ASU, Women’s Suffrage Society, Democratic Club, the Protectionist, Liberal and Federation League and all existing PPL branches.<sup>40</sup> This was later superseded in 1901 by the Political Labor Council (PLC).<sup>41</sup> What could be expected of the elected representatives was right to the fore. The pledge and platform were referred to in a letter to the BT&LC from the secretary of the MTH, J. G. Barrett:

What is Ballarat going to do? Choose your best men I hope, stick to them, and run them for all they are worth. I think later on that we will run several for the Federal Parliament. This will need hard work. Each person nominated must sign the pledge and platform.<sup>42</sup>

However the dilemma of these new parliamentarians is graphically captured in a letter in 1896 from the recently elected Footscray MLA, Hancock, to Hurdsfield at the BT&LC, already outlining the tension between the elected representative and the labour movement before formal structures and policies were even in place. The fact that the letter survives almost 120 years later indicates that this issue has been significant from the beginning.

Hancock wrote:

Yours to hand alright; but can hardly understand what you want me to do. Do you want me to interview the directorate of the mills, threaten to “stoush” the bad eggs, coax the wanderers from the union fold, or give Billingsgate an Alfred Hall audience? For any of these I am your Moses! However, throw off all disguise, and let me know what it is you want me do, and if mortal man can do it, I will do it, or else you can lose all faith in the Infallibility of.

Yours Fraternally, John Hancock<sup>43</sup>

After much debate in 1904, the PLC adopted a new pledge that all candidates were required to sign:

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38. BT&LC Minutes, November 2, 1894.

39. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*, 93.

40. *Worker*, July 14, 1894.

41. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*. The PPL was succeeded by the United Labour and Liberal Party in 1894. When this foundered the MTH created the United Labor Party in 1896 which was replaced by the PLC in 1901.

42. J. G. Barrett to the BT&LC, July 18, 1900, Reference 1977.0084, University of Melbourne Archives.

43. Hancock to Hurdsfield, August 1896, Reference 1977.0084, University of Melbourne Archives.

I hereby pledge myself not to oppose the selected candidate of this or any other branch of the Political Labor Council of Victoria. I also pledge myself, if returned to Parliament, on all occasions to do my utmost to ensure the carrying out of the principles embodied in the Labor platform, and (on) all such questions, and especially in questions affecting the fate of a Government, to vote as a majority of the Labor party may decide at a duly constituted caucus meeting.<sup>44</sup>

With Federation, the transition to the adoption of the name Australian Labor Party (ALP) began to occur. While caucus solidarity has largely been maintained since then, once a member has broken with it, there has been no option but to “rat”.

In this period, active engagement at the BT&LC with wider issues continued. A view independent from the MTHC was taken, particularly over Federation. Despite the active opposition to Federation by the *Tocsin*, the first Labor paper in Victoria and edited by O’Dowd,<sup>45</sup> the BT&LC wrote to the mayors of both Ballarat East and West, asking them to use their influence to have Ballarat nominated as the federal capital.<sup>46</sup> Their old friend, Major Smith, an active supporter of Federation, had been selected as a delegate to the initial Federation convention in 1890<sup>47</sup> but died in 1894 before seeing it come to fruition. Ballarat loyalties and the possibility of being the nation’s capital left no doubt at the BT&LC about whose side they were on. Their next-door neighbour in Camp Street was the Australian Natives Association established in Ballarat in 1874, a friendly society providing sickness and funeral benefits with membership limited to men born in Australia and also very active in the support of Federation, even being described as the “wet nurse” to the birth.<sup>48</sup> The secretary of the MTHC was given a torrid reception when raising issues against Federation at the Alfred Hall. H.B. Higgins, later well-known for the Harvester case when a justice of the High Court, speaking at the BTH, said the “most persuasive of the opponents had been told there was no point going to Ballarat as they were 10 to 1 against.”<sup>49</sup> In 1898, a referendum was held, which was a new idea at the time – having not yet being applied to a Westminster system of government – to ratify the constitution. The Ballarat Yes vote was 96.7 per cent compared with 81.6 per cent state-wide.<sup>50</sup>

44. Bongiorno, *The People’s Party*, 60.

45. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

46. BT&LC Minutes, March 13, 1891.

47. Bate, “Smith.”

48. Beggs-Sunter, *Camp Street, Ballarat*.

49. Saffin Papers, 1890s.

50. Bate, *Lucky City*.

After Federation, the labour movement in Ballarat became committed to providing candidates for the two levels of government – state and federal. Pleasant Sunday Afternoons with musical items interspersed with speeches became an important feature of Ballarat public life, and the numbers attending such events were impressive. James Scullin spoke regularly, as did Tom Carey, one of Scullin’s debating colleagues from South Street.<sup>51</sup> In 1903, Tom Mann spoke to 4000 people at the Alfred Hall during a railway strike and Andy McKissock chaired a meeting in Sturt Street, where Yarra MHR, Frank Tudor, spoke to 2000.<sup>52</sup> It took Ballarat until 1904 to run successful PLC candidates – Charlie McGrath and Harry Scott Bennett were elected in Grenville and Ballarat West at the state level with solid majorities,<sup>53</sup> which was more than 10 years after the seventh ITUC. At the BT&LC, John Wilson, the secretary since 1888, including during the ITUC, died in 1892, and was succeeded by Hurdsfield, who remained in the position until 1910.<sup>54</sup>

### **The Rise of Socialism (and Tom Mann)**

In 1902, the arrival of Tom Mann was a defining moment. Mann was first known to the Australian movement for his role in the London Dock Strike in 1889 and was immediately invited by the PLC to accept the position of organiser, for a salary of £600 a year, to help the PLC expand from a small, beleaguered Melbourne-based organisation to a statewide concern that had significant parliamentary representation.<sup>55</sup> Mann moved across the Victorian landscape like a comet, leaving a trail of devotees and detractors behind, while he hastened off to yet another place in another region, returning to England via Johannesburg in 1909. But he was a man who kept in touch with the multitude of people he met along the way. Scullin attended one of Mann’s meetings in 1903 and about that time joined the PLC.<sup>56</sup> Mann also spoke to the BT&LC on 25 August 1904.<sup>57</sup>

McGrath, a storekeeper at Pitfield near Ballarat, was an early devotee and established seven branches and sub-branches in the Grenville electorate. Mann identified Grenville as

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51. Robertson, *J. H. Scullin*.

52. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. Graeme Osborne, “Tom Mann: His Australian Experience 1902–1910” (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1972).

56. BT&LC Minutes, August 25, 1904.

57. Robertson, *J. H. Scullin*.

a pacesetter in Victoria “with lectures, debates, essays, open-air meetings, marches with brass bands, Labor songs and socials – they were educating and organising the whole electorate. Good luck to comrades McGrath, Pulley, MacInerny and Co. Keep the red flag flying.”<sup>58</sup> A remarkable photo (see Figure 4) has recently been sent to the Ballarat Historical Society of a group from the Grenville area in costumes, depicting the slogan “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Sword”, one of the few records of that era still remaining. The newspapers represented on the sashes are indicative of their reading interests – *Labour Call* (1906–1953), official publication of the PLC; the *Berringa Herald* (1903–1922); *The Worker* (1890–1913) and *The Courier* (1865–).



Figure 4. The Pen Is Mightier Than the Sword. Source: Ballarat Historical Society from Ann Burrows nee Simkins family photo collection. Mann sent Christmas cards to his friends at the BT&LC until his death in 1941. In his memoir, he noted:

I visited Ballarat at intervals during a period of seven years, became friendly with William Hurdsfield, a Britisher who was secretary of the Ballarat Trades Council and was also well acquainted with the secretary of the Miners Association (W. G. Spence).<sup>59</sup>

From 1902 to 1904, Mann travelled and held meetings in many country towns of any size but he failed to persuade the PLC to adopt a socialist platform.

58. Osborne, “Tom Mann.” Quoting from *The Organiser*, August 13, 1903.

59. Tom Mann, *Tom Mann’s Memoirs* (1923; repr., Nottingham, UK: Spokesman Books, 2008), 147.

Reactions to Mann varied greatly. The Catholic response was made clear first in a widely publicised sermon by Father Barrett in the Grenville electorate, an area where Mann’s Socialism, with help from McGrath, had taken hold with the local miners. Alarmed at its spread, “Father Barrett identified him as the cause and condemned him as a ‘Communist of a most pronounced type’, whose plague-like doctrines threatened sacred institutions such as private property.”<sup>60</sup> Father Barrett’s efforts received the endorsement of the church hierarchy in Melbourne. The Protestant response was similar in its concern to defend capitalism from Mann’s dangerous ideas.<sup>61</sup> In late 1904, the MTHC acknowledged Brother Mann’s contributions to the labour movement, but his brand of Socialism, including his suspicion of political action and his preference for industrial unionism, was not that of the Victorian craft unions. The parting of ways in January 1905 was welcomed on both sides.<sup>62</sup>

But the melody lingered on, helped by R. H. Long’s “God Save Tom Mann” published in the *Socialist*, as Mann continued to be active in the rise of Socialism in Victoria.

By Mann and such as he,  
Soldiers shall cease to be  
And Peace prevail  
Oh Christianity  
Where is thy sanity  
Thrusting humanity  
Into a Jail  
Happy and Glorious  
Fighting the fight for us  
God Save Tom Mann.<sup>63</sup>

He formed the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP), which grew from 800 in 1906 to nearly 2000 in 1907,<sup>64</sup> although after his departure, it reduced to 430 by the end of 1909. Many members were also active in the ALP and by the end of WWI, its residual members were subsumed into the ALP or had joined the CPA.<sup>65</sup>

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60. Osborne, “Tom Mann,” 75.

61. Ibid.

62. Saffin Papers.

63. Ibid. Song published in *The Socialist*, May 11, 1912.

64. Ian Turner, “Socialist Political Tactics 1900–1920,” *Labour History* 2 (May 1962), accessed April 25, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27550874>; Denis J. Murphy, ed., *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia, 1880–1920* (Brisbane, University of Queensland Press, 1975).

65. Frank Farrell, *International Socialism & Australian Labour: The Left in Australia, 1919–1939* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1981).

There is no doubt that Mann’s emphasis on tolerance (and sociability), with a wide range of educational and social activities, attracted a wide following: “Fabians, feminists, syndicalists, theosophists, pacifists and liberals.”<sup>66</sup> There were mid-week lectures, speakers on Sunday afternoons, communal dinners on Sunday nights followed by lectures on a wide range of issues, a girls calisthenics club, a football team, cricket teams, athletics club, choir, orchestra, brass band and drama society, a cooperative bootshop, grocer and bakery.<sup>67</sup> Membership of the ALP was no barrier to membership of the VSP and vice versa and Mann encouraged women to participate: “Tom set out to make it a family party – wives, women, girls, children – all were welcomed and there was something to cater for the interests for each one.”<sup>68</sup> His approach made it easier for women to take leadership roles, and the VSP was unique among socialist groups in its attempts to incorporate women into its organisation.<sup>69</sup> In Ballarat, the band of women who emerged in this era probably have counterparts who have never been documented or recognised.

The VSP continued to be active in Ballarat. In May 1907 at the Alfred Hall, the BT&LC sponsored six lectures by Ben Tillett, of Great London Dock Strike fame, which included attacks on Christianity as well as capitalism. Tillett said: “There was no religious institution today which was not class bound and class biased.”<sup>70</sup> He was followed by Tom Mann discussing the scientific basis of Socialism. Tom Carey, a member of the BT&LC and the PLC executive, chaired the meeting.<sup>71</sup>

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the new doctrine of Socialism was liberating for many and focused the debate in a new way on the sort of society they wanted. Two well-known socialist figures in Ballarat, McGrath in Grenville and Scott Bennett in Ballarat West were leaders, agitators “par excellence”, who followed very different paths. Strongly influenced by Mann, they represented the two ends of political combat that have been an internal feature of working-class politics: pugnacious pragmatist or the idealist. McGrath thrived on the “cut and thrust” of public life, with the more prominent episodes being a libel suit against H. V. McKay, one of the richest men in the state; suspension in 1913 for

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66. Walker, *Solidarity Forever*, 29.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*, 31.

69. Joy Damousi, “Socialist Women in Australia, c. 1890 – c. 1918” (PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1987).

70. “Can a Parson Be a Christian, the Devil, the Fat Man and the Poor, Capitalism and Socialism and the Doom of Australia Under the Fat Man,” Saffin Papers, Univeristy of Melbourne Archives.

71. Saffin Papers.

the rest of the session of parliament after refusing to apologise for his allegations against the speaker;<sup>72</sup> going to England in WWI to play a major part in the Vote No to Conscription campaign as a serving officer; his battle with Pompey Elliot on his return; and his physical encounter with Bill McAdam, the then secretary of the BT&LC, in Lydiard Street.<sup>73</sup>

While McGrath with his office at BT&LC remained active in the political sphere until the 1930s when he defected to the United Australia Party (UAP), Bennett did not enjoy the compromise of parliament, serving only one term, and said that he could do more amongst the workers than he could do in the House.<sup>74</sup> Both left big impressions on their contemporaries. In 1906, Bennett conducted classes in the BTH on American socialist Walter Thomas Mills' *Struggle for Existence*, officiated at May Day celebrations "and was an organiser 'extraordinaire' in Ballarat."<sup>75</sup> Bede Nairn said of Bennett:

(He) was man of many parts, a socialist, a humanist, a rationalist, possessed of great generosity and natural dignity with a quiet and effective sense of humour that is often lacking in radicals... As a public speaker he must rank as one of the greatest to emerge in Australia, equally at home on the lecture platform, at boisterous political meetings... he had a fine, cultivated voice with a polished and well-mannered' style...Bennett was, above all, a charitable man, in the true sense of the term.<sup>76</sup>

A new generation of Australian-born citizens emerged at this time in Ballarat: "They had no sense of exile, no memories of the lush green of English trees"<sup>77</sup> and were close to 80 per cent of the Australian population by 1890. Their culture was shaped by *The Bulletin*, which, at its early peak, had a circulation of about 80,000. Under editor J. F. Archibald, *The Bulletin* helped to establish the careers of many of Australia's key literary and artistic figures, publishing the stories and illustrations of many emerging writers and artists at the time, such as Henry Lawson, 'Banjo' Paterson, Miles Franklin, Ballarat-born Will and Ted Dyson, and Norman Lindsay.<sup>78</sup> This early support of a distinctly Australian style had

72. Peter Love, "McGrath, David Charles (1872–1934)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcgrath-david-charles-7361>.

73. *The Courier*, November 3, 1933.

74. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

75. Bertha Walker, "Harry Scott Bennett: An Appreciation," *Labour History* 16 (1969): 39, accessed April 25, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27507930>.

76. *Ibid.*, 38. Nairn cited.

77. Raymond M. Crawford, *Australia*, 3rd ed. (London: Hutchinson, 1970), 146.

78. Bruce Bennett and Jennifer Strauss, ed., *The Oxford Literary History of Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

helped to create a sense of national pride in opposition to the British focus of many papers of the time. Norman Lindsay in his book, *Bohemians of the Bulletin*, said: “*The Bulletin* initiated an amazing discovery that Australia was ‘home’, and that was the anvil on which Archibald hammered out the rough substance of the national ego.”<sup>79</sup> Even Deakin at the Federal Convention Debate of 1897, replying to a member who wanted to give more control to the Senate to control the lower House, said: “I will say that a gentleman, who in Australia in the nineteenth century deplors the loss of personal power of the English monarch and of the English lords, as compared with the power of the Commons, is in my mind an anachronism.”<sup>80</sup> Other magazines, such as *The Boomerang* established by William Lane in 1887, and *The Worker*, the official journal of the AWU, assumed the same: “That this last discovered continent need not be fettered to the inequalities and injustices of the old world.”<sup>81</sup> Ballarat was also home to many other “native-born” agitators who had made their mark on the new nation, not just the well-known names of Curtin, O’Dowd, Lindsay or Hyett but also the women and men who were uniquely Australian. The next generation of BT&LC activists came from that mould.

Before the twentieth century, only a minority of people received an advanced academic education, but a common thread among these early activists was their interest in self-education. They are often described as autodidacts, a term which would probably have amused them, and in Ballarat they did have the support of the Mechanics’ Institute and the City Free Library. They were to be found throughout the labour movement reading in their swags at night, debating in their local organisations, and arguing in their meal break.

They were interested in the world of ideas and at night would read diverse and complex philosophies. They were drawn in many directions. Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* influenced some; others saw Henry George and his single tax movement as the solution; and rising nationalism, with its propogandist the *Bulletin*, was a lively confident voice.<sup>82</sup> Jack Barnes unrolled his swag to read the works of Adam Smith, Henry George, and

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79. Norman Lindsay, *Bohemians at the Bulletin* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1977), 5.

80. Crawford, *Australia*, 151.

81. *Ibid.*, 154.

82. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.



Robert Blatchford.<sup>83</sup> Spence had no formal schooling but “at odd moments” was taught by a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. He read “in a curiously miscellaneous way the works of Bellamy, Blatchford, Ruskin and Morris.”<sup>84</sup> Hogan left school early to drive a team of horses but compensated for his lack of education by reading voraciously.<sup>85</sup>

Harriett Powell spoke highly of Vallins:

Walking encyclopedia and city librarian; the friend, adviser, and helper of all my studies, as he was of all aspiring young people then. I delighted in Ruskin, but a book which profoundly impressed me was Haydn’s Lectures on Painting. It is a series on real art and true art. True art must always elevate. Socialism embodies the highest principles of art because it aims to elevate... I have heard people say that Socialism means “a dragging down of everybody” but that is where they speak without knowledge, for Socialism means a raising up.<sup>86</sup>

Ernest Williams, editor of *The Courier* from 1891 to 1902, has been described as “a humane radical-liberal who gave trenchant support to labour during the 1890s strikes and, like other locally-born contemporaries, he was active in the South Street Debating Society, reading omnivorously and enjoying discussion.”<sup>87</sup> Stewart Miller, later BT&LC secretary, was bequeathed a library by an illiterate acquaintance and drew heavily on those books from which emerged three of his literary heroes: Robert Ingersoll, the American rationalist and orator, who campaigned in defence of agnosticism; Robert Emmett, the Irish Republican patriot, orator and rebel leader; and Robbie Burns, whose poems Miller learnt to the rhythm of the wheels as he worked on the trams.<sup>88</sup> The BT&LC initiated regular gatherings to discuss ideas, including a lecture by Mr Forbes on Shakespeare in 1912, Sunday night special lecture series<sup>89</sup> and sponsored lecture series at the Alfred Hall.<sup>90</sup>

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83. Alison Pilger, “John Barnes,” in *The Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate*, ed. Ann Millar (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), accessed July 15, 2021, <https://biography.senate.gov.au/barnes-john/>.

84. “Creswick: A Living History – W. G. Spence,” Business & Tourism Creswick, accessed November 19, 2019, [http://www.creswick.net/creswick/history/people/wg\\_spence/](http://www.creswick.net/creswick/history/people/wg_spence/).

85. Pam Jonas, “Hogan, Edmond John (Ned) (1883–1964),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hogan-edmond-john-ned-6697>.

86. Sue Tracey, “Harriet Powell: Labor Organiser,” *The Hummer* 7, no. 1 (2011): 23.

87. Weston Bate, “Williams, Robert Ernest (1855–1943),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 12, ed. John Ritchie (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990) accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/williams-robert-ernest-9117>.

88. Interview with Stewart Miller, 1995, Saffin Papers, University of Melbourne Archives.

89. Saffin Papers.

90. Ibid.

Another aspect of public engagement was the skill of public speaking and the South Street competitions played a significant role in developing that aspect of their self-education. In June, 1891, the first South Street Society Competitions were held, with 260 entrants competing in literary, elocution and musical items with essay competitions on “The Most Urgent Social Reforms” and “The Nobility of Labor: and “Recreation”. Following this success, entries doubled and competitors vied for honours in music, poetry, literature and criticism in front of over 1000 people who crowded into Skipton Street Hall to watch the 10-day event.<sup>91</sup> In the earlier days of the South Street competitions, Vallins, who was a close friend of Graham, the first secretary of the BT&LC, coached many successful competitors in elocution.<sup>92</sup> Powell joined a local debating and literary society, where her brother, Arthur, was also a keen debater, and took part in national debating competitions.<sup>93</sup> This was a class who made good use of their eight hours of leisure and enjoyed the cut and thrust of ideas.

In 1915 BT&LC established a debating team.<sup>94</sup> The South Street competitions still continue and until the arrival of television were an important part of community life in working class neighbourhoods. Women used to save up for their season ticket. The Coliseum Picture Palace built for the South Street Competitions in 1908 was one of the largest cinemas in Australia at the time with 4,000 seats but was destroyed by fire in 1936 and not rebuilt- “It was a barn of a building. My husband says that people sometimes used umbrellas but I’ve never done that.”<sup>95</sup> It was replaced by the Alfred Hall.

The tension for the many women who became leading socialist activists, taking up the challenge of women’s suffrage and the socialists’ aim of equality for all people, was the competing masculinity as advocated by the Bulletin, “the most influential exponent of the separatist model of masculinity which lay at the heart of the eulogies to the Bushman.”<sup>96</sup>

Lake goes further than most in stating:

The gender factor has been obscured in Australian historical writing by a number of phenomena: by the dominance of a narrowly defined political history, by the sex-blind nature of much of what passes as class analysis and by the centrality in

91. “125 years of Pure Performance Gold,” Royal South Street Society, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://royalsouthstreet.com.au/125-years/>.

92. “Death of Mr James Vallins: A Familiar Figure Removed,” *Ballarat Star*, July 18, 1904.

93. Tracey, “Harriet Powell.”

94. BT&LC Minutes March 25, 1915.

95. M. Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

96. Lake. “Historical Reconsiderations IV,” 118.

our historiography of organizing concepts such as “national character” and “national tradition”.<sup>97</sup>

Included in this thesis are details of a number of significant women activists, all with strong links to the Ballarat district, not because they were part of BT&LC, but because their contribution should be noted in any analysis of the Ballarat labour movement. They all were known on the wider stage for their socialist views (and one went to gaol for them) but in Ballarat their recognition is limited. It is known that Harriet Powell was on platforms beside Barnes and Carey, was asked by Spence to organise in Gippsland, mentored by Vallins and an early member of the VCE.<sup>98</sup> Guerin was a leading anti-conscriptionist actively involved in the campaign to fly the Red Flag, dear to the hearts of the BT&LC. Lizzie Ahern was one of the most formidable speakers of her era. She went to gaol to defend the right to free speech and could be there alongside those who have spoken at the Galloway Monument over the years, but she is not recorded. Most accounts from labour historians on the socialist movement focused on the political struggles and tensions between male trade unionists, political representatives, and socialist groups. Eric Fry has pointed out that “feminists could claim with justification that the concentration on the bush worker, male mateship, strikes, trade unions and political parties have incorporated a particularly sexist vision of the past.”<sup>99</sup> Joy Damousi goes further: “In the writings on left-wing politics and movements, they [women] have been consigned to oblivion; their contribution to the ‘cause’ both in terms of ideology and active participation has been neglected.”<sup>100</sup> So it has been surprising and gives weight to these arguments that a rich vein of women activists with such strong connections to Ballarat and as key activists in the trade union movement have not featured in Ballarat records. While not recorded there, for a more complete history of the Ballarat labour movement they deserve a space here which may lead to more research into that contribution.

After Federation, the vote for women was a significant catalyst for women to be regarded differently inside the labour movement. Although several states, including Victoria, still denied women the vote, the adoption of the Commonwealth Franchise Act in 1902 gave “white” women the vote and right to stand in federal elections well before Canada (1917),

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97. Ibid., 118

98. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

99. Eric Fry, ed., *Common Cause: Essays in Australian and New Zealand Labour History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1986), 1.

100. Damousi, “Socialist Women in Australia,” 1.

Germany (1918), the United States (1920) and Britain(1928) although not before New Zealand (1893).<sup>101</sup> They would count as much as men in determining who governed the country and they introduced a great unknown into the political landscape.

Union leaders were more concerned about the abolition of plural voting and maintaining protection in the PPL platform of 1891. Yet by 1891, a petition with over 30,000 signatures for female suffrage demonstrated that significant support had been presented to the Victorian Parliament.<sup>102</sup> The 1891 “monster petition” was a landmark for Victoria’s fledgling women’s movement. It was not immediately successful in gaining women the right to vote, but it did demonstrate the gathering strength of their determination. In the Ballarat district, more than 2222 names have been interpreted from signatures of those women who signed the petition.<sup>103</sup>

In Ballarat, the BT&LC had played an active role at the first public meeting in June 1894, to establish a Ballarat Women’s Franchise League. The meeting, chaired by the Anglican bishop, included on the platform some members of parliament, although not the Hon Alfred Deakin MLA, who sent a letter saying that he did not feel the question was one at present he was called upon to devote himself to. The bishop also noted that Mr McAllan had been deputised by Trades Hall to act as its representative. In his introduction he made clear that the meeting was to consider a very definite proposal – the extension of the franchise to women – and was not called to consider other legislative measures of any kind such as prohibition, another hotly debated issue of this era. He also made clear where he stood on that women should be seen but not heard:

He did not think it was at all likely that any lady desired to address the present meeting but he thought it best on the whole and frankest at the outset, without expressing any opinion on the broad general principle of ladies addressing mixed assemblages, to say that he considered it highly inadvisable supposing any lady did wish to speak. And if the meeting, instead of concurring with him, wished the lady to be heard, he would simply retire from the chair and ask the meeting to elect a chairman in his place.<sup>104</sup>

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101. Barbara Caine and Moira Gatens, *Australian Feminism: A Companion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

102. “Women’s Suffrage Petition,” Ballarat & District Genealogical Society, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.ballaratgenealogy.org.au/resources/women-s-suffrage-petition>.

103. *Ibid.*

104. “The Women’s Franchise,” *Ballarat Star*, June 12, 1894.

McAllan moved: “That anyone over the age of 21 years, paying the sum of 1/- annually, shall be a member of this league, and entitled to attend all its general meetings.”<sup>105</sup> The committee that was formed included McAllan, members of parliament, clergymen and Mesdames Boyd, Philp and Boswarrick.<sup>106</sup>

Powell is a Ballarat figure who has been ignored too long, a committed socialist who continued to work in the PLC while advocating for a brand of Socialism as equally fiery as Mann’s. She is not mentioned in BT&LC minutes although she was actively involved in the same forums as Carey, Scullin and Barnes, including recruiting ALP members in country areas. She had the ability to win converts from Killarney shearers to the miners of New Zealand, yet so little is known about her. Fortunately, Sue Tracey has now amassed a great deal of material from Powell’s family as well as from publicly available sources.<sup>107</sup> Tracy states that “when the ALP opened its ranks to women in 1904, a number of impressive females emerged to organise for the party. Harriett Frances Powell was one of them.”<sup>108</sup> Powell was born in Ballarat in 1878, the eldest of five children of George and Mary Powell. She always described herself as from Ballarat. Powell said she became interested in the women’s movement: “The unfair treatment women were subjected to, the prejudices under which they suffered, roused my imagination. I was angry at the popular belief in the inferiority of women ... and believe that a woman is just as good as a man ... I was determined to have as good a chance in the world as a man.”<sup>109</sup>

Another autodidact,<sup>110</sup> like so many of her contemporary socialists, indicating that many Australians were eagerly seeking out the new ideas that were sweeping the world, As already noted, Powell said: “Socialism embodies the highest principles of art, because it aims to elevate ... I have heard people say that Socialism means ‘a dragging down of everybody’ but that is where they speak without knowledge, for Socialism means a raising up.”<sup>111</sup> Powell was enrolled in 1903 in the East Ballarat electorate and one would

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105. Ibid.

106. Jennifer Feeney, “Votes for Women: The Woman’s Franchise League of Ballarat,” *The Latrobe Journal*, April 1983, accessed May 20, 2020, <http://www3.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-31/t1-g-t3.html>.

107. Sue Tracey’s private research, which is the basis of her article, is held by the BT&LC archives. Tracey is a member of the Sydney Branch Executive of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and regular contributor of articles to the journal *The Hummer*.

108. Tracey, “Harriet Powell,” 23.

109. “Harriet Powell,” *Weekly Times*, October 16, 1909.

110. Tracey, “Harriet Powell.”

111. Ibid., 25.

have hoped that she had been among the hundreds of women who attended the public meeting to hear Vida Goldstein put her case for election to the Senate in Ballarat on 6 December 1903.<sup>112</sup> Powell soon became involved in the women's parliament, a mock parliament formed in 1904 by the Women's Political Association, with both Aileen and Vida Goldstein as active members. This parliament met in June 1904, and on 2 December 1904 was formally prorogued after first dealing with a resolution in favour of preferential trade. Vida Goldstein was the Governor-General and Miss H. F. Powell proposed the toast to the state and federal parliaments. Powell was in prestigious company as Dr Maloney, a member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly who had introduced several (unsuccessful) women's suffrage bills into parliament between 1889 and 1894, responded.<sup>113</sup>

After a time in New Zealand and New South Wales, Powell returned to Victoria in October 1906. In 1909, she became secretary of the Women's Organising Committee of the ALP.<sup>114</sup> Powell was elected to the Central Committee of the Victorian PLC at the January 1910 conference, polling equal fifth of the 15 elected. Barnes and Carey (with whom she had worked recruiting in Daylesford and whose names regularly reoccur in this thesis) were also elected from Ballarat. Both were delegates from the BT&LC. Who was Miss C. M. McGrath of Ballarat at this conference? She seconded Powell's resolution calling for the nationalisation of health and was elected vice-president.<sup>115</sup> After this conference, the trade union movement formally supported the ALP women organising working women: activists such as Lilian Locke, Amy Whitham, Minnie Felstead, Ellen Mulcahy and Powell were being paid. By agreement with the ALP these organisers were paid £1 per day or 25/- for a day and a half in the country, and 15/- per day, or 20/- per day and a half for Melbourne and suburb.<sup>116</sup> In March 1911, Powell was asked to organise for the ALP in Gippsland by Spence, now the Member for Darling. From March until June 1912, she worked across Tasmania,<sup>117</sup> then went to NSW. Her determination to use Socialism as the basis of her lectures caused problems in Parramatta and the last report of her political activities in Australia was in August 1914:

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112. "The Contests for the Senate: Miss Vida Goldstein's Candidature," *Ballarat Star*, December 8, 1903.

113. *Table Talk*, December 1, 1904.

114. Tracey, "Harriet Powell."

115. *Labor Call*, July 1, 1909.

116. Tracey, "Harriet Powell."

117. *Ibid.*

Miss H. F. Powell, the Australian Labor organiser of wide and varied experience in so many states, and a native of Ballarat, was a passenger from Sydney to San Francisco on the Royal Mail SS Niagara at the end of last month. This enterprising Australian woman has embarked on the characteristic undertaking of a series of lecturing tours relating to Australia, her advanced Labor laws, improved condition of women in Australia and the benefits accruing therefrom.<sup>118</sup>

While Powell was the most active Australia wide in participating in the new political developments in the labour movement, she was not the only prominent woman activist with strong Ballarat connections.

Bella Guerin (1858–1923) was the first woman to graduate from an Australian university when she gained her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Melbourne in 1883.<sup>119</sup>

Bella's father, Patrick Guerin, was governor of the Ballarat gaol (early 1860s–1890) and in October 1870, the School of Mines and Industries opened next door. Guerin became the female principal of the School of Mines university classes, resigning upon marriage in 1891.<sup>120</sup> These classes allowed students who lived in Ballarat and district to complete the full course prescribed by the University of Melbourne for a BA degree without having to leave their homes or occupations.<sup>121</sup>

From the mid-1890s, Guerin participated in suffragist circles and co-authored Vida Goldstein's 1913 Senate election pamphlet. She wrote and spoke for the ALP, the VSP parties and the Women's League of Socialists, and was recognised as a "witty, cogent and instructive" commentator on a range of controversial social issues, including the rights of illegitimate children, "brotherhood and sisterhood without sex distinction" and the defence of English militant suffragettes. An ardent anti-war propagandist, she led the ALP's women's anti-conscription fellowship campaign during the 1916 referendum and spoke in Adelaide, Broken Hill and Victorian metropolitan and country centres against militarism and in defence of the rights of assembly and free speech.<sup>122</sup> In 1918, she

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118. *Ibid.*, 28.

119. Farley Kelly, "Guerin, Julia Margaret (Bella) (1858–1923)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/guerin-julia-margaret-bella-6503>.

120. *Ibid.*

121. Warren Perry, *The School of Mines and Industries, Ballarat: A History of Its First One Hundred and Twelve Years, 1870–1982* (Ballarat: School of Mines and Industries Ballarat Limited, 1984).

122. Kelly, "Guerin."

became involved in the campaign to fly the red flag in defiance of the War Precautions Act that made it illegal.<sup>123</sup>

Lizzie Ahern (1877–1969) was born at Haddon near Ballarat. Daughter of Edmund Ahern, a Eureka Stockader, she had been immersed from early childhood into the Australian radical tradition. At 14, she worked as a pupil teacher for 2d. a week then moved to Melbourne where she was employed as a domestic servant.<sup>124</sup> Ahern earned a reputation as a brilliant public speaker, one of the best soap box orators of the pre-war era. In 1906, Ahern was jailed, along with Tom Mann, for participating in the VSP's free speech campaign. Popular postcards of those jailed were produced to raise funds (see Figure 4)

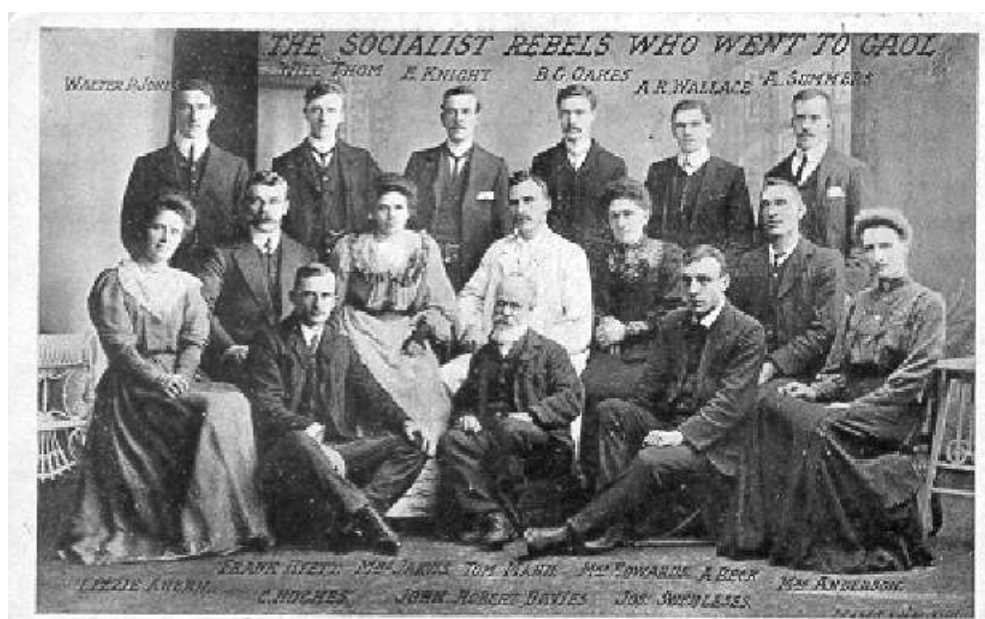


Figure 5. Free-speech campaign postcard – “The Socialist Rebels Who Went to Gaol.”<sup>125</sup>

Energetic, courageous and determined to the point of stubbornness, Ahern continued her activity in country and suburban areas; a champion of women’s rights and a strong internationalist, she became one of the party’s most effective propagandists.<sup>126</sup> In 1907, she helped form the Domestic Workers Union with Ballarat West MLA Bennett and within three months had gathered a membership of 500.<sup>127</sup> In 1916, Ahern was the Caterers’ Employees Union delegate to the MTHC, secretary of the Women’s Anti-

123. Damousi, “Socialist Women in Australia.”

124. Ibid.

125. Walker, *Solidarity Forever*.

126. Damousi, “Socialist Women in Australia.”

127. *The Socialist*, October 12, 1907.



Conscription Committee, and delegate to the Labor Women's Central Organising Committee, remaining active until 1934. In contrast, her husband, Arthur Wallace, became president of the Carpenters Union, and in 1919 won the Legislative Assembly seat of Albert Park. Defeated in 1927, then re-elected in 1929 to Albert Park, Wallace supported the Premiers' Plan and left the ALP to join the Nationalists. His parliamentary career was described as undistinguished.<sup>128</sup> It is hard to accept that Lizzie (Wallace) Ahern received so little public recognition. She remained a member of the ALP's Albert Park branch until her death in 1969, aged 91.<sup>129</sup>

The last of this quartet is Lesbia Keogh (Harford). Educated at Mary's Mount (now Loreto College) in Ballarat, where she boarded until she matriculated in 1909, she graduated in law and philosophy at Melbourne University in 1916. While still at school, she developed an interest in social reform and feminist issues, joining the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in 1915. She never practised her chosen profession as she began work in a clothing factory, where as a machinist she was introduced to a different world, which radicalised her both as a socialist and a feminist. Keogh played an active role in the Clothing and Allied Trades Union and became a member of the Wages Board in 1916.<sup>130</sup> It was a daunting role and the chairman of the Dressmakers' Board did little to put them at their ease: "Francis Reddin sat back in his chair, laughing at the union's claim for an increase in the minimum wage to thirty shillings, and refused to discuss the wages, saying £1 per week was enough for any woman."<sup>131</sup> Keogh, vice-president of the union in 1917 with May Francis, led the move to radicalise the union, organising lectures for union members and urging the union to support campaigns such as anti-conscription, the 1917 railway strike and the release of imprisoned IWW members.<sup>132</sup> There may be more notable women activists not yet identified in Ballarat, but where were they post WWI? Ballarat's history makes little mention of women in public life apart from their involvement in teaching, music and singing until the 1990s.<sup>133</sup>

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128. Geoff Hewitt, "Ahern, Elizabeth (Lizzie) (1877–1969)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 7, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ahern-elizabeth-lizzie-4977>.

129. *Ibid.*

130. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

131. *Ibid.*, 92.

132. *Ibid.*

133. Malcolm M. McCallum, *Ballarat and District: "Citizens and Sports" at Home and Abroad* (London: Palala Press, 1916); Fewer than 20 entries about Ballarat women compared with 120 entries for men.

The other strand of Ballarat’s radicals closely associated with the BT&LC at this time was led by Bury. It is interesting to note the use of the Galloway Monument as a space to meet to discuss ideas. After a CYMS meeting, as the young O’Dowd was waiting for the train to return to Beaufort:

He met up at the Galloway Monument, as was the custom, and there they continued the debates begun in the hall. One night O’Dowd struck up a conversation with a stranger who had contributed some killing point in the earlier argument and learned his name was Bury-Thomas Bury? Not “Tom Touchstone” of the *Courier*? The man admitted he was ... It was an exciting meeting for O’Dowd.<sup>134</sup>

O’Dowd went to Mount Pleasant Primary School and was a debater in the Ballarat Catholic Young Men’s Society (CYMS), which later became a training ground for Rowe and Scullin.<sup>135</sup> Bury’s room – crammed from floor to ceiling with books, papers and magazines, piled on chairs and the sofa, thereby demonstrating the growth of Australian nationalism with current Australian works – was a goldmine for the young O’Dowd.<sup>136</sup> O’Dowd was encouraged by Bury to publish his verse in *The Courier*.<sup>137</sup> Bury, using the pseudonym “Tommy Touchstone” in his weekly “Cornerisms” in *The Courier* from 1882–1900, offered paragraphs and short essays on a wide range of subjects: progressive political, social, religious, moral, artistic, and literary.<sup>138</sup>

In 1897, O’Dowd and two colleagues published the first edition of a radical weekly, the *Tocsin*, which was the first internal newspaper of the PLC initiated by Prendergast, who became the ALP Victorian premier in 1924. O’Dowd wrote a regular column as “Gavah the Blacksmith”, while artist Norman Lindsay drew its first cover design. *Tocsin* readers formed themselves into “*Tocsin* clubs”, conducting well-attended public meetings for political discussion.<sup>139</sup> O’Dowd was also one of the most outspoken critics of racism in the labour movement and Australian society, which was connected to his childhood in Ballarat. He condemned “the undemocratic branding of ‘inferior’ races ... Pure

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134. Kennedy and Palmer, *Bernard O’Dowd*, 50.

135. *Ibid.*

136. Chris Wallace-Crabbe, “O’Dowd, Bernard Patrick (1866–1953),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/odowd-bernard-patrick-7881/text13701>.

137. Kennedy and Palmer, *Bernard O’Dowd*.

138. Joseph Jones, “Bury, Thomas (1838–1900),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 3, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/bury-thomas-3124>.

139. Strangio, *Neither Power nor Glory*.

democracy is colour-blind.”<sup>140</sup> Bongiorno notes that a few months after Federation had been achieved, in a remarkable editorial in the *Tocsin*, O’Dowd recognised the right of Australians to exclude from their shores anyone who threatened their standard of living. He could not, however, find any justification for distinguishing between “whites” and “coloured races”: “The true enemies of white workers are bosses, not coloured workers, as the true enemies of the coloured workers are bosses, not white workers.”<sup>141</sup>

When Bury, *The Courier* journalist, died in 1900, the linkage with the BT&LC was quite apparent. Coffin bearers included McKissock (president of the BT&LC 1900–2, president of the AWU) and Alex Adair a linotype operator for *The Courier*, while the pall was borne by Captain Lynch, who served under Lalor at the Eureka Rebellion, Vallins (the city librarian), Graham (the first secretary of the BT&LC and secretary of the Old Colonists’ Club ), Hurdsfield (current president of the BT&LC), Lieutenant-Colonel Williams (editor of *The Courier* from 1889 and later the town clerk of the City of Ballarat 1902–19),<sup>142</sup> a humane radical-liberal who gave incisive support to labour during the 1890s strikes and who provoked Deakin and Peacock on such issues as the basic wage and the old-age pension,<sup>143</sup> and Harry Fleay, a pharmacist, who later married Maude Glover, a talented artist (and whose son, David, was a lifelong crusader for the protection of native wildlife, which began with a successful campaign against the hunting of waterbirds on Ballarat’s Lake Wendouree).<sup>144</sup> It is believed that the BT&LC paid for the funeral.

In 1883, at the age of 17, O’Dowd was appointed as principal of St Alipius Catholic School, Ballarat but it was a short-lived experience as his ‘increasing secularism and scientism led to his being dismissed from this post’. and he moved to Melbourne in 1885.<sup>145</sup> He participated in both the bourgeois public sphere and in socialist and secularist “subaltern counter-publics”, and his writings explore many of the conflicts experienced by the radical intellectuals of his generation – “they sought to reconcile these varieties of

140. Frank Bongiorno, “Bernard O’Dowd and the ‘Problem’ of Race,” in *Labour & Community: Proceedings of the Sixth National Labour History Conference*, ed. Robert Hood and Ray Markey (Sydney: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1999), 33.

141. *Ibid.*, 33.

142. “Thomas Bury Obituary,” *Ballarat Star*, November 9, 1900.

143. Bate, “Williams.”

144. Libby Connors, “Fleay, David Howells (1907–1993),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 19 (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2021), accessed August 11, 2021, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fleay-david-howells-18625/text30259>.

145. Chris Wallace-Crabbe, “O’Dowd, Bernard Patrick.”

engagement in the context of class conflict and other forms of social antagonism”<sup>146</sup> In 1941, Curtin, in one of the most famous political statements on Australia’s future, said: “Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.”<sup>147</sup> He began his speech with a quote from the poem *Dawnward* by O’Dowd written in 1903.<sup>148</sup> Both had been members of the VSP, Curtin holding a regular class on public speaking and O’Dowd conducting a Sunday-morning history class.<sup>149</sup> Both were sons of policemen and born in the Ballarat district – Curtin at Creswick and O’Dowd at Beaufort. The two of them were also Catholics who, having lost their faith, turned to rationalism, with both initially attracted to Marxism but abandoning it in favour of other strands of Socialism.

Frank Hyett was another influential Ballarat-born socialist, who had embraced Socialism by 1902. Among the formative friendships he had built at that time were with the future prime minister, John Curtin, Frank Anstey, and Tom Mann. In 1906, he followed Mann after the latter had founded the VSP, and became that organisation’s deputy secretary.<sup>150</sup> He played cricket for Victoria but his greatest contribution was the founding of the Victorian Railways Union, becoming its secretary-general, and his efforts eventually led to the formation of the Australian Railways Union (ARU) in 1920, sadly after his premature death from the Spanish flu.<sup>151</sup> Curtin was particularly affected by Hyett’s death, his wife recounting that he “paced the verandah” of their home all night long, repeating in disbelief, “Frank Hyett is dead.”<sup>152</sup>

## The AWU Born in Ballarat Comes Home

Along with the ferment of Socialism, the relocation of the AWU to Ballarat in 1905 introduced another “first” for the labour movement in Victoria, the first union in Victoria to have put a high value on a political presence, paying organisers to create the structure and putting their brightest stars into parliament. In NSW, the AWU had already had a significant impact on labour’s political organisation when the Federal Parliamentary

146. Bongiorno “Bernard O’Dowd’s Socialism,” 98.

147. McKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement*, 149.

148. Bongiorno, “Bernard O’Dowd’s Socialism.”

149. Ibid.

150. A Scarlett, “Hyett, Francis William (Frank) (1882–1919),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hyett-francis-william-frank-6783>.

151. Ibid.

152. David Day, *John Curtin: A Life* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2015), 288.

Labor Party (FPLP) was established. The four-month 1904 Watson minority ALP Government became the world's first labour government at a national level.<sup>153</sup> Spence was elected to the FPLP in 1901, beside another union organiser, Hughes, after both had been members of the NSW parliament. Watson the first ALP Prime Minister was also an AWU member. At least 30 AWU men ran for the NSW parliament between 1891 and 1901.<sup>154</sup> While the emphasis in this thesis is concerned with the BT&LC as a peak body, at this time the AWU put its stamp so firmly on the BT&LC that is difficult to separate its interests from those of the BT&LC, which not only provided the opportunity for Scullin to rise to the position of prime minister but also supported its key organisers to play major roles in the new political wing. Scullin's brother-in-law John Kean replaced Hurdsfield as Secretary of BT&LC in 1910 and remained in the position for 12 years, another Scullin brother-in-law, Jim O'Neill (later MHR for Wannon) was president in 1917. Arch Stewart was president in 1911 and left to become full-time secretary of the Victorian ALP and then secretary of the ALP federal executive from 1915 to 1925. McGrath (MLA 1904-1913, MHR 1913-1919, 1920- 1934), McKissock (MLA 1907-1911, Senator 1914-1917) and Barnes (Senator 1913-1919, 1922-1938) were all longstanding delegates from the AWU to BT&LC.

Having established a firm hold on political structures in NSW, it is surely no coincidence that the AWU looked to Victoria and saw Ballarat as a logical extension of its model.<sup>155</sup> "The AWU also brought a new social base into the ALP: shearers, who were also small landholders, and their sons earning extra cash to maintain their farms, and in Victoria they were concentrated in densely settled areas."<sup>156</sup> Ted Grayndler had a long activist career ahead of him when he arrived in Ballarat in 1905 and still has a federal parliamentary seat named after him.<sup>157</sup> In 1895, he was appointed the shearers' union organiser for the AWU, and in 1900 he became secretary of the Victoria-Riverina branch,

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153. Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*.

154. Ibid.

155. Frank Farrell, "Grayndler, Edward (1867–1943)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9. ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/grayndler-edward-6465>.

156. Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, 277.

157. Farrell, "Grayndler."

moving the headquarters from St Arnaud to Ballarat in 1905. Cleary identifies critical junctures in the fortunes of the peak bodies and it was one of these.<sup>158</sup>

Scullin was the first “native born” ALP prime minister, the first Catholic prime minister, and the first prime minister to choose the governor-general (he chose the first Australian, Sir Isaac Isaacs, in 1931 to hold the post against the protests of King George V).<sup>159</sup>

Scullin’s later roles perhaps have overshadowed his origins in Ballarat, but he was a very substantial figure from an early age. When at night school in Ballarat, he made good use of the public library, reading avidly and honing his skills by active participation in the CYMS, which led to a 30-year association with Ballarat’s South Street Society competitions, both as a successful contestant and a respected adjudicator. He saw this as one of the most important formative influences on his career.<sup>160</sup> At the 1906 PLC/ALP Annual Conference, Grayndler, McKissock and Arch Stewart from the AWU were delegates. Scullin was supported by the AWU to contest Ballarat against Deakin in 1906, despite the leader Watson being opposed, but the local PLC/ALP made the decision.<sup>161</sup> His campaign committee room was at the AWU office, at 2 Chancery Lane, where Stewart, the AWU delegate to the BT&LC, organised the work of over 50 canvassers. Helpers included McGrath, Frank Anstey, and Ramsay MacDonald, who later became the first British Labour Party leader to become prime minister of the United Kingdom, leading minority Labour governments in 1924 and then in 1929–31, which coincided with Scullin’s term as prime minister.<sup>162</sup> Deakin won in 1906, but the result was better than expected.

In 1908, the AWU appointed Scullin as its organiser, at £6 a week, to work in conjunction with the PLC/ALP. The significant role he played cannot be underestimated, later as editor of the *Evening Echo* and one of the best stump orators of his generation.<sup>163</sup>

Working alongside him was Jack Barnes, a lesser known but still significant AWU figure who spent much of his working life in Ballarat. Although Scullin’s recognition of him at the AWU Jubilee Dinner as “one of the whitest men ever to appear in public life in

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158. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

159. Zelman Cowen, “Isaacs, Sir Isaac Alfred (1855–1948),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), accessed February 14, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/isaacs-sir-isaac-alfred-6805>.

160. Robertson, *J. H. Scullin*.

161. Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*.

162. Robertson, *J. H. Scullin*.

163. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

Australia”<sup>164</sup> is a two-edged sword in today’s parlance; he certainly used the phrase to mean that Barnes stood out for his fairness, reliability, and trustworthiness. Barnes joined the ASU in 1887, and by 1909, was in Ballarat, having been installed as secretary of the AWU’s Victoria–Riverina branch when Grayndler resigned. In 1913, Barnes was elected to the Senate and re-elected in 1914. By 1919, he had become chairman of the board of directors for the *Evening Echo* newspaper as well as a member of the Victorian ALP central executive (VCE), serving as president in 1920 and remaining a member for 16 years. He would remain a stalwart of the AWU, serving as its federal president from 1923 until his death in 1938. Barnes was cautious in his response to controversial issues. He regularly recalled that the AWU had been “behind the agitation for a sensible means of settling industrial troubles and advocated arbitration in substitution for the strike.”<sup>165</sup> The AWU’s new building in Grenville St opened in 1908.<sup>166</sup> The gradual takeover of the *Evening Echo* from 1912 by the AWU gave a new dimension to the labour movement in the early twentieth century. when it had the largest circulation of any newspaper outside Melbourne.<sup>167</sup> The AWU also took a firm hold on the Ballarat ALP. By 1908, a full complement of AWU representatives were contesting the Victorian general election – McGrath, now strongly aligned with the AWU won Grenville again, McKissock won Ballarat West, and Stewart contested Ballarat East.<sup>168</sup>

Scullin moved on in 1910, becoming the Member for Corangamite in the Federal Parliament when the ALP’s Andrew Fisher surged in the polls and formed Australia’s first majority government after the election.<sup>169</sup> Previously Barnes and Kean had moved that the Secretary Hurdsfield be dismissed due to his employment of non-union labour. But at a later meeting McGrath and Hall moved an amendment that the Secretary be censured over the issue.<sup>170</sup> McGrath became the fraternal delegate from MTHC, Scullin became an AWU delegate to the BT&LC and John Kean, replaced Hurdsfield as secretary “in an atmosphere of accusations.”<sup>171</sup> Hurdsfield continued to be listed on the

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164. *Ibid.*, 147.

165. Pilger, “Barnes.”

166. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

167. Beggs-Sunter, “Ballarat’s Crusading *Evening Echo*.”

168. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

169. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

170. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*, 289; BT&LC Minutes, September 16, 1910.

171. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*, 98.

Ballarat Electoral roll as a builder, until his death in 1936, but he played no further role at BT&LC.

By 1910 there remained few links to the 1890 Council. ‘New Unionism’ now held sway in Ballarat, Scullin was defeated in Corangamite in 1913 and returned to Ballarat to edit the *Evening Echo*. The battle against conscription in this decade put Ballarat at the forefront in one of the most decisive ideological struggles of the century.

### **Protection and Compulsory Arbitration**

In 1896, the Victorian Parliament amended the Factory Act and established boards to set wages in the “sweated” trades. These boards represented both employers and employees with independent chairs, and this initiative became the first system of wage regulation through industrial legislation in Australia.<sup>172</sup> By July 1902 there were 38 Wages Boards setting conditions for Ballarat workers.<sup>173</sup> These wages boards became a predominant interest of the BT&LC and provided a new role for it, where wage differentials could be scrutinised and unions could enlist other unions to support them in their campaigns. The proliferation of unions caused problems and the attempt to have differential rates for country and city workers was a constant concern. BT&LC regularly objected to the importation of manufactured goods and machinery as a threat to local jobs,- such as a Ballarat City Council purchase of an imported rush-cutter for Lake Wendouree and 40 locomotives and also regularly agitated for higher tariffs.<sup>174</sup>

With Federation, the ALP included industrial arbitration in its federal platform and made its establishment a condition of support in the early Commonwealth parliaments.

Australia and New Zealand were unique in the adoption of compulsory arbitration with the power to enforce determinations, and after Federation, a Commonwealth power to arbitrate in interstate industrial disputes was introduced.<sup>175</sup> In 1907, the president of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, Justice Higgins, used the adoption of protection to underpin his famous Harvester judgement. It established a minimum “basic wage, payable to an adult male”, whereby local employers paid male employees a fair and

172. Saffin Papers, List of Ballarat Trades Covered by Wages Boards-Boot, Bread, Clothing, Shirt, Underclothing and Furniture then 21 trades were brought under the system making a total of 38 boards by July 1902.

173. Ibid.

174. BT&LC Minutes, July 1, 1904, November 3, 1905, July 9, 1908, July 7, 1908.

175. M.cKinlay, *A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement*.



reasonable wage, which eventually led to a national system of wage regulation.<sup>176</sup> In 1912, Higgins explicitly rejected the concept of female equal pay, subsequently setting the federal basic wage for women at 54 per cent of the male rate. Male unionists also used the new wages' systems to restrict female employment opportunities. The Secretary of the Federated Clothing Trades Union recounted that his union's representatives 'deliberately refrained from using their best endeavours to improve the lot of women'. Given such attitudes it is not surprising that in 1912 only 17,670 of the nation's 394,719 female breadwinners had a union ticket.<sup>177</sup> The fact that women were excluded from this definition has had lasting consequences for female workers.

White and black lists had been used extensively, dating back to the debate over early closing, and constant requests were made to unionists to support each other. The BT&LC extended the system of "white lists" circulated to union members to bolster their support for those businesses that supported the conditions that had been set by the wages boards. The Butchers Union complained in August 1911 that too many Ballarat unionists had been patronising non-union shops, whose prices were lower because of worse working conditions.<sup>178</sup> The Grocers, Tea and Dairy Produce Employees Union joined the BT&LC in June 1912 and issued a "white list", but in 1914 BT&LC took over the issuing of all "white" lists.<sup>179</sup>

### **Ballarat North Railways Workshops**

The rail network had expanded to 1355 miles by 1882. Then "Tommy" Bent, a leading player in the land boom, brought in his great bribe, with railway lines "towards infinity, towards gum trees, swamps, cemeteries and back doors, as a critic observed, providing for a new line or spur for almost every constituency, a total of about 1200 extra miles, reaching its climax in 1890.<sup>180</sup> Rolling stock was needed, which led to the rise of the Ballarat North Railways Workshops (BNRW). But there was also a new tone emerging in Ballarat politics. Where there had been active cooperation between popularly elected representatives and the labour movement, there was now manoeuvring and manipulation

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176. Bradley Bowden, "The Rise and Decline of Australian Unionism: A History of Industrial Labour from the 1820s to 2010," *Labour History* 100 (2011), accessed April 25, 2020, 59, <https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.100.0051>.

177. *Ibid.*, 60.

178. BT&LC Minutes, June 12, 1902.

179. BT&LC Minutes, December 17, 1914.

180. Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich*.

of public opinion. With the closing of the Phoenix foundry, the demand for the decentralisation of the state-owned government enterprise was increasingly in discussion. Railway workshops at Newport and Port Melbourne were employing hundreds of men by 1890.

At the annual May Day celebrations of the ALP branch in 1911 at the Millers Arms Hotel, the main address given by McAdam drew on a booklet on the Newport Workshops by Tom Tunnecliffe, another “Ballarat Boy”.<sup>181</sup> Tunnecliffe later became the leader of the political wing, then chief secretary and speaker in the Victorian Parliament. But in 1911, his booklet inspired a Ballarat committee to campaign for government railway workshops. The committee was Jack Ward, a *Courier* employee, Jim Tait, the husband of the licensee of The Millers Arms, Bobby Band, a cabman, and Bill McAdam as the secretary.<sup>182</sup> The mood change is clear in McAdam’s account of the campaign, which indicates that the cordial air of cooperation and mutuality had been replaced with distrust and suspicion, which probably also related to the political environment as the local ALP member McKissock was being challenged by Baird, the Liberal candidate.

As McAdam states: “Plenty of sneers, jeers, insults and even brawls were met ... Just another IWW stunt of the Labor crowd was freely hurled at members.”<sup>183</sup> McKissock was defeated by Baird in the 1911 election and the committee had just about finished its enquiries when the mayor called a meeting of interested citizens to form a new committee. While still including some members of the ALP committee,<sup>184</sup> after a well-staged fanfare of triumph at the opening of the South Street Competitions in September 1912, much to the chagrin of McAdam, just before the final musical item, the conductor called for attention. The Hon. R McGregor MLA had a telegram from the premier with the news that the government had that day decided to build the workshops at Ballarat North and Bendigo at a cost of £80,000 without a contribution from the City of Ballarat:

Great jubilation but “Socialism in Excelsis” was not admitted. Led by Mayor Crocker the “heads” adjourned to Craig’s Hotel to “pop the corks of champagne” and celebrate the event and scratch the backs of those who came into the movement after all the spade work was done. Those who were responsible for the

181. Peter Love, “Tunnecliffe, Thomas (Tom) (1869–1948),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 12, ed. John Ritchie (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tunnecliffe-thomas-tom-8878>.

182. W. J. McAdam, *Ballarat North Railway Workshops History*. Melbourne University Archives.

183. *Ibid.*, 1.

184. *Ibid.*, 4.

movement being launched and persevered with in face of sneers, jeers and insult never got a mention.<sup>185</sup>

There was a turning point in Ballarat unionism. Previously localism and the closeness between workers and their supervisors in most small workshops ensured that agreement in the workplaces rated as highly as better wages and conditions. Even at large workplaces like the Phoenix foundry deciding where a worker's best interests lay was not clear to many workers. Unionism in this sector was the preserve of a handful of craft unionists. But the arrival of a new and distant employer was a new dimension and the most powerful of the unions involved was the ASE, who already monopolised the supply of fitters and turners, and along with members from other specialised unions such as the Boilermakers Society had the skills for the more complex undertakings such as locomotive building. The ASE affiliated with the BT&LC and a co-ordinated group of union delegates from BNRW took control. In addition, the affiliation of the ARU with the ALP in 1923 brought a membership of 16,000 and was a boost for country Victorian unionism, with the majority of their members outside Melbourne.<sup>186</sup> So with the major workplace came new leadership, which generated much of the direction for the BT&LC for the next 40 years, as had the AWU for the previous. In 1917, £100,000 had been spent, mostly on repairs and rolling stock, and the first Ballarat-built locomotive for over 10 years rolled out for trials in November 1919.<sup>187</sup> The total number of BNRW workers increased to 304 by 1938 and by 1960 was 640 mostly skilled tradesmen.<sup>188</sup> This coterie of ASE men was to play a significant role at the BT&LC for the next 30 years.

## Conclusion

While a spirit of optimism that working men could play an equal part in shaping their community had prevailed in Ballarat until the 1890s, the Depression and maritime strike were sharp reminders that old ways could be reasserted. The decision to formalise the participation of the labour movement in the political process through its own political wing that had made in Ballarat in 1891 has had long-lasting repercussions for Australian political life. In the pre-Federation period, Ballarat Socialism had been informed by

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185. *Ibid.*, 6.

186. Strangio, *Neither Power nor Glory*.

187. *Ibid.*

188. City of Ballarat, "Ballarat Heritage Study (Stage 2), July 2003," Hansen Partnership, accessed June 3, 2020, <https://www.ballarat.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/Ballarat%20Heritage%20Study%20Stage%202%20-%20July%202003.pdf>.

philosophical ideologies that had arisen from the USA and Great Britain. But the arrival of the charismatic Tom Mann, who had been heavily influenced by the Communist Manifesto, brought another element to the scene. The lively debate amongst a wide range of participants from Scullin to Powell who had brought a socialist feminist view to the fore would have been a unique period in Ballarat. In Saffin's papers, he refers to a 1909 Ballarat meeting where a participant remarked that the labour cause will not be benefitted by the words of an impracticable visionary such as Miss Powell and he does not want to see Scullin's success impaired by that (in reference to her support for a State Bank).<sup>189</sup> It would be another 70 years before there is evidence of women mentioned again in ideological debate at BTH. Although it is not evident whether Powell was actually present on this occasion or just the subject of the remarks, she was present in Daylesford in May 1909, when she opened an organising campaign of one week, and as a result, 50 financial members were added to the Daylesford PLC and a woman's organising committee was formed.<sup>190</sup>

The return of the AWU to Ballarat in 1905 also brought into play a new element on how to assemble an effective political voice. Lessons that had already been learned from NSW were quickly applied. While there had been argument among themselves on how their community should be organised, a coalescing of conservative figures to firmly claim their traditional positions of authority in the early years of the new Federation had united the BT&LC. However, all too soon the dark clouds of war in Europe loomed over them and BT&LC would play an active role in determining how Australia would participate.

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189. Saffin Papers.

190. *Labor Call*, June 10, 1909.

## Chapter 5

### A Dominant Tree 1914-1929

*(The crown extends above the general level of the canopy. It receives full light from above and some light from the sides)*

In Ballarat in pre-war days three stalwarts of the AWU Jack Barnes, John McNeill and Andy McKissock had become known as the “Three Musketeers of the Ballarat Trades Hall”. United in their nationalism, devotion to the labour movement and reverence for Spence as its grand old man, they made a pact that each musketeer and the AWU would ensure that a Cootamundra wattle was planted on each of their graves. Holloway and scores of other Labor mourners were huddled together at the cemetery in drizzling rain as McNeill and Barnes planted the commemorative wattle (on McKissock’s grave). Suddenly they would have noticed a pathetic old man standing alone some fifty metres away. It was Spence. An unbridgeable chasm separated him from them after the ghastly war that had shattered Labor friendships and devastated their party.

—Ross McMullin<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In 1914, the “war to end all wars” overtook Australia. Ballarat citizens were swept along in a patriotic surge that left indelible marks on families for at least two decades, and there are visual reminders that continue to this day. Conscription during WWI became the foremost challenge that the labour movement had faced regarding a major policy issue, which also revolved around the use and abuse of parliamentary power. Everyone came out bloodied and bruised. But winning the conscription debate in Ballarat and shaping the wider debate was a major achievement and the BT&LC made a major contribution. The conscription debate played a significant role in creating and strengthening new alliances and opened up divisions: sectarianism became an established feature of public discourse and loyalty to Empire a marker. To return to the tree analogy, the tree stood strong and firm through all the storm that raged around it on the conscription issue. However, from the storm new alliances emerged with substantial consequences in the next decade. As economic power became more entrenched and social divisions heightened, a new hegemony started to emerge in Ballarat around social status and public life. Very soon this struggle would be fought against a backdrop of economic collapse and political unrest, unprecedented in the history of the industrialised world.

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1. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 121. Andy McKissock’s funeral.

## The Labour Movement, Conscription and World War I

After Federation, while Australia maintained its relationship with Great Britain as part of the British Empire, there was some surprise when Britain made an alliance with Japan in 1902. The defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 added impetus to the need for Australia to have its own defence force.<sup>2</sup> At the 1908 Federal ALP Conference, delegates supported Hughes's proposition to introduce a system of compulsory military training<sup>3</sup> during a time of peace – the only English-speaking country to do so – and provided for boys aged 12 to 18 years to be enrolled in cadets, and those 18 to 26 years to register with the Commonwealth military forces.<sup>4</sup> The use of the military for “strike breaking” was still seen as a threat to workers and the 1912 ALP Conference carried a resolution making clear that the labour movement was firmly opposed to any use of that kind. In 1914 the Hughes Government introduced the Federal War Precautions Act, which restricted freedom at home, and when some in the labour movement began to oppose the war, tension escalated. Extensive opposition beyond the ALP to boyhood conscription led to more than 34,000 prosecutions and 7000 detentions by July 1915.<sup>5</sup>

By 1916, despite the continually optimistic headlines and official dispatches, huge losses had not brought the Allies to the verge of ultimate success and the labour movement was becoming increasingly suspicious of the cost in human terms as the Allies pursued this distant war.<sup>6</sup>

In 1919, the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics reported that from a population of approximately 4.9 million, 416,809 Australians enlisted for service, which represented 38.7 per cent of the male population aged between 18 and 44, of whom 58961 were killed, 4098 were missing or still prisoners, 166811 were casualties from wounds or gas and 87865 were sick,<sup>7</sup> not accounting for deaths after 1918. The Australian

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2. Sebastian J. Gatto, *Contribution and Conflict: A History of Wonthaggi and the First World War* (Wonthaggi, Vic: Wonthaggi and District Historical Society, 2016).

3. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

4. National Archives of Australia, “Universal Military Training in Australia, 1911–29 – Fact Sheet 160,” accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/fs-160-universal-military-training-in-australia-1911-29.pdf>.

5. Ibid.

6. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

7. Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Yearbook of the Commonwealth of Australia, no. 12, 1919* (Melbourne: Albert J. Mullett, 1919); Ernest Scott, *Australia During the War: The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, vol 11 (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1941).

Imperial Force (AIF) suffered more deaths, more for wounding and illness than did Britain, Germany, France, Canada, and the USA.<sup>8</sup> Anti-conscriptionists could show from official statistics that even from June 1916, when Australia suffered the highest casualties, the 18,000 serious casualties were covered by 21,000 recruits for the same period.<sup>9</sup>

When Hughes returned from England in July 1916 determined to impose conscription, the conflict was open. Donald Horne described Hughes this way:

‘The man [and] who for twenty years had thrilled to the power of his own voice ... was entranced by the view of himself talking over the heads of the labour movement to the people of Australia ... Whatever the reason for his change of view, having made the decision he committed himself to it with the zealous fixedness of a charging rhinoceros.’<sup>10</sup>

Hughes, realising that he could not get support in the Senate, decided to hold a plebiscite (although often referred to as a referendum).<sup>11</sup> However it was only supported by Caucus in a vote 23–21 taken at 2 am on Tuesday 29 August.<sup>12</sup> On 30 August 1916, Hughes announced the plebiscite. The question was: “Are you in favour of the Government having in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of the war, outside the Commonwealth, as it now has in regard to military service within the Commonwealth?”<sup>13</sup>

Looking back on a long and varied life in the labour movement, “Jack”. Holloway, whose own loyalty to cabinet solidarity during the Depression was later tested, stated: “I have seen men’s loyalties tested in several crises during my lifetime in Labor’s ranks. Never have I seen anything to compare, in that regard, with the conscription crisis.”<sup>14</sup>

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8. David C. Noonan, “Those We Forget: Recounting Australian Casualties of the First World War” (PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 2014).

9. Ibid.

10. Donald Horne, *Billy Hughes: Prime Minister of Australia 1915–1923* (1979; repr., Melbourne: Black Inc., 1983), 123.

11. R. J. Lewis, “The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat, 1916–1917” (Arts Honours thesis, University of Melbourne, 1969). A “plebiscite” meant the electorate was not giving or withholding power by its decisions, as is implied in a “referendum”, but merely asked to make known the majority “will.”

12. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*. The meeting had commenced on the previous Thursday and continued on Friday, Saturday, Monday and Tuesday.

13. National Archives of Australia, “Conscription Referendums, 1916 and 1917 – Fact Sheet 161,” accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.naa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/fs-161-conscription-referendums-1916-and-1917.pdf>.

14. Edward J. Holloway, *The Australian Victory over Conscription in 1916–1917* (Melbourne: Anti-Conscription Jubilee Committee, 1966), 15.

At the beginning of the war, Ballarat newspapers all supported the war.<sup>15</sup> However, the *Evening Echo* warned against fostering a jingoistic spirit, and hoped “that good might come out of the war, as a saner set of conditions for world affairs might become possible when the working men began to realise their power and responsibilities on an international scale.”<sup>16</sup>

The AWU, particularly Scullin, using the influence of the BT&LC to oppose conscription and shape the ALP at this time, led formidable opposition throughout the state to Hughes’s determination to impose conscription.<sup>17</sup> From early in 1912, the *Evening Echo* had become a strongly labour-oriented paper, with Senator Barnes as chairman of directors, McGrath and Jim (Scullin’s brother-in-law) as directors and Scullin as editor.<sup>18</sup> In later life, Scullin said that he had been appointed an editor without any journalistic experience, and a prime minister without ever having been a cabinet member.<sup>19</sup>

In 1913, when Barnes, one of the “three musketeers”, was elected to the Senate, McNeill, another “musketeer”, succeeded him as secretary of the AWU Victoria–Riverina branch, holding the post until 1922 and becoming the president of the BT&LC in 1916. Stewart, the AWU delegate and president of the BT&LC in 1910, moved to Melbourne when he was appointed full-time secretary of the ALP in 1911, and by 1914 was acknowledged as one of the “powers behind the throne” of the Fisher Government. His appointment as secretary of the newly established ALP federal executive in 1915 consolidated his power, a post he held until his death in 1925.<sup>20</sup> When Barnes stepped down as VCE president his place was taken by Kean; Stewart was secretary, McNeill and Hogan vice-presidents, and Barnes, Scullin, and Carey committee members,<sup>21</sup> all with strong Ballarat connections. The role of McGrath, as a serving soldier and ALP politician, cannot be underestimated, either, earning him hostility from one of the most powerful senior army officers at the Front, Major-General Pompey Elliott, who also grew up in Ballarat, which led to serious consequences after the War.

15. “Our Duty to Britain and Ourselves,” *Evening Echo*, August 5, 1914.

16. “War and People,” *Evening Echo*, August 10, 1914.

17. BT&LC Minutes, May 15, 1916. Resolution congratulating the *Evening Echo*.

18. Beggs-Sunter, “Ballarat’s Crusading *Evening Echo*.”

19. Anne Beggs-Sunter, “Ballarat’s Crusading Labour Paper: the *Evening Echo*,” *Ballarat 1914 – 1918* (blog), City of Ballarat Libraries, accessed June 10, 2020, <http://ballarat19141918.blogspot.com/2016/11/ballarats-crusading-labour-paper.html>.

20. “Late Arch Stewart: Monument Unveiled at Coburg Cemetery,” *Australian Worker* (Sydney), December 8, 1926.

21. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.



Among the 25 identifiable “No” campaigners in Ballarat, 17 were members of the BT&LC.<sup>22</sup> Of the 25 “Yes” campaigners in Ballarat in 1916 and 1917, 10 were local councillors, four connected with Liberal politics, five Liberal politicians, three clergyman and 12 active on recruiting committees.<sup>23</sup> While the BT&LC was critical of those “flag-waving patriots” who were gushing over the Belgian relief fund but ignoring Ballarat’s 300 unemployed breadwinners,<sup>24</sup> the mayor of the city had no such concerns:

At a Scottish “haggis supper” the mayor (Cr R. Pearse) made these remarks. He had “that day” received a deputation “from the unemployed”. He thought they were going to eat “him”. (Laughter from the well-fed gathering, as though the unemployed should want to “eat” anything.) He was not quite prepared for them, but if he had been he would have found a job for the lot of them, for he would have told them to go and fight the Germans.<sup>25</sup>

The *Evening Echo* covered the extraordinary news of the Dublin Easter Rising with front-page headlines throughout May 1916, then the news of the arrival of the ANZACs in France but continued to hold the line on the prime minister’s stated position: “No longer ago than July 16 of last year he did say in the House of Representatives ‘in no circumstances would I agree to send men out of this country to fight against their will’.”<sup>26</sup>

However, by July 1916, that stance had been abandoned. Both the conscriptionist and anti-conscriptionist movements opened their respective campaigns on 18 September 1916. Hughes led the conscriptionists’ rally at the Sydney Town Hall. Anti-conscriptionists gathered in Ballarat, led by Victorian ALP Senator Barnes and Scullin.<sup>27</sup>

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22. BT&LC Minutes, November 2, 1916. This Council expresses its appreciation of the meritorious efforts of the following in Ballarat, who procured the defeat of conscription – Evening Echo, J. Scullin, R. Jordan, L. Jude (BT&LC), J. McNeill (BT&LC), A. J. Rowe (BT&LC), W. A. Dalton (BT&LC), J. Meehan (BT&LC), T. Carey (BT&LC), E. Carren, W. McAdam (BT&LC), R. Merlin (BT&LC), E. H. A. Smith (BT&LC), R. Whitrick (BT&LC), T. M. Hanlon (BT&LC), F. Brophy, (BT&LC) W. Newberry (BT&LC), D. M. Miller (BT&LC).

23. Lewis, “The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat.”

24. *Evening Echo*, March 12, 1915.

25. *Evening Echo*, October 15, 1914.

26. *Evening Echo*, August 15, 1916.

27. Nathan Church, “Political Attitudes to Conscription 1914-18,” Parliamentary Library Research Paper Series 2016–17 (Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Services, 2016), accessed August 12, 2021, [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/4899280/upload\\_binary/4899280.pdf](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/4899280/upload_binary/4899280.pdf).

Scullin asked his audience: “What did Australia go out to fight? Was it not the cursed military system (the conscriptionists) we’re now trying to force on Australia?”<sup>28</sup>

The BT&LC swung into action.<sup>29</sup> The *Evening Echo* contribution became vital, as 60,000 copies a day were sent to Melbourne for distribution (see Figure 6),<sup>30</sup> and articles written by Scullin put the No campaign clearly and strongly.<sup>31</sup> Even before the official launch, the AWU had held several meetings in the Ballarat district.<sup>32</sup> Throughout September and October in 1916, the paper advertised meetings that had been organised all over the district, often outdoors, with the Galloway Monument a popular meeting place.<sup>33</sup> Scullin and his associate at the *Evening Echo*, Richard Jordan, attacked capitalists and profiteers, arguing that Australia had done more than its share in defending the Empire.<sup>34</sup>



Figure 6. Trade union officials and paperboys with copies of the *Evening Echo* outside the Melbourne Trades Hall in October 1916 supporting the anti-conscription campaign, including AWU organiser Richardson born on the Ballarat goldfields to African-American parents from California. Source: Rhonda Chestnut family photo collection. In 1913, AWU-aligned McGrath and long-time delegate to BT&LC had stood down from the state seat of Grenville to contest the federal seat of Ballarat against the formidable Hugh McKay. McGrath was helped by the bitter legacy of the 1911 strike by the Agricultural Implement Makers Union. Led by McKay, the

28. Leslie C. Jauncey, *The Story of Conscription in Australia* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1935), 175.

29. BT&LC Minutes, August 1916,

30. Beggs-Sunter, “Ballarat’s Crusading *Evening Echo*.”

31. “What’s The Game,” *Evening Echo*, October 3, 1916.

32. *Evening Echo*, September 1, 1916.

33. Beggs-Sunter, “Ballarat’s Crusading *Evening Echo*.”

34. Ibid.

employers responded with a lockout of all unionists, striking or not, which affected 2500 workers. McKay's detestation of Labor and unionism was expressed in his support for the free (non-union) labour cause.<sup>35</sup> McKay sued the *Evening Echo* for publishing comments that reflected poorly on his business dealings, then McGrath sued *The Courier* over a letter published by a farmer, Archibald Lawson. McKay's wealth at the time of his death in 1926 was £2,123,945 (\$959,200,000 in today's terms),<sup>36</sup> so the threat of litigation was a serious matter. In the May 1913 election, McGrath narrowly won. Fortunately for Scullin, McKay dropped proceedings and paid the *Evening Echo's* costs. In 1914, McGrath held his seat with an increased majority and constantly pressed the federal government to improve soldiers' conditions.<sup>37</sup>

McGrath became a powerful voice against conscription but his opposition had consequences for his son, David, a student at the Ballarat Agricultural High School, who enlisted in the AIF with his father's approval. A family member can still recount the background: "Uncle Dave enlisted at 15 putting up his age to 16 as his mother received a white feather. Uncle Dave was a big person and it was an intimidation act as it was thought he should have enlisted, especially as my grandfather was a federal MP."<sup>38</sup> His father, at the age of 43, then enlisted.<sup>39</sup> The *Evening Echo* reported on McGrath's final leave.<sup>40</sup> McGrath said he little dreamt that he would ever conceive it his duty to offer his services to King and country, knowing in many cases, wars were opposed to the interests of the class to which he belonged, and conscription would probably cause civil war in Australia. Rather than divisions, his solution was to raise the minimum pay for men going to the Front from six shillings a day to ten shillings a day, comments that were heartily endorsed by his audience.<sup>41</sup>

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35. John Lack, "McKay, Hugh Victor (1865–1926)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986), accessed June 10, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mckay-hugh-victor-699>.

36. Raymond C. Duplain, "Elites in the Colony and State of Victoria 1860–1939: A Prosopographical Analysis" (PhD thesis, Deakin University, Geelong, 1994). "Measuring Worth Is a Complicated Question," Measuring Worth. com, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/australiacompare/relativevalue.php>.

37. Beggs-Sunter, "Ballarat's Crusading *Evening Echo*."

38. Margaret Webster, McGrath's great niece, email to author.

39. Beggs-Sunter, "Ballarat's Crusading *Evening Echo*."

40. "Public Opinion: Mr McGrath's Farewell," *Evening Echo*, June 2, 1916.

41. Ibid.

McGrath went to London then to France in 1917, where he remained until repatriated to Australia in April 1918 after a serious illness.<sup>42</sup> Results published in 1917 indicate that soldiers at the front voted “No” and those in support roles voted “Yes.”<sup>43</sup> Another factor in the soldiers’ experience is outlined in this graphic account of dealing with English conscripts by Les Boak, a “Ballarat boy”. If his views were shared by his mates, it is not hard to understand why the troops did not think conscription was the answer. He describes the latter part of the war when British regiments were arriving in France with many conscripts:

Boys in battle. You’d find two or three of them crying on your shoulder. They’d had it. Well, you couldn’t expect boys to do it: “Turn the bloody guns around and show them the bayonet.” There would be perhaps half a dozen that were men in a bloody hundred troop.<sup>44</sup>

Two other contrasting figures should be noted as part of Ballarat’s opposition to conscription – Hogan and Crouch. Both changed political parties during their careers. Hogan – later the first ALP premier of Victoria, an anti-conscriptionist and avowed pacifist who was expelled from the ALP in July 1932 for supporting the Premiers’ Plan – campaigned for the “No” vote.<sup>45</sup> Hogan’s home, near the strongly Irish Catholic township of Dunnstown in the Warrenheip division, returned a conclusive vote: 145 Yes to 460 No.<sup>46</sup> Richard Crouch is still well known as the benefactor of the Prime Ministers’ Avenue in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens and the Crouch art prize for Australian artists.<sup>47</sup> His two periods as an MHR (1901–1910 and 1929–1931) were separated by WWI, during which time he became an anti-conscription activist and changed his political affiliation. Crouch was the Victorian branch president of the Returned Soldiers’ No-Conscription League, who campaigned hard against conscription in 1916 and 1917. Encouraged by Scullin, he became an active leader of the ALP in Victoria, including becoming president

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42. McMullin, *Pompey Elliott*.

43. Paul Barclay (presenter), “Conscription in World War I,” *Big Ideas*, aired December 13, 2016, on ABC Radio National, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/bigideas/conscription/12477682>.

44. Les Boak, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 10.

45. Jonas, “Hogan.”

46. Beggs-Sunter, “Ballarat’s Crusading *Evening Echo*.”

47. Anne Beggs-Sunter, *Not for Self but for All: A History of the Art Gallery of Ballarat Association* (Ballarat: Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2018).

in 1928.<sup>48</sup> Crouch won the federal seat of Corangamite for the ALP in October 1929 but lost it in the resounding defeat of the ALP in 1931.

Two men who began their lives in the Ballarat district, Scullin and Curtin, also came together in a powerful leadership team on this issue. Both Scullin and Curtin had contributed to the development of specific theories of Labor and its purpose. Up until 1916, these concepts were clearly divided: Scullin represented the AWU-led wing that sought to defeat Hughes and enforce union control over the party, and Curtin led the growing socialist forces within the unions who took opposition further to oppose the war itself.<sup>49</sup> In 1916, these two major strands came together at the Australian Trades Union Anti-Conscription Congress, which appointed Curtin to be secretary of its national executive.<sup>50</sup> The BT&LC instructed their delegates to vote against conscription,<sup>51</sup> and the conference declared its overwhelming determination to resist any attempt to impose conscription upon the people of Australia.<sup>52</sup>

Scullin and Curtin were “leaders who were both activists and agitators as well as editors and orators, each connected to an important power base and representing the ideological and structural nature of the political culture of the labour movement.”<sup>53</sup> Liam Byrne, in *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin: Their Early Political Careers and the Making of the Modern Labor Party*, describes how the two remained close to the end of Curtin’s life.<sup>54</sup> A remarkable affirmation of that friendship was that Scullin, although holding no portfolio, occupied the office between the prime minister’s office and the treasurer’s in Parliament House until Curtin’s death.<sup>55</sup>

That unknown quantity, the “women’s vote”, was subject to special attention during the campaigns, and much of the propaganda was directed at them given that many had

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48. Austin McCallum, “Crouch, Richard Armstrong (1868–1949),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 8, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981), accessed August 19, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/crouch-richard-armstrong-5831>.
  49. Liam Byrne, “The Young John Curtin and James Scullin: Conscription, the Split and Labor’s Political Culture,” in *Fighting against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Phillip Deery and Julie Kimber (Melbourne: Leftbank Press, 2015).
  50. Geoffrey Serle, “Curtin, John (1885–1945),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 13, ed. John Ritchie (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), accessed June 10, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/curtin-john-9885>.
  51. BT&LC Minutes, May 18, 1916.
  52. Jauncey, *The Story of Conscription in Australia*.
  53. Byrne, *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin*, 85.
  54. *Ibid.*, 85.
  55. *Ibid.*, 85.

already faced the consequences. The first attempt of the military authorities to censor civilians' right to free speech targeted women, with Vida Goldstein, as editor of *The Woman Voter*, being subjected to severe censorship in the magazine.<sup>56</sup> While women in the Victorian ALP were active in the anti-conscription movement, there is no record of their involvement in Ballarat's No campaign.<sup>57</sup> Judith Smart recently referred to the Labor Women's Anti-Conscription Committee, formed in September 1916, which joined forces with other left-wing anti-war women to form the United Women's No-Conscription Committee. Members came from the ALP as well as the Socialist Party and the Women's Peace Army and Political Association, and organisers included Elizabeth Wallace (Lizzie Ahern), Vida Goldstein and Bella Guerin. On 21 October 1916, a Women's No Conscription Demonstration and Procession took place in Melbourne, with 4–6000 women marching from the Guild Hall in Swanston Street to the Yarra Bank, where the crowd had swelled to 80,000.<sup>58</sup> Both Ballarat women, Guerin and Ahern were jailed.<sup>59</sup> However there is no mention of their participation in Ballarat or a record of them visiting Ballarat in BT&LC minutes.

Hughes certainly scapegoated Archbishop Mannix and Pompey Elliott blamed the Catholics for the failure of the Yes vote. Elliott, undoubtedly an outstandingly successful Australian general, was regarded as charismatic, controversial, forthright, and volatile. However, he was appalled that a majority of Australians had voted against conscription: "I cannot understand it. I suppose it was the Catholics that were against England as usual."<sup>60</sup> Yet Catholic recruitment to the AIF remained throughout the war at around 20 per cent, equivalent to the demographic share of Catholics recorded in the 1914 Census.<sup>61</sup> Mannix had been appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Melbourne to the ageing Archbishop Carr in 1913 and began to immerse himself in Victorian politics on his arrival from Ireland. His companion on the journey out was his cousin, Father Foley from

56. Jauncey, *The Story of Conscription in Australia*.

57. Church, "Political Attitudes to Conscription."

58. Judith Smart. Text of a lecture to the Brunswick Coburg Anti-conscription Commemoration Committee, 3 May 2016. Reprinted in Labour History Melbourne.  
<https://labourhistorymelbourne.org/2016/12/06/opposing-war-womens-protest-in-world-war-i/>

59. Kelly, "Guerin."

60. McMullin, *Pompey Elliott*, 244.

61. Robert Bollard, "Economic Conscription and Irish Discontent: The Possible Resolution of a Conundrum," in *Fighting against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Phillip Deery and Julie Kimber (Melbourne: Leftbank Press, 2015).

Terang, who would soon be appointed Bishop of Ballarat.<sup>62</sup> While initially raising the issue of state aid for religious schools, the increasing impact of the war in Europe changed the political focus to the conscription debate. After the Easter Rising in Dublin, issues of class and religion became more intermingled. Mannix, like the BT&LC, had highlighted the hypocrisy of the propaganda being made out of the “rape of little Belgium” while the British suppressed Irish rights.<sup>63</sup> At this time, Mannix was living in West Melbourne, and Noone argues that it is likely that his observation of the hardships of parishioners, his connections with Dr Maloney and Frank Brennan, both militant ALP members of the Federal Parliament who were critical of the war, and his knowledge of casualties were factors in his opposition.<sup>64</sup> Mannix rebuffed Hughes’s overtures to support conscription and entered the first plebiscite campaign only twice to emphasise that Australia was already doing enough.<sup>65</sup>

In focusing hostility on Mannix, what has often been overlooked is the role of the Irish Catholics in the structures of the ALP whose values and aspirations were similar to the Church leadership. Scullin, Hogan, Kean and McNeil, all of Irish extraction, were staunch opponents of conscription, and all had a firm commitment to the independence of Australia, free from the influence of British colonialism, going back to Eureka. Jan Groggon’s helpful analysis of the role of the different Celtic groups in Ballarat concludes that the Irish, more than any of the other Celtic groups “brought their emotional and cultural “baggage” with them, and in so doing played a significant role in recognising and defining the differences between Ballarat and the Mother Country.”<sup>66</sup> The Irish more consistently distanced themselves from the mantle of the British than any of the Cornish, Welsh or Scottish who were living in Ballarat in the years 1851 to 1901.<sup>67</sup> That motivation was driven by their history, not the late arrival of Archbishop Mannix to the Victorian scene.

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62. Brenda Niall, *Mannix* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2015).

63. Ross Fitzgerald, Adam J. Carr, and William J. Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2003).

64. Val Noone, “Class Factors in the Radicalisation of Archbishop Daniel Mannix, 1913–17,” *Labour History* 106 (2014), accessed June 10, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.5263/labourhistory.106.0189>.

65. James Griffin, “Mannix, Daniel (1864–1963),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1986), accessed June 10, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mannix-daniel-7478>.

66. Croggon, “‘Strangers in a Strange Land’,” 301.

67. *Ibid.*

Adding to the enmity to Mannix, another alliance of the Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, with Hughes afterwards, recently detailed by Peter Bastian,<sup>68</sup> makes it clear who got the blame back in London. Ferguson's report to the colonial secretary said: "The organised opposition was composed of the labour movement and the Roman Catholics. This body, organised and capably led by Archbishop Mannix, comprises the Irish element, which would be hostile to any proposals of the government."<sup>69</sup> Spin-doctoring may be a new word but is not a new art form, so the combination of the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and senior Army Officers won the public relations argument but is it good history. The AWU should argue that it is not.

In 1917, the debate on the second plebiscite became more belligerent everywhere and there was more sectarian bitterness for which Dr Mannix was blamed. But the Protestant Federation, which had been formed with branches throughout the Ballarat area, was active on the other side and included many powerful public figures in commercial, religious, public, and political life, including Dame Nellie Melba who wrote to *The Courier*.<sup>70</sup> The Bishop of Ballarat, Dr Foley, did join his superior in announcing publicly that he would vote against conscription and why.<sup>71</sup> The second plebiscite on 20 December 1917 was defeated by a larger margin than the first.

Local government played a major part as a supporter of conscription. In February 1916, the Warragul Shire had circulated a letter to other municipalities seeking support for conscription.<sup>72</sup> All the municipal areas in the Ballarat area, except the Ballan Shire, quickly passed motions favouring conscription.<sup>73</sup> A new division emerged in Ballarat's "body politic" as is evident from the antagonistic tone at the BT&LC, with a referral to the new executive to consider the advisability of contesting any or all of the City's and Town's municipal wards.<sup>74</sup> Hughes sent telegrams to municipal bodies that recommended the formation of national plebiscite committees and he urged all individuals to work for

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68. Peter Bastian, "Vice-Regal Intervention in Australian Domestic Politics: Ronald Munro Ferguson and the ALP Split of 1916," *Labour History*, 114 (2018): 1–16.

69. *Ibid.*, 7.

70. Letter from Nellie Melba, *The Courier*, December 12, 1917.

71. "Bishop Foley on Conscription: How He Is Voting and the Reasons Why," *The Courier*, December 17, 1917.

72. "Conscription: *The Warragul Circular*," *Argus*, March 1, 1916.

73. Lewis, "The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat."

74. BT&LC Minutes, January 11, 1917.



the triumph of the government’s proposals. Local committees then received and distributed conscriptionist material.<sup>75</sup>

On 9 October 1916, Hughes opened the South Street Competitions at the Coliseum, a venue seating 10,000 people. The evening was advertised as a musical program, to be preceded by a speech from Mr Hughes. Not for the first time nor the last, politicians blatantly misused the opportunity: the prime minister gave a speech lasting more than an hour and called for every person to declare himself for or against Australia with their vote, then two other politicians spoke at length in favour of a “Yes” vote, which delayed the advertised musical program until 10.25 pm. The *Evening Echo* condemned Hughes for bringing politics to South Street: “Argument of Exaggeration. Prime Minister Hughes Exposed,”<sup>76</sup> but an editorial in *The Courier* described anti-conscriptionists “as the mouthpiece of the counsels of crafty cowardice”<sup>77</sup> reiterating a letter Hughes had circulated to all major papers.

Ballarat held out against the majority Victorian opinion on conscription, voting against it in both the 1916 and 1917 referendums, and against the trend when Victoria voted “Yes” in 1916.<sup>78</sup> The 1916 plebiscite resulted in a narrow win nationally for the “No” campaign, with the support of a majority of states. While there was a “Yes” majority in Victoria, Ballarat voted against the Victorian trend: the vote was No 15,373 to Yes 13,831.<sup>79</sup> Turner asserts that voting was on party lines<sup>80</sup> and that was able to be established for Ballarat, which appeared to show no significant changes to party allegiance, regardless of religious belief.<sup>81</sup> However, party allegiance and religious beliefs did align as the ALP was “the only party not conspicuously tainted with sectarianism”,<sup>82</sup> and the brutal suppression of the Easter Rebellion in 1916 sharpened the anti-imperialist attitudes among the ALP’s Irish Catholic supporters.

In 1916, Hughes also overplayed his hand with an important AWU constituency. An order in October under the Defence Act, prior to the plebiscite, called up single men and

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75. Lewis, “The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat.”

76. “Argument of Exaggeration: Prime Minister Hughes Exposed,” *Evening Echo*, October 10, 1916.

77. *The Courier*, October 21, 1916.

78. Lewis, “The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat.”

79. *Ibid.*

80. Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*.

81. Lewis, “The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat.”

82. Brian J. Costar, Peter Love, and Paul Strangio (eds), *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2005), 2.

widowers without children, between the ages of 21 and 35, to enter camps<sup>83</sup> giving them a taste of army life; many small farms were then left without the sons and labourers just as harvesting and shearing was beginning. The *Evening Echo* put the case bluntly: “The farmer must face the facts. Conscription *does* mean ruin for him. If the farmers were alive to their own interests they had to vote No.”<sup>84</sup> To exacerbate uncertainty, notices were delivered to married men in Ballarat East that ordered them to attend the recruiting office on the following Monday morning after the plebiscite vote. They were being conscripted! The editor of *The Courier* and the speakers at the final conscription rally on the night before the poll emphasised that the notices had been sent out by mistake, but the conscription cause must surely have suffered.

At a special ALP conference held in December 1916, Scullin moved the resolution, carried 29 to 4, expelling all FPLP members who had either supported compulsory overseas service or had left the FPLP to form another party.<sup>85</sup> Hughes then formed the “National Labor” Government made up of 25 defectors from the ALP, including Spence, who joined a ministry that included many enemies of the ALP. By 1916–17, Spence was postmaster-general and vice-president of the Executive Council.<sup>86</sup> However, he was ill and, according to AWU officials, tricked by Hughes and Lamond, his son-in-law, into voting for conscription (nevertheless he liked being postmaster-general). He was the only member of the union allowed to resign instead of being expelled for his actions.<sup>87</sup> The BT&LC expressed in no uncertain terms its view of the defectors.<sup>88</sup>

Hughes went on to form the Nationalist Party, and the election held in May 1917 gave the Nationalists a resounding victory. The 46 members who remained in the FPLP were reduced to 22, but the result showed that the ALP had retained nearly all of its voters in traditionally strong areas, although it lost the extra support crucial in finely balanced seats, thus confirming that a significant number of voters were prepared to endorse the Nationalists win-the-war policy without accepting conscription.<sup>89</sup> McGrath was exempted

83. Lewis, “The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat.”

84. “Conscription and the Crops: What the Farmers Must Face,” *Evening Echo*, October 6, 1916.

85. Byrne, *Becoming John Curtin and James Scullin*.

86. Holloway, *The Australian Victory over Conscription*.

87. Lansbury and Nairn, “Spence.”

88. BT&LC Minutes, November 16, 1916. This council views with intense satisfaction the recent developments in the affairs of the Federal Parliament which has relieved the Labor Party and the labour Movement of Mr Hughes and his satellites.’ Carried.

89. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

from contesting, as Ballarat was a “khaki” seat, which was part of an agreement with the National Federation that politicians in the fighting forces would not be opposed, which was fortunate for him.<sup>90</sup> Two of the three “musketeers”, Barnes and McKissock, lost their Senate seats, and, sadly, McKissock died two years later,<sup>91</sup> but Barnes returned to the Senate in 1922 and remained there until 1935.<sup>92</sup> McNeill, the third musketeer, joined him in the Federal Parliament from 1922 to 1925 as the Member for Wannon. He then lost the seat in 1925 but was returned for the 1929–1931 parliamentary term;<sup>93</sup> Barnes and McGrath remained together in the Federal Parliament for most of the next two decades.

The State ALP Conferences in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and South Australia in 1917 endorsed motions announcing that “the present colossal struggle” was the inevitable product of capitalism, where they welcomed the momentous events that were occurring in Russia at the time and called for an immediate international conference that included labour representatives and women delegates to negotiate a peace settlement.<sup>94</sup> Undeterred, Hughes announced another plebiscite.<sup>95</sup> In January 1917, Hughes again visited Ballarat and formed a branch of the National Federation, which conducted the local conscription campaign. Most of the municipal councils again gave active support.<sup>96</sup> This role of municipalities becoming protagonists in a party-political way on the conservative side was to be repeated in Ballarat many times in the future.

Special issues of the *Evening Echo* were printed, almost the lone daily voice against conscription, although supplies of paper were running so low that on occasions the paper was down to one sheet.<sup>97</sup> But its efforts were justified when the nation voted even more strongly against conscription. Victoria voted against conscription, 332,490 votes to 329,772,<sup>98</sup> and Ballarat rejected the measure again.<sup>99</sup> The *Evening Echo* wrote proudly:

In spite of 90% of the capitalist press, large sections of the pulpit, and parliament supporting conscription, the “No” vote had won the day, in spite of prosecutions,

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90. *The Courier*, May 7, 1917.

91. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

92. *Ibid.*

93. J. R. Robertson, “McNeill, John James (1868–1943) “ in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 10, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press, 1986), accessed June 10, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcneill-john-james-7434>.

94. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

95. Ernest Scott, *Australia During the War*.

96. BT&LC Minutes, December 6, 1917.

97. Beggs-Sunter, “Ballarat’s Crusading *Evening Echo*.”

98. Scott, *Australia During the War*.

99. Lewis, “The Conscription Plebiscites in Ballarat,” Appendix.

of persecution, in spite of suppression of free speech, in spite of regulations framed by a Junta.<sup>100</sup>

But the strongest note of pride is evident in the minute passed at BT&LC:

That this Council congratulates the volunteer soldiers of Australia on the cessation of hostilities in which they bore so brave and chivalrous part in fighting against the conscription-ridden peoples of the Central empires, and records its just pride that Australia's soldiers overseas are on the eve of rejoining their comrades here in conscription-free Australia after having contributed in no small measure to the overthrow of militarism in Europe.<sup>101</sup>

The conscription debate was occurring against a background of political upheaval in Russia, with Manning Clark noting changes in Australia in February 1917 from a theoretical enthusiasm for the concept of a new way of organising society to the possible reality of the overthrow of the established order:

The outbreak of revolution in February 1917 led to a different division of opinion in Australia. This time the division was on class lines. The capitalist class was alarmed. They feared that the middle class liberal revolution in Russia might be followed by a working-class revolution. This might encourage the radicals within the labour movement to start a revolution in Australia; they might try to bring the war to an end.<sup>102</sup>

One ALP member of the New South Wales Parliament said the red flag was “the only flag I’ll spill my blood for”.<sup>103</sup> BTH first flew the Red Flag in 1917 when the War Precautions Act was extended by Hughes to ban it, which was considered to be an attempt to suppress the trade unions. The Red Flag is often misrepresented as the Russian flag, but Jim Connell wrote the song titled *The Red Flag*,<sup>104</sup> one of the great rallying worker songs, during the London Dock Strike in 1889 after hearing a lecture on Socialism. His song quickly became an anthem of the international labour movement. It is

100. “No”: Australia Was There,” *Evening Echo*, December 21, 1917.

101. BT&LC Minutes, November 21, 1918. Moved Jim McNeill and carried unanimously.

102. Thomas Poole and John McNair, *Russia and the Fifth Continent: Aspects of Russian–Australian Relations* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1992).

103. *Ibid.*, x.

104. The people’s flag is deepest red,  
It shrouded oft our martyred dead,  
And ere their limbs grew stiff and cold,  
Their hearts’ blood dyed its every fold.  
Chorus:  
Then raise the scarlet standard high.  
Beneath its shade we’ll live and die,  
Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer,  
We’ll keep the red flag flying here.

still the official anthem of the British Labour Party and its annual party conference closes with its rendition. The red flag he wrote of has been associated with left-wing politics since the French Revolution and prior to that as a symbol of defiance and battle. On 18 May 1917, the *Evening Echo* reported that the flying of the Red Flag alongside the Union Jack at Trades Hall for Homecoming Week had led to charges of disloyalty against the BT&LC from the local politician McGregor. Delegate Whittrick's retort that McGregor, a real estate agent by profession, had hoisted the red flag thousands of times at auction sales: "They will all hoist it for pounds, shillings and pence"<sup>105</sup> brought laughter and applause. The president, McNeill, said it was mostly men connected with the labour movement who did the fighting and Lieutenant-Colonel Crouch said that 90 per cent of the men in the trenches were trade unionists. In 1918, Guerin gave a strong defence of the Red Flag at a meeting of socialists: "I was never prouder than when the little Red Flag fluttered from the Trades Hall in hypocritical old Melbourne, she said, to the accompaniment of loud applause."<sup>106</sup> The Red Flag still flies every day at BTH.

In July 1918, Richard Jordan, but not Scullin, was charged under the War Precautions Regulations with publishing an article in the *Evening Echo* likely to be prejudicial to recruiting, an article on peace. *Labor Call's* response showed the depth of the animosity now entrenched:

It appears that Mr. Jordan set out to give a testimonial to peace, like Christ many, many decades ago, but although to some people peace is a very desirable subject, it is, nevertheless, most undesirable to the recruiting authorities, and, as a result, the Laborite with the Biblical tone about his name was mulcted in £25 damages.<sup>107</sup>

## **Localism and the Consolidation of Power and Influence**

In 1918, the Great War was over. Many Ballarat families mourned sons, husbands and fathers who did not come back or returned very different men from those who went away. The memorials, honour rolls, avenues and the Arch of Victory created pride and a sense of cohesion that this major world event had brought to the furthest parts of the Empire. But the obvious costs were also apparent. Jim Morgan, when interviewed, spoke of the neighbour who came back minus a hand and Mr Harris, a prominent member of the

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105. "Humanity's Flag: Russian Colors at the Trades Hall," *Evening Echo*, May 18, 1917.

106. "Again, the Red Flag: Bella Lavenders's Brilliant Lecture," *The Socialist*, September 20, 1918.

107. *Evening Echo*, July 18, 1918.

Skipton Street congregation choir came back minus a foot, while Mr Darling lost a leg and the Red Cross set him up in a little boot repair shop.<sup>108</sup>

After the War ended, a changed mood was noticed by many. Norman Lindsay considered “uninhibited hearty laughter, common before 1914, had all but disappeared.”<sup>109</sup> McMullin reflected that this chastened pessimism turned many Australians away from broad social goals and aspirations for reform. The conscription debate had been an intense ideological struggle and had played a significant role in creating and strengthening new alliances in Ballarat; social divisions and distinctions had become apparent, new elites had emerged, and municipal government had become the entitlement of powerful Protestant businessmen.

Neville Kirk puts forward an argument that between 1917 and the early 1930s conservatives achieved political hegemony in Australia using the politics of loyalism to nation and Empire, which contributed significantly to their domination.<sup>110</sup> That was clearly the case in Ballarat with the rise of sectarianism. In 1917, “The Dirty Insect of Sectarianism” was raised at BT&LC.<sup>111</sup> McGrath had been defeated by one vote in the 1919 federal election, but the result was overturned by the Court of Disputed Returns, and in 1920 a by-election was held. *The Courier* used its authority to build suspicion regarding Catholic influence in Ballarat by reproducing a large heading – “Vote out Sectarianism. Vote 1 McGrath” – from the Catholic paper, the *Tribune*, on its front page on the day.<sup>112</sup> McGrath was not a Catholic; he was an Ulster-Protestant by upbringing, and a staunch follower of Tom Mann, the charismatic socialist.

The Nationalist candidate, former soldier Kerby, was strongly supported by Elliott, now a Nationalist Senator for Victoria. Elliott published a venomous attack against McGrath, saying that as a member of the AIF he had had a “safe and cushy job”<sup>113</sup> in London and had pulled strings to have his son moved away from the Front. McGrath angrily refuted these claims and launched a libel writ against Elliott. The by-election was a triumph for

108. Jim Morgan, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, Tape 39, 6.

109. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 130.

110. Neville Kirk, “‘Australians for Australia’: The Right, the Labor Party and Contested Loyalties to Nation and Empire in Australia, 1917 to the Early 1930s,” *Labour History* 91 (2006), accessed July 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516154>. 95.

111. BT&LC Minutes, May 17, 1917. Term used during report on losses at the recent federal election.

112. *The Courier*, July 10, 1920.

113. McMullin, *Pompey Elliott*, 533.

McGrath, who gained an absolute majority in 15 out of the 30 subdivisions,<sup>114</sup> and Barnes, in speaking to a very large crowd on election night, said that the ALP had “not gone to the pack when Hughes, Pearce and Co. had left, but now had 50,000 extra members.”<sup>115</sup> In the 1920s, ALP membership increased both in affiliated unions and local branch members, and the party was reasonably harmonious, with a stable branch executive and cohesion between the industrial and political wings.”<sup>116</sup>

Bate identifies the underlying issue of sectarianism and relates it to class prejudice: the Protestant Federation fighting for the wealthy against poorer Catholics. He notes that loud cries greeted the Council’s decision in August 1921 to allow the Alfred Bells to be rung to welcome home Bishop Foley, as they had done for the Anglican bishop and the Presbyterian moderator.<sup>117</sup> Foley was returning from the trip he took with his cousin, Archbishop Mannix, to Rome when Mannix was presenting his credentials as the Archbishop of Melbourne to the Pope and where Mannix was forced to stay in London for more than a year while being under threat of arrest from the British government.<sup>118</sup> In any event, the Alfred Bells did not ring for Foley, as the death of a councillor made ringing unseemly.<sup>119</sup>

BT&LC and opposing forces played out their differences in Letters to the Editor in *The Courier*. Several Wesleyan clergy called unionism a heinous tyranny that would ruin Australia and labelled unionists as anti-Christian servitors of mammon.<sup>120</sup> In 1921, Rev. T. Indian identified a deep-seated Irish menace in Australia. He stated that 92 per cent of trade union officials came from “the camp of the enemy,”<sup>121</sup> who were scheming for war between Britain and the United States. Unidentified but religiously aligned authors regularly attacked each other: “ ‘Magna Charta’, ‘A Protestant Federation Man’, and ‘Anti-Roman Anglican’ ‘Anglican’ and ‘Disgusted Methodist’ put the Protestant view while ‘Austral’ and ‘Kinkora’ put forward a Catholic view. ‘More Light’ attacked both sides, by asserting that science was killing superstition and that an earthly paradise was

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114. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

115. “Labor Demonstration,” *Ballarat Star*, July 12, 1920.

116. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 140.

117. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

118. *The Courier*, August 9, 1921.

119. *The Courier*, August 13, 1921.

120. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

121. *The Courier*, February 3, 1921.

possible.”<sup>122</sup> Williams spoke of Methodists, including his mother, not voting for the ALP in the 1920s because they considered it a Catholic party.<sup>123</sup>

Localism has always been a powerful tool in Ballarat. Bate identifies (and endorses) how localism has played out: “Aggressive localism was needed in Ballarat to retrieve its greatness, and it was provided in May 1916 by a Forward Ballarat organisation founded by local builder W. F. Coltman.”<sup>124</sup> Activities included the first Factory Day held in Australia to promote local products, which was attended by over 15,000 people; schools within 25 miles were closed for the day so that families could attend and 48 factories were open for inspection.<sup>125</sup> As Phil Roberts quotes: “The magnificent factory of Messrs Lucas and Co. in Doveton Street will be open for inspection on Friday next. Here, visitors will come to see over 400 employees busily engaged in the production of some of the prettiest blouses and ladies underclothing which have been put on the market.”<sup>126</sup>

While the focus was local with a capital L, this was no longer a cooperative event and the BT&LC was not included in the planning. This was about economic interests from which economic benefits might flow to workers, but the major objective was to make local factory owners more successful by providing marketing opportunities. Many employees, however, would have been proud for their work to be recognised by their families and the wider community. Characterised by claims of local unity and development, localist politics challenged class-based organisations and established ascendancy, building on the conscription debate and the loyalty to Empire theme, although during the 1920s, as economic conditions worsened, class politics was building.

At the same time as the conscription debate was at its height, another battle on the industrial front was being waged. In Ballarat the nature of work changed, with the move to larger modernised factories replacing small specialised workplaces, and work had become more stratified. An age of technological change was spreading throughout the

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122. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 75.

123. Colin Cleary, “A Comparative History of Ballarat and Bendigo Labor” (PhD thesis, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2007).

124. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 58.

125. *Ibid.*

126. Philip Roberts, “Avenue and Arch: Ballarat’s Commemoration. How Are Community Attitudes to War and Peace Reflected in the Civic Management of the Avenue of Honour and the Arch of Victory?” (PhD thesis, Federation University Australia, 2018), 188, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://researchonline.federation.edu.au/vital/access/services/Download/vital:13869/SOURCE1?view=true>.



industrialised world led by the USA and influenced by “Taylorism”, which broke the production process into separate actions. Previously, production was largely in the hands of skilled craftsmen, who followed their own routines and worked at their own pace, but Taylor advised managers to study, reorganise, and control the work process. The rise of Taylorism was hastened in Ballarat by leading manufacturers such as Edward Price, and government agencies, particularly at the BNRW.

Edward Price, at the Ballarat clothing factory, E. Lucas and Company, led the way in introducing new production techniques from the USA, taking nine overseas trips to visit Europe and America to study the latest ideas in factory organisation, assembly lines and mass production.<sup>127</sup> Price saw no place for unionism and the dispute between the BT&LC and Price is a remarkably clear example of the way in which patriotism was mobilised alongside localism to attempt to diminish class-based loyalties. While the introduction of the chain system at the abattoirs in 1931 and the “speed-up” method at the BNRW were both later examples of these methods, Price at the Lucas factory, which was employing 500 people in 1916, was regarded by other employers as leading modernisation.

Price was a member of the Forward Ballarat Movement Information Committee, the Nationalist Party, and vice-president of the Industrial Exhibition Committee;<sup>128</sup> he was also one of the two employer members of the Textile and Clothing Trades Wages Board, alongside two union representatives and an independent chair to set wages and conditions for their industry. The creation of various wages boards had also encouraged union co-operation, and in the clothing industry all the unions amalgamated to form the Federated Clothing Trade Union. In 1913, women and girls made up 80 per cent of employees, with the average wage for females being 22s 2d, and for males 47s 1d.<sup>129</sup> So the Lucas girls were doubly disadvantaged as Price was adamantly opposed to unions and would have understood, from his role on the wages board, the risk of allowing female workers to unionise. The difficulties for the union representative, Leslie Keogh, when dealing with the chairman of the Wages Board, Reddin, who was so dismissive of female workers, have already been noted.

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127. Ibid.

128. Ibid.,

129. Frances, *The Politics of Work*.

While Price encouraged the “Lucas Girls” to play a significant role in supporting and commemorating the contribution of the Ballarat soldiers in WWI, he was well rewarded. The Arch of Victory and the Avenue of Honour are still powerful symbols of their commitment. The workers could leave their machines to welcome and farewell troop trains, although they then had to make up lost time before going home at night. This encouraged loyalty and it certainly worked. They played a significant part by raising funds, planting trees, carting the bricks from Selkirk’s factory for the arch and working overtime and donating from their wages. The workers raised £10,600 (equivalent value in 2021 – \$850,200).<sup>130</sup> Price attempted to convince “his workers that their interests were identical to his own, and the unions were therefore irrelevant.”<sup>131</sup> However, these women were very low paid workers who were already making a large contribution to the war effort in their workplace, and the pressure to march to the company tune was obvious under the formidable presence of Tilly Thompson: “Tilly ... was a determined lady involved with the drive and management of the girls. In the early 1900s, she was reputed to be the first travelling saleswoman in Australia.”<sup>132</sup>

As the young women had to leave when they married and no Catholics were employed until the mid-1950s,<sup>133</sup> the social pressures of being part of Lucas & Co. would have been obvious to all. As far back as the 1880s, factory work was preferred by women to working as domestic servants due to the advantages of comradeship and regulated conditions. However, the Lucas girls also had the added advantage of media and community attention for their patriotic works: “The regional loyalty to a provincial city, the paternalistic approach of Edward Price to his employees and the zest of Tilly Thompson led to the widespread reputation of accomplishment.”<sup>134</sup> *The Mayor’s Report* for Ballarat for each of the years in the period 1917 to 1920 and local and Victorian newspaper reports reinforced this.<sup>135</sup>

When the combined Arbor Committee, which was planning a number of avenues to honour Ballarat soldiers’ contribution to WWI, sent letters to local organisations

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130. “Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of Australian Amounts, 1828 to the Present,” Measuring Worth.com, accessed April 25, 2019, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/australiacompare/>.

131. Frances, *The Politics of Work*, 93.

132. Roberts, “Avenue and Arch,” 280.

133. *Ibid.*, 186.

134. *Ibid.*, 186.

135. *Ibid.*, 186.

including the BT&LC for support, Secretary Kean and E. H. A. Smith, the vice-president, decided to visit Price to discuss allowing employees to join the union as one of the avenues proposed was sponsored by Lucas & Co. The meeting did not go well. Price stated:

“If they argued a thousand years, they would never convince me.” Further, he stated that if Mrs Lucas were there, she would sweep them off their feet with the knowledge of the bible. Smith retorted: “You might know the written word, but you certainly don’t know anything about the spirit of Christianity.”<sup>136</sup>

This quickly escalated.<sup>137</sup> A letter printed in *The Courier* and the *Ballarat Star* signed by the employees of E. Lucas & Co. per Miss Jolly (a senior supervisor) on behalf of 412 women had the hallmark of management,<sup>138</sup> and included phrases such as: “... to men like Kean and Smith, whose business is to foment strife between employer and employee in these times of national crisis,” and went on “Further, the fact that the girls would rather deduct from their wages money for the Avenue of Honour, and other patriotic efforts than subscribe towards the salaries of the officials of the Trades Hall is no doubt sufficient reason for Thursday night’s outburst”<sup>139</sup> raised another issue as employees were expected to contribute from their wage towards Lucas’s patriotic effort, 2d. in the £.<sup>140</sup> The BT&LC’s response was to call a meeting under the heading “Unionism Maligned”. Price was invited to take a seat on the platform with the opportunity to speak, which he chose not to do.<sup>141</sup> Alf Wallis of the Federated Clothing Trades Union put forward the union position to the Wages Board and a large crowd “packed the ground floor and gallery areas and clearly had a bias towards the union case. The heading in the *Evening Echo* was ‘Unionism Triumphant’.”<sup>142</sup> However, Price put his case to the workers at the factory a couple of days later in a much more controlled and orchestrated space which was reported in *The Courier* as vindicating his position.

The Ballarat newspapers had so much correspondence about the issues that the *Ballarat Star* on 28 July stated: “Correspondence is now closed.”<sup>143</sup> While it ended in a stalemate between Lucas management and the BT&LC, the records of the Clothing Trades Union

136. *Ibid.*, 187.

137. BT&LC Minutes, July 26, 1917.

138. Letter to the Editor, *The Courier*, July 14, 1917; Letter to the Editor, *Ballarat Star*, July 14, 1917.

139. *Ibid.*

140. Roberts, “Avenue and Arch.”

141. Letter to Mr E. H. Price, July 20, 1917, Reference no. 1977.0084, Melbourne University Archives.

142. Roberts, “Avenue and Arch,” 193.

143. *Ballarat Star*, July 28, 1917.

show that other large workplaces, such as Gribble's, Morsheads and Salmonow, were largely unionised but a brave Doris Cartledge of Lucas & Co. signed in on 13 July 1917.

There are six substantial interviews with women who worked at the Lucas factory from the 1983 Oral History project. They all still referred to themselves as a "Lucas Girl" and all of them have memories of the compulsory nature of events that had occurred more than 60 years ago. Monica Dooley, born in 1898 recalled: "Even when I left, we were still giving so much to the soldiers. We kept them in reading and writing and all that material. And we made pyjamas and we made shirts and flannels for them too."<sup>144</sup> Nellie Berryman, also born in 1898, said: "Of course we worked all through the First World War; we had to make shirts for the soldiers ... But a lot of it we did in our own time. Oh yes, it was really expected of us."<sup>145</sup> Nellie also planted trees and one day it was wet: "I couldn't get home that night and we had no telephones in 1917 to ring up my parents."<sup>146</sup> Muriel Williams, born in 1900, was still reluctant to record her memories, revealing the pressure to still be a "Lucas Girl" but her comments also show the solidarity of the workers in the face of considerable pressure:

Those days there was no union. He wouldn't have let anybody join the union ... I don't know whether to tell this because it's against them. Like we used to sometimes have to work overtime and you should have got double money ... and they didn't pay. So I think there were a few girls, older, who were thinking of trying to get the girls to join the union. Anyway this day the word was just passed along to the girls that we had to work overtime tonight. The girls got up when it came the time and took off their aprons and said, "We're not going to work tonight" ... Well, I thought he was the nastiest man that I had ever seen. The way he spoke to those girls; he spoke terribly to them. Well, do you know it was only the next day when we were all at work, they got letters; he sacked them. They never came back, of course. I never forgot him. I didn't think it was in him because he was a great Church man.<sup>147</sup>

That this fierce debate was happening at the same time as the 1917 conscription plebiscite was surely another tool intended to isolate the BT&LC and their supporters from their traditional base. Pitting girls mainly from "the East" against their fathers and brothers, who were staunch unionists and supporters of the BT&LC would have sorely tested their loyalties. Price's enthusiasm for new industrial technology and management style indeed kept his factory at the forefront of innovation and profitability, unlike some of his

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144. Dooley, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

145. Berryman, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

146. *Ibid.*

147. Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

contemporaries who were resting on their wealth and were fading from the Ballarat landscape. But Price, by maintaining a mainly female workforce on substantially lower wages, had a definite competitive advantage over unionised Ballarat factories. When the Ballarat City Council voted in 2011 to call the city’s newest suburb Lucas in recognition of their work, the Lucas Girls who were still continuing to meet were “absolutely chuffed, absolutely thrilled to their back teeth.”<sup>148</sup> Miss Leonard remembered her 30-odd years working at the factory:

We worked overtime and instead of paying us, it was used for softball teams, badminton teams and a cricket team. We were involved in a lot of things. Now that we’re all old, we meet every month and we’re sort of a bit clannish, I suppose.<sup>149</sup>

It was a very powerful mix: patriotism, paternalism and localism. While the socializing of young women to adapt to a paternalistic environment was an easier tool to use in a workplace than in a male dominated workplace, it had a cost for the labour movement. When discussing the 1930’s and ‘40’s Tony Restarick, long-time delegate to BT&LC said:

Charlie Chung’s brother Lenny was Secretary of the Textile Workers Union and he tried his hardest to get those girls to become shop stewards and come to the Trades Hall and do other things, but he was unsuccessful in trying to get any women involved in the Union movement then. ... When Chifley became Prime Minister he said “The Government isn’t giving out any contracts to non-union shops”, well Johns’ and Lucas’ couldn’t beat a track around to the Trades Hall quick enough to join all their members because they had to get contracts. ... So there was lots of women members but only one or two shop stewards. But generally speaking the women didn’t take a great deal of interest, but, I think the women are their own greatest enemies you know.<sup>150</sup>

Is this another case of a sex-blind response? Rather than being their own worst enemies, women in these workplaces had no incentive to engage as they would lose their employment on marrying, a cultural imperative they had no choice but to accept.

An example of ‘spatial fix’ shows clearly in the council amalgamation in 1921. The amalgamation of the Ballarat City and Ballarat East councils in 1921 heightened the alienation of the East, and the property qualifications required for voters and candidates gave many more residents the vote in the West than the East. Pro- and anti-

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148. Dellaram Jamali, “Ballarat Lucas Girls: The History,” *The Courier*, February 11, 2011.

149. *Ibid.*

150. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 6.

amalgamationists had lined up against each other on many issues since the 1850s, but the East, which since the 1860s had been the less affluent community, suffered a population loss of 15.7 per cent (compared with the West's 3.6 per cent) between 1911 and 1921.<sup>151</sup> While the East's population was still three-quarters of the West, its property valuations, rate revenue and total expenditure was less than half.<sup>152</sup> The East's fears that amalgamation would focus on the imposing town hall in Sturt Street and favour businessmen in the West, while severing associations "in the East, a community produced by the thrift, energy and pluck of the pioneers,"<sup>153</sup> was justified. The amalgamation occurred on 24 May 1921, and at the subsequent election, three auctioneers, three shopkeepers, two contractors, two machinery merchants, a manufacturer and a plumber were elected. The BT&LC candidates, A. R. Whitrick and McAdam, who campaigned on adult suffrage, council ownership of the electricity supply, day and not contract labour, polled poorly.<sup>154</sup>

The strength of freemasonry also contributed to the consolidation of power and influence. Historians have not often written of the role of freemasonry, yet their membership has included the most powerful men in society. Even full-length biographies of famous Australians often fail to mention their masonic allegiance. More than 30 of the 111 members of the first Commonwealth Parliament were masons, either at the time or later. Almost all conservative prime ministers up to 1972 had been masons, as well as many governors who had often been grand masters of their states.<sup>155</sup> Bate refers to these lodges as a very significant part of Ballarat relationships. He states that "one in three among the successful was a mason, it had been said, every member of the Ballarat West council belonged to the order. Yet no prominent Catholics belonged. This helped to erect social barriers against Catholics, who were also scarce in the Ballarat Club."<sup>156</sup> The first lodge in Ballarat was the French Lodge.<sup>157</sup> Soon there were twice the number of lodges in Ballarat and district than the average for anywhere else in Victoria. Since 1853, there

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151. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

152. *Ibid.*

153. *Ibid.*, 112.

154. *Ibid.*

155. James Franklin, "Catholics Versus Masons," *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 20, (1999), accessed January 26, 2020, <https://search.informit.org/doi/epdf/10.3316/ielapa.200004086>. Barton, Reid, Cook, Bruce, Page, Menzies, Fadden, McEwen, Gorton and McMahon.

156. Bate, *Lucky City*, 260.

157. Dorothy Wickham, *Freemasons on the Goldfield: Ballarat and District 1853–2013* (Ballarat: Ballarat Heritage Services 2013).

have been about 50 within 30 miles of Ballarat. Influential public figures such as Cuthbert, Humffray, Collard Smith and Alexander Peacock were leading masons.<sup>158</sup> Masonic membership in Australia peaked in the 1950s at approximately 400,000.<sup>159</sup>

Bate reflects the common view that being successful meant holding public office, and certainly being male, but makes no analysis of the distribution of resources that such positions allowed. Dorothy Wickham does make the link regarding Cuthbert:

Masonic lawyers and solicitors were well placed to work with others in the fraternity to establish local government, draft laws, and by-laws ... Henry Cuthbert was instrumental in the formation of the municipality of the Township of Ballarat ...[and] for twenty years applied himself to acquiring knowledge of commercial and municipal law.<sup>160</sup>

While most lodges in Ballarat had been formed between the 1850s and 1860s, five lodges were established in the 1920s, including the Hope Lodge,<sup>161</sup> where Arthur Nicholson (later to become Sir Arthur) – a notable freemason, builder and long-term city councillor dispensed advice and his view of the world to a captive audience. The Silver Club, also known as the Masonic Silver Club, had its headquarters at the Ballarat Town Hall, where all donations, buying and distribution of goods were directed by a committee of councillors, headed by the town clerk, Colonel George Moreton, as treasurer.<sup>162</sup> The chances of non-masons' families being included in the distribution were not high. The Ballarat Masonic Fidelity Club members were drawn mainly from the BNRW and Moreton's successor as town clerk, Frank Rogers, became the choirmaster of the masonic choir. In 1989, over 700 lodges were part of the United Grand Lodge of Victoria, with Ballarat still overrepresented, being on average twice the state average in numbers.<sup>163</sup> The union movement has long had its masonic links, with some unions known to have been led by active masons up until the 1980s.

The Catholics had their equivalent in various groups and societies in the diocese which served to bind its community and provide a sense of identity, loyalty and unity. The

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158. Ibid.

159. Gerard Henderson, "The Secret We Should All Be Let in on," *The Age*, September 3, 2002, accessed January 26, 2020, <https://www.theage.com.au/opinion/the-secret-we-should-all-be-let-in-on-20020903-gdujwu.html>.

160. Wickham, *Freemasons on the Goldfields*, 32.

161. Ibid.

162. Ibid.

163. Ibid.

Campion Society, the Holy Name Society, the Knights of the Southern Cross, and later the Social Studies Movement provided forums for Catholic thought and concern. Bracks recounts in his memoir that his father, Stan, was a sales manager at T J Coutts, electrical contractors, who only employed Catholics. Stan was treasurer of St Alipius and a member of the Knights of the Southern Cross, and took his son to a Catholic Men’s Dinner Club meeting in 1985 when Jeff Kennett was guest speaker.<sup>164</sup> Perhaps more telling was Bracks’ memory of his father in 1969–70 in Lydiard Street, where he worked, pointing out: “That firm only employs masons; that firm only employs Catholics.”<sup>165</sup> Norm Borchers, ALP activist, recalled a job interview with a large engineering works when the first question put to him was what was his religion.<sup>166</sup>

### **The Contest for Power inside the Labour Movement**

By 1919, the labour movement, both politically and industrially, was divided over the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Some who had learnt their politics from the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin accepted the dictatorship of the proletariat as essential for the creation of a socialist society, but others had learnt from Utopian socialists and the social teachings of the Catholic Church, believing that democratic elections were the source of political power – the ballot box was the way of deciding political differences. The party of the labour movement must first win a majority in parliament and then use its political power to create a new society.<sup>167</sup>

One catalyst was the strike in NSW, which started on 2 August 1917 in the Eveleigh Railway Workshops over the adoption of Taylorism, which spread in a matter of hours to all workers in the transport industries. This strike became a major polarising factor. By 22 October, approximately 97,500 workers were involved, including 6017 Victorian unionists on strike or locked out, another 5317 with no jobs, and thousands more working part time from lack of materials.<sup>168</sup> BT&LC actively supported the Eveleigh strike, holding a public meeting to explain its causes and collecting donations to be sent to

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164. Steve Bracks and Ellen Whinnett, *A Premier’s State*.

165. *Ibid.*, 41.

166. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*. 192.

167. Poole and McNair, *Russia and the Fifth Continent*.

168. Lucy Taksa, *The New South Wales 1917 Strike in Retrospect: Commemorating Past Struggles for Workplace Rights* (Sydney: Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University in association with Unions NSW, 2017).



support families of striking workers.<sup>169</sup> After it was over, the government, in seeking to have a compliant workforce, refused to re-employ at least 2000 strikers who were thought to have been sympathetic to the IWW.<sup>170</sup>

The division was solidified in October 1920 when the IWW, the Australian Socialist Labor Party and other militant groups met in Sydney and formed the CPA. They repudiated the doctrine held by the ALP that parliament could be used by the working class “for positive advancement of its class interests.”<sup>171</sup> However, national participation in central wage-fixing determinations was still relevant to the movement, so the formation of the ACTU proceeded, the last piece in the jigsaw of peak unions. On 3 May 1927, the ACTU was formed in Melbourne at the All-Australia Trade Union Congress with the president of the MTHC W. J. Duggan, elected president and C. A. Crofts appointed as secretary.<sup>172</sup> The AWU resisted joining and claimed the ACTU’s purpose was “to institute a scheme for white-anting the labour movement in order to bring it under the domination of the Communists and the ‘red wreckers’.”<sup>173</sup>

BT&LC Secretary Kean from 1910 to 1922, key AWU figure and president of the Ballarat ALP – was in a position to shape the debate on the strategic direction for the movement. For some years prior to 1919 the WIWU had been associated with the concept of the One Big Union (OBU): the reorganisation of the trade union movement along “industrial lines”.<sup>174</sup> Committed to parliamentarianism and industrial arbitration, the AWU was hostile to OBU rhetoric but a substantial minority of its members favoured the idea and the leaders also realised that the AWU was well positioned to be the OBU.<sup>175</sup> From 1915, the BT&LC debated the rights and wrongs of the argument, and in 1918 three delegates supporting Secretary Kean were elected to attend the Closer Union conference.<sup>176</sup> The 1921 All-Australian Congress of Trade Unions in Melbourne was held but failed to provide momentum. Four disparate groups – the AWU, some unions already organised on industrial lines, the WIU and the state labour councils – appointed a

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169. BT&LC Minutes, August 30, 1917; September 6, 1917; October 4, 1917.

170. Taksa, *The New South Wales 1917 Strike in Retrospect*.

171. Poole and McNair, *Russia and the Fifth Continent*, xiv.

172. Hagan, *The History of the ACTU*.

173. Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*, 15. Quoting *The Australian Worker*, May 11, 1927.

174. Lucy Taksa, “1917 General Strike-Lessons from the Greatest Industrial Upheaval in Australian History,” accessed January 26, 2020, <https://evatt.org.au/papers/1917-general-strike.html>.

175. Gollan, *Revolutionaries and Reformists*.

176. BT&LC Minutes, May 30, 1918.

provincial council to seek registration in the Arbitration Court. When the case was heard in 1924, registration was opposed by 24 unions and eight employer organisations. The request was rejected, which marked the end of the OBU.<sup>177</sup>

By 1924 the AWU influence was waning in Ballarat. In 1922 Scullin had departed Ballarat when he won a by-election for the safe ALP seat of Yarra in the federal parliament. Kean had also resigned as secretary of the BT&LC in 1922 to become the editor of the *Evening Echo* before moving to the powerful position of secretary of the Victorian ALP in 1926 which took him out of the Ballarat arena. The *Evening Echo* went into liquidation in February 1929.<sup>178</sup>

A transfer of power towards the Left began occurring. The new delegates to the BT&LC had entered the workforce at quite a young age and had worked their way up through the Ballarat ranks as wage-earners: there had been no adventuring nor seeking of greener fields by these workers; their focus was on supporting their families, often becoming breadwinners at an early age due to the impact of miners' phthisis and industrial accidents. They were "Ballarat Boys". Miller was secretary of the BT&LC from 1926 to 1947 and McAdam had two periods of tenure from 1923 to 1925 and 1948 to 1955. Both had been born in Australia in the 1880s; both leaving school at 14; both active unionists by the early 1900s; and both leading strikes. After these strikes Miller joined the Ballarat Tramways and McAdam organised the Bread Carters Union and was elected to the Bread Carters Wages Board. When McAdam was dismissed for his union activities, the men went on strike for him and he was paid to organise other unions – the Municipal Employees, Textile Workers, Shop Assistants and Agricultural Implement Makers.<sup>179</sup>

In 1924, McAdam left the BT&LC to contest Ballarat East and entered the Victorian Parliament with a narrow win of four votes over McGregor,<sup>180</sup> who had represented the area for 30 years, helped by a significant gerrymander.<sup>181</sup> This was a sweet victory given that Baird and McGregor had got the credit for the BNRW when McAdam had done much of the preliminary work. With McAdam off to parliament, Miller succeeded him as secretary of the BT&LC. AEU delegate Jack Lonsdale was elected president in 1925,

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177. Hagan, *The ACTU*; Farrell, *International Socialism & Australian Labour*.

178. Strangio, *Neither Power nor Glory*.

179. Saffin Papers, University of Melbourne Archives. Interview with McAdam,

180. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*. Appendix 2: Victorian Legislative Assembly election results.

181. Cleary, "A Comparative History of Ballarat and Bendigo Labor."

which marked the continuing shift to the Left and the emergence of another powerful union. The AEU drew its strength from the BNRW and remained dominant at the BT&LC until after WWII. In 1927, McAdam increased his hold on the state seat and remained the member until 1932 when he was defeated by Tom Hollway, another rising star of Ballarat who later became premier.<sup>182</sup>

Joining the BT&LC at this time and unionists all their lives, Charlie and Len Chung deserve more space than is available, as does Harold Foo, another CPA stalwart and president of the BT&LC in 1974; all of them were of Chinese ancestry and they all had ASIO files. Len Chung was secretary of the Textile Workers Union for some years and became president of the BT&LC in 1964. While the trade union movement was a vigorous supporter of the White Australia policy it never sat too comfortably with the BT&LC. Ballarat had an active Chinese community who continued to work in many roles as well as sell vegetables and herbal remedies to residents, attend the churches, and generally participate in public life. Its local football team, Golden Point, was known as the “Rice-Eaters.”<sup>183</sup> When the railways called for lad porters, lad labourers and junior clerks, Charlie Chung was the only one selected who passed the medical:

When I went into work at the Sunshine biscuit factory one of the lads said “How did you get on?” to one that went “Oh no b----- good. The only one selected was the red-headed Chow.” That was me. When we were kids, we put up with a lot of that sort of thing at school and in industry. In later years, it seemed to ease off a bit somewhere. We thought “Well, I’m as good as you are.” I mean, physically we were, intellectually we were. We were usually the top of the class; every one of the eight girls would be at the top of the class. We were all good athletes, too.<sup>184</sup>

Charlie Chung’s reference to racism in the workplace indicated a healthy sense of self-worth which is also reflected in other interviews with his sister and nieces. When asked recently about their early life, niece Christine Wicking now 91 said:

Uncle Len was the president of the Textiles Union; Uncle Charlie with the Railway Union, and they were in the Communist Party in Ballarat. And when we were children, they used to bring over all these envelopes they used to give out. It was quite an elite club, the Communist Party. There were doctors and lawyers and quite well-off people as members. We were introduced to that sort of thing

182. Parliament of Victoria, “McAdam, William James,” accessed July 19, 2020, <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/people-in-parliament/re-member/details/24/1381>.

183. *Herald Sun*, February 5, 2015. Golden Point FC known as the Rice-Eaters reflected the Chinese history of the Ballarat goldfields. The team’s logo was a purple dragon breathing fire out of its nostrils. The club, which produced VFL champions Bob Davis and Percy Beames, merged in 2000 with East Ballarat to become East Point.

184. Charlie Chung, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, Tape 28.

very early in life. That's how we knew they were communists. We helped fold up (pamphlets) and put them in the envelopes. When I started working, and Uncle Len was president of the Textile Union, we realised they were somebody... They wanted to look after the working man, to bring forward the force of the working man; that the working man had just as much right as anybody. That was their motto of the time: the working man was the main thing of the earth, and made things happen.<sup>185</sup>

The Foo family likewise were also active at BT&LC, with Harold Foo becoming President in 1974. His brother Melvin also played an active role in the public life of Ballarat, twice Mayor of the City of Ballarat in 1978 and 1983.

This period also saw the emergence into the public arena of Rowe, later to become a significant national leader in the AEU and the first Communist to achieve federal office in the union. Andrew Reeves, in an oration to mark the 125th Anniversary of the BT&LC in 2012, stated that Rowe is “remembered as an ebullient personality and a gifted public speaker, who combined a flair for theatricality in politics with a fundamental commitment to militant rank and file industrial politics.”<sup>186</sup> Williams had abundant admiration for Rowe who started as an apprentice fitter and turner at BNRW in 1922. On leaving school, he joined the CYMS, where he became their brightest star in all forms of public speaking and debating and joined the ALP. As Williams said of Rowe: “Although only slightly built, he was a dynamo of activity, a good organiser, and an avid reader who was quick to assimilate any subject he undertook.”<sup>187</sup>

### **Conclusion: “I’ve Danced with a Man, Who’s Danced with a Girl, Who’s Danced with the Prince of Wales”<sup>188</sup>**

The conscription battle that began in WWI has continued to reverberate throughout Australia ever since and resurfaced most dramatically in the 1960s. While Scullin, the *Evening Echo* staff and the BT&LC must have felt great elation at the outcome in 1916–17, in the 1920s, the aftermath meant that Ballarat had new powerful alliances that challenged the egalitarian approach to public life, a feature of Ballarat in the previous 50 years. This certainly occurred in Ballarat, with powerful elites controlling the public agenda by use of local media, local employer organisations and local government after

185. *The Courier*, October 24, 2021.

186. A. Reeves, Oration for the 125th Anniversary of Ballarat Trades Hall Celebration, 2012.

187. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat North Railway Workshops.”

188. Herbert Farjeon, lyricist, and Harold Scott, composer, “I’ve Danced with a Man, Who’s Danced with a Girl, Who’s Danced with the Prince of Wales,” 1927.

the amalgamation of the councils. Visits of royalty became a highlight of the social calendar. Eleven royal visits occurred between 1901 and 2000 and Ballarat had a Victoria League organisation that met regularly to discuss promotion of the British royal family and to lobby for royal visits to the city.<sup>189</sup> Sectarianism was unleashed and played a major part in public life for the next 30 years. Municipal government became the prerogative of powerful Protestant businessmen whose support for Forward Ballarat was fervent and a training ground for conservatism.

In the private sphere, it became the era of traditional family structures, with men viewed as the sole breadwinner and little girls were brought up on the fantasy of meeting a prince, which in Ballarat for some became a reality. The “Prince’s pyjamas” was a clear example of building Ballarat’s fascination with royalty and the Lucas factory contribution to the folklore. Forty years later in 1983, the women who each sewed some stitches on those cream satin pyjamas with a pocket embroidered with wattle at the Lucas factory and presented to the Prince of Wales at the opening of the Arch of Victory remembered them well: “And he was a lovely man. and he spoke to everybody, and we’d bow, and he’d say never mind about bowing for me. And it teemed raining and ruined all our clothes and everything.”<sup>190</sup>

In retreat were those passionate young socialists who were exploring a new definition for Australia before WWI. But the rise of the CPA in the 1920s was to provide another avenue for those youthful optimists to explore, but this time in a more entrenched public culture.

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189. Roberts, “Avenue and Arch.” Eleven royal visits occurred between 1901-2000 and Ballarat had a Victoria League organisation that met regularly to discuss promotion of the British royal family and to lobby for royal visits to the city.

190. Mavis Whitla, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 30.

## Chapter 6

### A Tree with a Disease 1929-1939

*(A completely disease-free tree is rare because of the many microscopic organisms that live on trees – in the bark and in the root tissue – but trees are tough and usually can co-exist with the pathogens)*

I was completely unpolitical until the time that the Depression arrived. I got married in 1931, and had no money. I was attracted by Lang's Labor policies. But then I got talking to this Teddy Rowe bloke and he convinced me that I wasn't on the right track and, eventually, I joined the Communist Party, like most of the others (Jack Brown, Beau Williams and Charlie Chung and many others) I could see that that was the only way out.

—Tony Restarick<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

As a consequence of the Great Depression, the BT&LC became the hated enemy of the ALP premier of Victoria at the time, “Ned” Hogan – an antipathy that endured until his death.<sup>2</sup> This was just one of the hatreds that festered during this period, a disease that ate away at the core of the movement. In the 1920s, Great Britain and the USA extended their grip on Australia – Great Britain, financially, as overseas customers for Australian primary exports and overseas investors willing to subscribe public loans; while the USA was introducing new forms of production and consumption.<sup>3</sup> The consequence had started to influence the Ballarat economy. Unemployment in Australia was already at 10 per cent before the devastating New York stock market crash in October 1929, and in Ballarat this was heightened by the collapse of mining and the restructuring of workplaces in line with USA methods. The previously healthy tree was attacked from within and without, but as most trees do the industrial wing co-existed with the pathogens, although the political wing did not have the same resistance. ALP prime minister Scullin and the ALP Victorian premier Hogan, both “Ballarat Boys”, who were leading federal and state governments at the time, could not hold their party caucuses together and damaging splits occurred again. But the trade union movement did not have workable solutions; its responses ranged from total rejection of the rule of parliament to dependence on the courts to sort it out.

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1. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 5.
  2. Edmond J. Hogan, *Everyone Should Know about Communism in Australia* (Melbourne: E. J. Hogan, 1958).
  3. Stuart Macintyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998).

The social cost of the Depression has been analysed in many ways – for example, in powerful novels by authors such as Kylie Tennant, the oral records featured in Wendy Lowenstein’s *Weevils in the Flour* and by artists such as Noel Counihan. David Potts’s *The Myth of the Great Depression*<sup>4</sup> and Charlie Fox’s *Fighting Back: The Politics of the Unemployed in Victoria in the Great Depression*<sup>5</sup> provide two relevant perspectives and both include detailed reminiscences from people who lived through this traumatic period. There is no doubt that the dashed hopes, anxiety, fear, and misery of the Great Depression permeated Australian society for several generations. In Ballarat, the particular response from the labour movement was not replicated in many other places – a direct confrontation with Catholicism. During the 1920s, Communism was only a minor player, but this quickly altered in the 1930s. Workers had seen their elected representatives divided and defeated. At home they railed against the failure of the system but had little capacity to change their own destiny. Many workers were attracted to the CPA as a new way of addressing the problems they were facing. The creation of shop committees as pioneered in Ballarat at BNRW was a major focus for BT&LC as a way of maintaining morale and focus. The BT&LC also turned its attention to events on the other side of the world where Fascism was emerging. By taking up the issue of the Spanish Civil War, the BT&LC propelled Ballarat into another upheaval, which led to immediate conflict with many substantial public institutions, including the Catholic Church, and it was one that Curtin was not prepared to confront in the ALP. Antagonism between two competing systems of beliefs, Catholicism and Communism, began to pull at the Right and the Left in Ballarat.

### **The Great Depression- “Hail Out of an Almost Clear Sky”<sup>6</sup>**

Even in Ballarat, where unemployment had been relatively high, the new shock was unexpected and alarming. The impact on workers was obvious immediately. One man said: “We were all working and all of a sudden told to go home.”<sup>7</sup> In mid-1929, *The Courier* referred to “a season of depression” and stated: “the demand for help from

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4. David Potts. *The Myth of the Great Depression* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2009).

5. Charlie Fox, *Fighting Back: The Politics of the Unemployed in Victoria in the Great Depression* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

6. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

7. *Ibid.*, 83.

deserving people stricken with misfortune has become increasingly acute.”<sup>8</sup> *The Courier* also put forward one of the more radical solutions: a special rate of threepence in the pound to enable employment to continue on public works. While the Ballarat ALP supported the idea, no further mention was made of it;<sup>9</sup> instead, wage-earners were the target of cost-cutting while property owners faced few consequences.

The Australian unemployment rate increased rapidly to 19.3 per cent in 1930, before reaching a peak of 29 per cent in 1932, which persisted for two years, before it fell below 10 per cent by 1937.<sup>10</sup> Australia’s rate was second only to Germany’s among major industrialised countries, due to its exposure to global markets and financial practices.<sup>11</sup> The total number of Ballarat people unemployed was always difficult to ascertain but Neil Barrett, after having accessed the records at the Ballarat Town Hall, was able to give an accurate account.<sup>12</sup> As only the main breadwinner could receive sustenance in their home town, many young men became “travellers” and the Ballarat figures also included “travellers” who had stopped off in Ballarat.<sup>13</sup> The regulations required that a man on travellers’ sustenance had to report to a sustenance office in a town, receive his sustenance, and then have his card stamped for the next collection at another town. In Ballarat, from January to August 1930, the registered unemployed grew from 150 to 1030 and hit 1500 in January 1931. It reached a peak of 1610 in January 1933 and remained steady at over a thousand until 1938. In 1933, with an unemployment rate of 26.9 per cent, Ballarat was above the state average of 25 per cent.<sup>14</sup> Women, unless single, were not considered eligible for official handouts.<sup>15</sup>

Looking out for each other was soon taken to a new level. They grew their own food—“You used to have to go round and beg for seed. You wouldn’t have enough money for seed for carrots and parsnips seed. In those days there was never anyone turned down.”<sup>16</sup>

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8. Neil Barrett, “Ballarat During the Depression of the 1930s” (Undergraduate essay, University of Melbourne, 1968).
  9. *The Courier*, February 20, 1930, and May 13 and 16, 1930.
  10. “A Century of Change in the Australian Labour Market,” Australian Bureau of Statistics, accessed April 20, 2020  
<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/previousproducts/1301.0feature%20article142001>.
  11. David Gruen and Colin Clark “Depression in Australia from the Perspective of Today,” 19th Annual Colin Clark Memorial Lecture, November 11, 2009, Brisbane.
  12. Barrett, “Ballarat During the Depression of the 1930s.”
  13. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression.”
  14. Bate, *Life after Gold*; Barrett, “Ballarat During the Depression of the 1930s.”
  15. *Ibid.*
  16. Dooley, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.



But an important difference from Melbourne was the capacity for workers to own their houses. They helped each other, scrounged materials and shared tools. Getting enough money and land for a house often came from the extended family-

So we put a deposit on the place. We had to pay about 3 pounds a week. We had some (money) and Mum's sister came to the rescue to loan us the other. Well, my lovely wife never missed a payment and the place was paid off. There was no back gate, the bath had a hole in it. Out the back the old copper. I've seen people washing in kerosene tins. Well, we had to wash in the copper. It would take about two hours to make it boil, everything was done by hand, kiddies napkins and everything else, you have no idea what Mum had done, like in them days.<sup>17</sup>

Jim Richards, who became a lifetime resident of Creswick after arriving there in the Depression described the situation graphically where there were 400 men like him who came to Creswick and made camps. The locals put on dances and social evenings and bowls and nearly every night of the week a church would have events and people would bring supper. He likened it to one big family where he got to know everybody and later married a Creswick "girl". He was gold-mining but that depended on having gold to sell, otherwise he had nothing. They played cricket, cleared the scrub off and made a cricket pitch and when the football time came—they got a football team and interchanged all around. Many of them were tradesmen, secretaries and bank clerks. He referred to them as "a cosmopolitan lot". He was English but others were Irish, Scottish, Greek, Italian, Czechoslovakian, Yugoslav and Swedish. Their diet was mostly rabbits and "spuds". Richards occasionally got two shillings for a kerosene tin full of blackberries from an old man who made blackberry wine. He noted that was as close as he got to "booze" because there was never any spare money for that.<sup>18</sup>

Retrenchments and lay-offs began. At the BNRW, management put the option of rationing to the workers: "The men decided to accept rationing to avoid dismissals. Rationing was introduced immediately: single men one week off in three and married men one week off in eight."<sup>19</sup> But soon the dismissals started – first the casuals, then apprentices on completing their "time" were rehired as labourers and supernumeraries were replaced by permanents from Newport:

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17. Bill Roberts, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 8–9.

18. *Ibid.*, 8–9.

19. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat in the Depression," 8.

Married men, many of whom were buying houses in Melbourne, were forced to leave and lost what had been paid because the houses were unsaleable or if sold brought far less than had been paid for them. One boilermaker from Preston was so incensed that he smashed the paths he had laid and tore up the garden before he left. He refused to buy another home and paid rent for the rest of his life.<sup>20</sup>

In June 1930, the “dole” was introduced, and by February 1931, a four-member family received two and a half loaves of bread and 14 pounds of potatoes weekly and firewood. In April 1931, the Ballarat Unemployment Relief Committee began issuing food vouchers to those wanting relief who had registered at the Ballarat Town Hall.<sup>21</sup> In August 1931, Ballarat City Council introduced a scheme of “work for sustenance”. This touched off a controversy that lasted until WWII. The *Labour Call* newspaper gave considerable attention to the Ballarat issue, strongly opposing the principle of work for sustenance. The paper said that work for sustenance undermined the position of workers employed at award rates and “reduced the workers to the level of convicts – a state of affairs which overseas capitalists are determined to bring about in Australia if possible.”<sup>22</sup> *The Courier* also reported a deputation of unemployed meeting the mayor to protest.<sup>23</sup> Concerns about accountability produced bureaucratic procedures involving queues, cards, rubber stamps and food orders, where people became merely numbers.<sup>24</sup> By July 1932, the sustenance rate varied from a single man on 10/- per week to a man with a wife and eight children on £2/2/6<sup>25</sup> (Equivalent value 2021 – \$175).<sup>26</sup>

A considerable amount of municipal maintenance work was carried out by the sustenance workers. A few municipal employees became foremen to supervise the work of the gangs of the sustenance workers: “These foremen had little technical knowledge of the type of work they were supervising and ‘like most pannikin bosses’ stood over the workers, chasing higher output, and threatening that the workers would be struck off sustenance if the work was not performed at the speed they required.”<sup>27</sup> On 3 May 1933, a worker was killed and another injured while working at the Mt Pleasant Reserve, where a 12-foot-high bank was being broken down to construct a sports ground. (see Figure 7 – The photo

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20. Ibid.

21. Barrett, “Ballarat During the Depression of the 1930s.”

22. *Labour Call*, September 3, 1931 and September 17, 1931.

23. *The Courier*, August 19, 1931.

24. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

25. Barrett, “Ballarat During the Depression of the 1930s.”

26. “Measuring Worth Is a Complicated Question,” Measuring Worth. com, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/australiacompare/relativevalue.php>.

27. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression,” 18.

shows similar work on the Yarra Boulevard indicating the height of the bank that collapsed on the workers.)

There had been overnight rain and the bank, which had been undercut the night before, looked dangerous, so the workers called for the bank to be barred down:

This entailed the removal of the overhanging portion of the bank under which the men were working. The reply was “Never mind the bars, get in further and get a good fall. They resumed undercutting and got a good fall only a few minutes later. Two workers were buried by the fall: Robert Daykin, 23, was killed instantly and Stanley Bradley was badly injured.<sup>28</sup>



Figure 7. Sustenance workers, Susso Drive (Yarra Boulevard, 1930s). Reference 1979.0015, Victorian Collections.

Robert Daykin’s funeral became a protest against the conditions under which work for sustenance was being performed. About 100 unemployed men marched in the funeral and many hundreds of citizens lined the streets. As Daykin was a member of the local militia, a contingent from the militia also marched in the funeral cortege. This accident sparked a

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28. *Ibid.*, 19.

strong campaign by the Ballarat Unemployed Association (BUA) and the BT&LC for stricter supervision by the city engineer of conditions on all sustenance jobs.<sup>29</sup>

Mining as a substitute for “susso” was also introduced. From February 1931, as well as issuing equipment, the Mines Department paid full-time miners a special sustenance of 8/- per week and 15/- to those searching for new deposits. Just over a third of the district’s 1002 miners were on mining sustenance in 1933.<sup>30</sup> Monica Dooley recounted how Dytes Parade was a mass of mineshafts because sustenance miners were allowed to dig anywhere and there was a shaft in their backyard, where they would wash the stone in the gutter – “the gutters were full of yellow mud and the streets were awful.”<sup>31</sup> Lawrie Elliot spoke of his attempt at mining along the Geelong Road when Ballarat City Council had given permission to sink shafts along the road.<sup>32</sup>

Begging was not uncommon: “I remember my blind grandfather; he was a very old man, he had his stool and he used to beg in the street.”<sup>33</sup> Restarick was only seven when his father died of pneumonia, leaving his mother with five children to raise. His mother took in foster children for 5/- a week, and he worked before and after school, on a farm at Sebastopol for a milkman, coming into school with him and delivering milk after school. He was paid 5/- a week which he gave to his mother.<sup>34</sup> But by 1931 when he wanted to get married, his mother was still reluctant to take the pension for which she was eligible:

I was the only one working in our family so they were more or less dependent on what I was bringing in and when I said, “You will have to go down and get the pension then.” This distressed her terribly: “I never thought you would force your mother into the indignity of going down to get the pension.” And this was the attitude the old people had. But nothing else for it because I got married anyhow and she went down and got the pension, about 17/6.<sup>35</sup>

The Commonwealth Defence Department made military clothing available that was dyed black to fit out “Scullin’s Army,”<sup>36</sup> which was much appreciated by Jim Richards at

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29. Ibid.

30. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

31. Dooley, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

32. Lawrie Elliot, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project*, interview, 1983, 29.

33. Elsie Hammill, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project*, interview, 1983, 71.

34. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

35. Ibid., 1.

36. Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, 1901–1942*, vol. 4 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), 277.

Creswick: “Those good old army coats kept you dry.”<sup>37</sup> Richards, who had just turned 20 in 1929, had been working on a farm when he was put off, so he decided to try his luck at mining. His most poignant comment was that the only thing you dared not do in those days was smoke in public: “Everybody was after you for a cigarette; if you wanted to smoke, you had to do it on the quiet because they’d come up and want to draw on your cigarette, or they’d want a butt.”<sup>38</sup>

Who did people blame? George Young noted the philosophical stance of his fellow workers:

I’ve often heard afterwards that the government couldn’t find money during the depression, but soon as war broke out there was plenty of money. I don’t know if we really got bitter about it. Everyone just realised that it was a worldwide depression and you just had to put up with it.<sup>39</sup>

Bert Williams, who worked at the BNRW, said he wasn’t affected by the Depression but certainly was aware of the men who used to gather there to catch the train to go up north to look for work; clearly, a more sympathetic place where the men in charge didn’t give them a hard time, allowing them to climb up under the tarpaulins and get into the trucks.<sup>40</sup> They were forced to do this by the travellers’ sustenance rules, and a considerable body of young men moved from place to place receiving sustenance and searching for work.<sup>41</sup> This led to much inefficiency and unintended consequences. Chung saw this first-hand during a BT&LC rally on unemployment:

I remember I got my head knocked one Friday. We were down the street protesting against that. A group of workers from Ballarat were being sent up on the Rocklands Dam to work, yet people from those districts were coming down to Ballarat to work and it seemed a deliberate attempt to keep the workers from organising and uniting and having a common front.<sup>42</sup>

They would “hump the bluey” and try seasonal work, like grape picking, but all that sort of work was swamped, as Wilfred Burchett found out.<sup>43</sup> Burchett, one of Australia’s most famous journalists attended Ballarat Agricultural High School, but his parents’ indebtedness resulting from the cost of medical treatment for his sister Amy (d. 1921)

37. Jim Richards, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 89.

38. *Ibid.*, 90.

39. George Young, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project*, interview, 1983.

40. A. C. Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Chung, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

43. Burchett, *At the Barricades*.

curtailed his formal education at 15. In his memoir, he describes his Depression experiences. After “jumping the rattler”, he got to Mildura for fruit-picking season but found no jobs there, either. He lived on the banks of the Murray River for six months eating fish and damper: “The railway police, tolerant towards the unemployed leaving the big urban centres, were very vigilant in preventing them returning. Hitchhiking was the next big thing. I turned up in the small hours of the morning at our Wendouree house, scaring the living daylights out of my brother.”<sup>44</sup> In 1933, Burchett founded the Pathfinders in Ballarat, an anti-war group, supported by the BT&LC and Ballarat ALP on 7 April 1933 with Reverend Fitzgerald as guest speaker. A Ballarat Council Against War was also formed in July 1933 with Burchett as an office-bearer.<sup>45</sup> In 1936, Burchett left Australia for London, and in 1940 began his career in journalism.<sup>46</sup> Known for his independent political views, he was the first foreign correspondent to enter Hiroshima after the atomic bomb was dropped and provided the first public report published in the Western media regarding the effects of radiation and the nuclear fallout.<sup>47</sup>

Two studies – Drew Cottle’s 1998 study of the rich of Woollahra from 1928–1934,<sup>48</sup> and Jean Rogers’ 1984 study of Adelaide’s wealthiest class,<sup>49</sup> have shown that lives in Sydney and Adelaide continued unaffected during the Great Depression for the social elite. In Ballarat, the Depression did not affect everyone in the same way, either. Young’s comment was revealing: “A lot of people never knew there was a depression on. I went to school with the son of a butcher. They were a nice family, not ‘stuck up’, but they didn’t know there was a depression on.”<sup>50</sup> Ruth Nevett, a mothercraft nurse, assisted new mothers with their babies when they came home from hospital:

Even during the depression, we always had our holiday at the sea. Father was a great believer in that. It was bad while I was nursing, of course, and yet people would manage to employ nurses. Train fares and things like that were cheap; you could go to Melbourne for a pound return ticket.<sup>51</sup>

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44. Ibid., 22.

45. Saffin Papers, Rev. F. Heriot, President, Secretary O’Leary, Treasurer W. Burchett, vice-presidents Spielvogel and Gullan, Committee members: T. Restarick, A Williams, H. F. Jones, Colin Brittain.

46. Burchett, *At the Barricades*.

47. Wilfred G. Burchett, *Shadows of Hiroshima* (London: Verso, 1983).

48. Drew Cottle, *Life Can Be Oh So Sweet on the Sunny Side of the Street: A Study of the Rich of Woollahra During the Great Depression, 1928–1934* (London: Minerva Press, 1998).

49. Jean Rogers, “Leisure and Adelaide’s Social Elite During the Great Depression 1929–34” (Arts Honours thesis, University of Adelaide, 1984).

50. Young, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

51. Nevett, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project*, interview, 1983, 53.

As Bate says, “The have and have-nots were in two worlds.”<sup>52</sup> Noting the geographic disparity, he refers to the East as the Collingwood of Ballarat while “fashion and etiquette, rather than tribalism, were dominant in the West, reinforced by Adela’s column, ‘Afternoon Tea’ in *The Courier*.”<sup>53</sup> Continuing, he noted: Until after WWII, proper ladies equipped themselves with visiting cards on which were tastefully printed their names and addresses as well as the day of the week on which they were ‘at home’.<sup>54</sup> Anne Tippett, on marrying John Tippett, arrived in 1939 from a lectureship in zoology at the University of Western Australia, and had been in the CPA and toured Russia in 1936. However, she did not pass muster when she was found to have no visiting cards and no at-home day.<sup>55</sup>

Nevett was a victim in another way in that she was denied an education:

I had the greatest struggle with my parents to let me go baby nursing and it was only my grandfather who thought it would be a good thing ... very few of the girls that I was friendly with did work. The others would just stay home.<sup>56</sup>

Domestic servants were cheap and Nevett also commented that her grandmother and her family always had a maid: “Because young girls were available at that stage for domestic work, they didn’t have to be paid a very great wage. But you had to keep them. They lived in.”<sup>57</sup>

A sinister contribution heightened tension when a secret paramilitary organisation was set up to safeguard law and order. Australia’s business, military and political leaders had mobilised surreptitiously to suppress radical, political, and industrial action, with one branch, the New Guard, gaining notoriety at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932.<sup>58</sup> Michael Cathcart provides a detailed account of Thomas Blamey’s dual role as Commissioner of Police and titular leader of this clandestine organisation in Victoria.<sup>59</sup> Known as the White Army, it turned out in force on 6 March 1931 when the rumour that Communists, Catholics and unemployed had formed “a treacherous syndicate, which planned to sweep through the region, rifling banks and destroying property. The arms

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52. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 122.

53. *Ibid.*, 128.

54. *Ibid.*, 129.

55. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

56. Nevett, 6.

57. *Ibid.*, 7.

58. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions*. Fox, *Fighting back*.

59. Michael Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia’s Secret Army Intrigue of 1931* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble/Penguin, 1988).

were stored in Catholic churches, which seemed a bizarre connection but farmers and local businessmen kept watch through the night.”<sup>60</sup> In my own family, my mother, who grew up at Clunes and my father in the Mallee, both related similar accounts of secretive visits to warn their families, but our neighbour Mr McFarlane’s response probably represented community attitudes at their best: “Don’t be silly, we aren’t going to shoot the Hogans” (our Catholic neighbours).

The public focus on the BNRW was constant. Graeme Chapman refers to the threat posed by a group of Communists in the BNRW, which led to a shadowy Ballarat White Guard, an underground organisation of former AIF officers and concerned citizens who organised clandestinely.<sup>61</sup> Bate refers to an interview with a Ballarat man who joined the White Guard by invitation, who was reluctant to name his associates or have his own name published, stating they never met formally, they put nothing in writing, and yet they were ready to act if social order was threatened.<sup>62</sup> Reports were given to Premier Hogan and Chief Secretary Tunnecliffe who duly passed them on to Police Commissioner Blamey who then dutifully set about investigating the “secret army” of his own making.<sup>63</sup> These activities contributed to “the unmistakable air of menace between 1930 and 1932.”<sup>64</sup>

## The Political Arena

Within the Federal Parliament, McGrath continued to represent Ballarat, while Scullin having been elected to the federal parliament in 1922, by 1928 had become the ALP’s federal parliamentary leader.<sup>65</sup> The federal election in October 1929 resulted in the ALP winning its biggest majority yet in the House of Representatives, with 46 of the 75 seats, but it was outnumbered in the Senate, holding only seven of the 36 seats.<sup>66</sup> Scullin would have been exhilarated by the elation of the 5000 people who farewelled him and his wife at Melbourne’s Spencer Street Station.<sup>67</sup> The ALP had unseated the former prime

60. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions*, 15.

61. Graeme Chapman, *Ballarat Churches of Christ, 1859–1993: A History* (Melbourne: CCTC, 1994).

62. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

63. Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop*.

64. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 173.

65. J. R. Robertson, “Scullin.”

66. “Australia’s Prime Ministers – James Scullin,” National Archives of Australia, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/australias-prime-ministers/james-scullin/during-office>.

67. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.



minister, Melbourne Stanley Bruce, and with no less a figure than “Jack” Holloway. The BT&LC Minutes of 17 October 1929 were effusive in their regard for Comrade Holloway; after all, from 1914 to 1916, he had held the “triple crown’ – presidencies of the MTHC, the Political Labor Council of Victoria and the Eight Hour Day Anniversary Committee.”<sup>68</sup> As the minutes said:

The wonderful victory attained at the ballot box by Australians on the 12th inst., was referred to by the secretary when those who would smash our organisations were given the right about. Reference was made to the achievement of Comrade E. J. Holloway on his election to the Federal Parliament ... We feel assured that with his unique knowledge of industrial matters he will further the true interests of Australia and that he will be a potent factor in the promotion of beneficial legislation.<sup>69</sup>

However, the very next resolution in the minutes protested against the McPherson Government’s dismissal of married men from the BNRW and replacing them with single men who had been brought from Newport.<sup>70</sup> It was a forerunner of what was ahead.

At the state level, Victoria had previously been governed by the ALP only twice- for 13 days in 1913 and for four months in 1924, but in Ballarat, Ned Hogan first elected in 1913, remained in control of Warrenheip.<sup>71</sup> He became a member of the VCE in 1914, and in May 1927, the ALP regained office in Victoria with Hogan as premier.<sup>72</sup> Although the ALP was defeated in November 1928, at the subsequent election in December 1929, it won 30 seats out of 65 and Hogan was premier again, but only with the support of the Country Party.<sup>73</sup> So in 1929, both the ALP governments in Canberra and Spring Street were being led by two men who knew Ballarat well, and their leadership spanned most of the worst years of the Depression.

Two days after the Scullin Cabinet had been sworn in, the New York Stock Market crashed. Scullin invited Sir Otto Niemeyer from the Bank of England to provide advice. His deflationary medicine translated into drastic cuts to wages. In NSW, the ALP premier, Jack Lang, advocated the temporary cessation of interest repayments on debts to

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68. D. P. Blaazer, “Holloway, Edward James (Jack) (1875–1967),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 14, ed. John Ritchie (Melbourne; Melbourne University Press, 1996), accessed August 12, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/holloway-edward-james-jack-10523>.

69. BT&LC Minutes, October 17, 1929.

70. Ibid.

71. Jonas, “Hogan.”

72. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

73. Ibid.

Britain to free up money for injection into the economy, but his proposal was firmly rejected by the prime minister and the other state premiers.<sup>74</sup> At the Premiers Conference in mid-1931, all the premiers, including Lang, agreed to the Premiers' Plan which cut spending by 20%, including cuts to wages and pensions and was accompanied by tax increases and reductions in interest on bank deposits.<sup>75</sup> Lang supporters lost momentum, only having minimal success in Queensland and Victoria.<sup>76</sup> On 13 May 1932, Lang was dismissed by the NSW governor, Sir Philip Game, becoming the first case of an Australian government with the confidence of the lower house of parliament to be dismissed by a vice-regal representative; it was repeated in 1975.<sup>77</sup> The conservatives' solution as outlined by Menzies was 'rather than fail to pay debts to bondholders 'it would be far better that every citizen within her boundaries should die of starvation during the next six months.'<sup>78</sup>

All the dimensions of solidarity were tested in the political events that unfolded. Hogan had to contend with four major problems but active opposition from most unions was not one of them. The first was placating the Country Party; the second was the hostile obstructionist Legislative Council, which rejected most of his economic measures; third was keeping the numbers in the Legislative Assembly; and fourth was the deteriorating economic situation. The Assembly even rejected measures for unemployment relief and the Council exacerbated the problem by lowering sustenance to well below the basic wage.<sup>79</sup>

When the Carters and Drivers Union called a special conference to discuss unemployment in September 1930, Hogan's problems encapsulated the dilemma of solidarity quite clearly. Hogan had overall responsibility for the state of Victoria, but he had little power to deal with the unfolding worldwide crisis, neither "techniques, money, financial expertise or electoral support for an attempt at anti-cyclic fiscal policy,"<sup>80</sup> and the unions knew they would fare much worse under a conservative government. The special conference resulted in a pseudo victory for the industrial wing when a resolution

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74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

78. Potts, *The Myth of the Great Depression*.

79. Kate White, *John Cain & Victorian Labor, 1917–1957* (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1982).

80. Ibid., 60.

that the unemployed should be maintained or work found for them was carried and that the Victorian ALP parliamentarians, state and federal, should comply with this demand without reducing wages or hours, extending hours or rationing work. Hogan's response was to suggest the unions demand the government's resignation, which did not occur.<sup>81</sup> Unity still underpinned solidarity. Theoretically, the unions could dominate the political machine, for they had a majority of the delegates to the state conference of the party (169 of 224 in 1929) and had the numbers to determine the outcome of selection ballots. In practice, however, the relationship between the two wings of the movement was not so simple.<sup>82</sup> BT&LC in 1930 had no doubt about their attitude to Hogan.<sup>83</sup> But what did solidarity mean now? Wages and conditions were the government's main target; a 10 per cent cut in wages imposed by the Arbitration Court followed by a 12.5 per cent cut under the Premiers' Plan. The movement was divided and thrown into confusion, and the unions had no solutions to offer. Into this stalemate came the Ballarat CPA.

The high hopes raised by the election victories in 1929 had been shattered. In October 1931, when Kean was appointed as a commissioner of the State Savings Bank, the Ballarat ALP president, Frank Brophy, recalled a local ALP conference some years before where Scullin, Barnes, McNeil, Hogan, and Kean had been present, all members of BT&LC, except Hogan. Now Scullin was Prime Minister, Barnes Assistant-Minister for Works, McNeil Commonwealth Minister of Health, Hogan Premier of Victoria, and Kean commissioner of the State Savings Bank. After the 1931 federal election, only Kean retained his position.<sup>84</sup> Former BT&LC secretary Kean did remain a commissioner for 24 years including 3½ years as chairman.<sup>85</sup> This was the high point of BT&LC's political power and the end of more than two decades of AWU domination.

Leaders of the labour movement in Ballarat saw the CPA as reflecting their view of the world more genuinely than any other philosophy on offer at the time, although there was always tension between individual rights and authority, which played out early during the

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81. Ibid.

82. Leslie J. Louis, *Trade Unions and the Depression: A Study of Victoria, 1930–1932* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968).

83. BT&LC Minutes May 29, 1930. The secretary introduced a resolution that Hogan be asked to explain statements attributed to him in a recent issue of *The Herald* but an amendment was overwhelming carried that Premier Hogan be condemned for statements made.

84. "ALP Notes Ballarat," *Labor Call*, October 15, 1931.

85. Parliament of Victoria, "State Savings Bank of Victoria: Reports, Statements, Returns, Etc. for the Year Ending 30th June 1955," accessed November 11, 2019, <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/papers/govpub/VPARL1955-56No9.pdf>.

1931 abattoirs strike. Ted Tripp was the catalyst for the men who heard him speak at a public meeting in November 1931 to look to this new way of asserting the rights of workers. Another “Ballarat Boy”, Jim Barry, had returned from Broken Hill, where he had become interested in radical politics, and invited Tripp, the first endorsed Communist to stand for the Federal Parliament,<sup>86</sup> to address a meeting at BTH.<sup>87</sup> *The Courier* reported that during the meeting a group of men sang *The Red Flag*, gave three cheers for the revolution and stamped out of the hall.<sup>88</sup> Williams, just 21, and later a key BT&LC activist, was in bed with the “flu”, but a friend came around to tell him about the meeting, and said another meeting was going to be held in a few weeks and asked him to attend.<sup>89</sup> Williams went along with about 150 others; it was his first introduction to Communism. Rowe was chairing the meeting, which decided to form a branch of the CPA and Williams became a member:

I suppose that had the biggest effect on my life and my whole outlook on society and so on, it’s persisted and stayed with me ever since. After I left the Communist Party but that was because of differences not of philosophy, but differences of political tactic and so on. But the basic philosophy of acceptance of socialism as perhaps a solution in some way to the evils of capitalism, has remained with me all my life.<sup>90</sup>

The formation of the CPA provided a focal point for militants in the labour movement, who were able to exert considerable influence in developing socialist policy in their unions, in the BT&LC, and within the ALP.<sup>91</sup> A Ballarat branch and an industrial unit of the CPA at the BNRW attracted a strong group of members from the AEU, the Boilermakers Union, and the ARU.<sup>92</sup> Bob Gould looking back on his long career in the Left (and an ASIO file of a record 8000 pages)<sup>93</sup> describes the founders of the CPA “as free spirits, rebels and proletarian organisers, from the rank and file level up to and including a number of union officials, moving in and out of the ALP, depending on

86. Peter Beilharz, “Tripp, Edward Clavell (Ted) (1900–1979),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, supp. vol., ed. Christopher Cunneen (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2005), accessed August 12, 2017, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tripp-edward-clavell-ted-13223>.

87. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression.”

88. *The Courier*, November 23, 1931.

89. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression.”

90. *Ibid.*, 7.

91. *Ibid.* Amongst those were Jim Barry, Ted Rowe (BT&LC), Jack O’Leary, Jim Wight (BT&LC), Bill Irwin, Andy Angwin (BT&LC), Gordon Shore, Jack Murphy, Beau Williams (BT&LC), Alf Tenby (BT&LC), Bert Black (BT&LC), Tony Restarick (BT&LC), George Bales, Norman Malcom, Jack Brown, Charlie Chung (BT&LC).

92. *Ibid.*

93. Jeff Sparrow, “The Real Fight Is for Civil Rights,” *The Age*, March 16, 2004, accessed January 21, 2020, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/the-real-fight-is-for-civil-rights-20040316-gdxi25.html>.

circumstances and tactical considerations.”<sup>94</sup> He describes these men as being a healthy combination of experimenters, idealistic rebels, the elite of the existing workers’ movement, who had the “occupational hazards of that elite, ranging from opinionated sectarianism to embryonic labour movement careerism, such characteristics sometimes existing even in the one individual.”<sup>95</sup> He also identified that “...after the conscription split of 1916–17, [there] was a broad layer of radicalised Catholics, also usually proletarian autodidacts ...,”<sup>96</sup> which fits well with the profile of Rowe and his mates. Williams, when describing Rowe, said: “He was an intense egotist, and possessed a caustic wit, which he used to the discomfort of his opponents.”<sup>97</sup> These men remained the core of the BT&LC until the late 1960s and were influential beyond Ballarat in many areas of the labour movement. However, McIntyre’s view was that the CPA always faced the problem of how to challenge the “tenacious pragmatism of powerful and complementary institutional forms”<sup>98</sup> and that proved to be the case in Ballarat. But the local CPA members were determined and in industrial matters always kept the “upper hand”.

The second major split in the federal ALP in 14 years occurred— seven MHRs left to join the United Australia Party (UAP) led by Joseph Lyons. The *Labor Call* newspaper announced “ratting” was going on at an alarming rate:

This lot propose to form an Independent Labor Party – but eventually they will be found in the ranks of the Nationalists, under the guise of a Coalition Government. It appears that the anti-Labor crowd have only to bring on a crisis, and away goes Labor.<sup>99</sup>

*Labor Call*’s faith in the notion of delegates rather than representatives was undimmed; it was just that the right people were not in place:

Platforms, planks, policies and pledges seem of no avail when it becomes a matter of personal aggrandisement. And so Labor struggles on labouring heavily

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94. Bob Gould, “The Communist Party in Australian Life,” *Ozleft*, accessed January 21, 2020, <https://ozleft.wordpress.com/2000/10/14/cpinaustralianlife/>.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid.

97. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat North Workshops,” 3.

98. Stuart Macintyre, “Communism,” in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, ed. Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 144.

99. *Labor Call*, March 19, 1931.

under the strain of time-seekers, treachery, and timidity. There appears to be no solidarity that is so much boasted of.<sup>100</sup>

While it has always been a mark of purity when the “rats” are purged, and there have been a lot of them since Lalor split from his Chartist friends, this time in Ballarat it was McGrath who defected to the Lyons group.<sup>101</sup> Dickinson’s detailed study of ‘ratting’ is more nuanced<sup>102</sup> and BT&LC secretary Miller’s anecdote shows bemusement – where he relates the story of Granny O’Donnell from Creswick, who, when questioned as to whom she was going to vote for after the McGrath debacle, said that she was not sure: “I cast an awful affliction on the last man for whom I voted. He went blind and grew a tail.”<sup>103</sup> In 1931, McGrath – who for 32 years had been part of the labour movement, had been a disciple of Tom Mann, part of the original AWU contingent, had his office at BTH, defected from Labor’s ranks with barely a comment.

From the voters’ point of view the labour movement did not have solutions. At the December election in 1931, the UAP under Lyons brought down the Scullin Government.<sup>104</sup> In Ballarat the election was a foregone conclusion; when McGrath stood as a UAP candidate, winning 63.6 per cent of the vote after preferences to comfortably defeat BT&LC secretary Miller.<sup>105</sup> McGrath died in office in 1934. A debate in July 1932 between the Ballarat ALP and the BT&LC on the topic – “Has political action proved effective as a means of settling our economic problems?” – was unsurprisingly won by the BT&LC team taking the negative.<sup>106</sup>

At the state level in March 1932, premier Hogan left Victoria for England and Tunnecliffe, as acting premier, refused to pledge the government’s continuing adherence to the Premiers’ Plan and the government fell.<sup>107</sup> In the May 1932 election, the ALP suffered a crushing defeat. The collapse of the Hogan Government brought “the final

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100. Ibid.

101. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

102. Dickenson, *Renegades and Rats: Betrayal and the Remaking of Radical Organisations in Britain and Australia*.

103. Norman W. Saffin, Papers, AN 99/10 98/69, University of Melbourne Archives.

104. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

105. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

106. Saffin Papers.

107. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

liquidation of the dilemma and facilitated a return to traditional postures in which radical demands could be made without the limitations of a responsibility to implement them.”<sup>108</sup>

Hogan was expelled from the ALP, along with other MPs who had voted for the Premiers’ Plan. He remained the Independent Labour member for Warrenheip and Grenville until 1943, when he was defeated after holding a significant slice of the Ballarat district from 1913.<sup>109</sup> He remained a bitter enemy of the BT&LC and wrote *Facts Everyone Should Know about Communism in Australia* in 1948, a caustic diatribe that had chapter headings such as “The Apostasy of Evattism” and the “Evatt-Cain-Stout Party” and “Communists in the Evatt-Cain Party”.<sup>110</sup> At the other end of the political spectrum, Frank Anstey, another politician, a self-educated man and one of the greatest and most loved radical orators and writers of his time, sought a simple explanation of social injustice – in his case, the consequences of private finance capital.<sup>111</sup> Disillusioned with his party, Anstey said: “I’m finished with this hopeless spineless mob you try to serve.”<sup>112</sup> Years later, when Scullin was asked if he would write about his time in government, he said that as it had nearly killed him to live through it, it would certainly kill him to write about it.

## The Industrial Arena

Understandingly, there was little inclination to mobilise the workers’ industrial strength for action outside the orbit of the arbitration system, and Victoria was almost free of strikes in 1930.<sup>113</sup> Victorian unions passively watched the treatment meted out to the AWU by the Arbitration Court in reducing its award. The AWU annual convention decided on more legal proceedings, which proved unsuccessful. The *Argus* drew a lesson for all employers from the AWU’s decision to accept the award: “The pastoralists had proved that the resistance of the trade unions was not as formidable as the bombast of many trade union leaders might lead the community to believe.”<sup>114</sup> Certainly the capitulation of the AWU, the most powerful union in Australia, followed by the failure of

108. Louis, *Trade Unions and the Depression*, 3.

109. Jonas, “Hogan.”

110. Hogan, *Facts Everyone Should Know about Communism in Australia*.

111. Ian Turner, “Anstey, Francis George (Frank) (1865–1940),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 7, ed. Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), accessed August 12, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/anstey-francis-george-frank-5038>.

112. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 182.

113. Louis, *Trade Unions and the Depression*.

114. *The Argus*, July 29, 1930.

the Miners Union and the ARU to prevent wage reductions, did not inspire a combative spirit in weaker organisations.<sup>115</sup>

Solidarity in the union movement was under threat, too. Restarick recounted an episode in 1932 when the Sunshine Biscuit Factory shop steward reported about the dreadful conditions. The BT&LC helped the union organise a strike, the first time ever. But the company took the union dues out, sending the money to the secretary in Melbourne and the workers never saw an organiser. The secretary, Joe Perruga, attended a conference with representatives from Sunshine and a couple from the BT&LC Disputes Committee:

Perruga carried a revolver and put it on the table and said: “This strike is over; you are finished,” and he said, “Anybody want to disagree with me ...” And he put his hand on the gun. I have heard of that in America, but it was the first time I saw it in operation here. Yeah a real gangster. No wonder they had crook conditions in the factory. Anyway the strike finished and they sacked the young shop steward.<sup>116</sup>

The Biscuit-makers Union disaffiliated from BT&LC.<sup>117</sup> Williams, writing about the Depression, articulated the view of many Ballarat workers and exemplifies why the CPA was to become a more attractive voice for them:

We had a 22.5% cut. Now the only effect that had was to reduce spending power and further constrict the consumption of goods and further constrict the number of people employed. Unemployment rocketed immediately. The workers felt the employers were successful in placing the main burden of the crisis upon them.<sup>118</sup>

But Louis clearly identifies that union leaders lacked an alternative response.<sup>119</sup> They were divided about renegeing on repayment of government debt and were unprepared for the turmoil between those who supported “Red Ted” Theodore’s solution, the “Lang Plan” or the Premiers’ Plan. Theodore, a former premier of Queensland, was deputy prime minister and treasurer in Scullin’s government put forward a “middle way” between repudiation and deflation; however, this was rejected by the banks.<sup>120</sup> With indifference to theory, the unions made few attempts to analyse the elements of political power or define their own possible relationship with an ALP government in these

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115. Louis, *Trade Unions and the Depression*.

116. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

117. BT&LC Minutes, 30 August, 1933.

118. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression,” 1.

119. Louis, *Trade Unions and the Depression*.

120. Neville Cain, “Theodore, Edward Granville (1884–1950),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 12, ed. John Ritchie (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990), accessed April 25, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/theodore-edward-granville-8776>.



circumstances. Their ideological equipment consisted of a few simple articles of faith: the ALP was the political expression of the industrial labour movement; the ALP laid down the policies to be implemented by ALP governments; and ALP governments could legislate for the regulation of industrial relations.<sup>121</sup>

Like the women at Lucas & Co., abattoir workers were becoming part of a globalised system of industrial management. They saw this approach as reducing workers to robots and giving more power to management.<sup>122</sup> The newly formed CPA was anxious to engage with Ballarat workers on the issue, but it did not end well. Towards the end of 1931 when the killing season opened, a butcher, Stan Hunt, came to Ballarat to work at the abattoirs. He had recently spent time in the Soviet Union and was well equipped to instruct the newly formed CPA on socialist theory. When the management decided to introduce the chain method of killing,<sup>123</sup> the CPA also sent an organiser, Arthur King, to assist the workers.<sup>124</sup> The chain- method reduced workers to repetitive work carrying out only one of the tasks involved in slaughtering, thus becoming part of a chain and making work more monotonous. The ensuing strike lasted some weeks, until broken largely because of the attitude of the butchers to the labourers who worked with them, not allowing them to speak or vote at the strike meetings. This action caused a deep division between the two sections, which was exploited to the full by management. Under the slogan *Get Rid of the Communists*, the labourers led, by Arthur Hughes, a former ALP MLA for Grenville, organised themselves into a vigilante squad, attacking Hunt and some of his supporters and forcing them to take a rowing boat out on Lake Wendouree to escape.<sup>125</sup> The strike did not end well for Monica Burke, either, who was working at the Railway Hotel:

The change was coming on at that time for the meat workers with the abattoirs chain system. There would be one man to do this and the next man would do that to the carcass. Of course, there was a big argument going on whether it was going to come in or not. These men were boarding in the Hotel. Anyway the meat workers then went on strike. They brought in the chain system and the meat workers who had boarded there got the sack. So that ended me, I had to leave.<sup>126</sup>

121. Louis, *Trade Unions and the Depression*.

122. Michael Costa and Mark Hearn, *Reforming Australia's Unions: Insights from Southland Magazine* (Sydney: Federation Press, 1997).

123. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat in the Depression."

124. Ibid.

125. Ibid.

126. Monica Bourke, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 17.

BT&LC chose not to get involved resolving that no action be taken re. meat trade strike until official notification be received from the Meat Trade Employees Union and the following meeting noted work had resumed.<sup>127</sup> BT&LC minutes reflect obvious antagonism to communists at this time. They were banned from using the BTH for meetings. Williams, a member of the local CPA branch and BT&LC delegate, felt the CPA was left to build itself in a very strong anti-Communist atmosphere.<sup>128</sup>

King, the CPA organiser, appeared in a Ballarat court in January 1932 on another matter. King, with four others including Reg McKeagney, were charged with distributing pamphlets without the name and address of the printer as required under the Newspaper and Printers Act. King's case was probably not assisted when Arthur Jackson, secretary of the CPA from Melbourne, gave evidence. In answer to Sergeant Ryan's question of "Have any of your speakers advocated in Ballarat or Geelong for the overthrow of the present form of government by armed revolution?", he agreed they had:

King was paid to organise the working classes for better conditions, and that may mean armed revolution. He believed the working class should rule and "the majority had the right to use every means it can to gain control, including armed revolution if the minority try to stop them".<sup>129</sup>

King was sentenced to three months imprisonment,<sup>130</sup> although he was free by April 1, 1932, when he spoke at the Galloway Monument with McKeagney at a significant Rally for the Unemployed. Throughout the Depression, the BT&LC leaders were constantly challenged by the more militant unemployed and, like the leadership at the political level, mainly worked at keeping control rather than taking an active part in solving the immediate issues of the unemployed, including the itinerants. By March 1932, a group of more than 20 CPA militants had set up a camp, with a soup kitchen for a large number of unemployed families in the area.<sup>131</sup> The Single Men's Camp Committee decided to confront the ban by the city council by having street meetings to outline the plight of the unemployed, with a Friday night meeting on 1 April 1932<sup>132</sup> at the Galloway Monument, the traditional place for outdoor labour meetings. A descendant of a Eureka combatant, Gerald Murphy, who was 15 in 1932, 60 years later explained his role in what he

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127. BT&LC Minutes, October 15, 1931. October 29, 1931.

128. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat in the Depression."

129. "Communists in Court," *Argus*, January 30, 1932.

130. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat in the Depression."

131. *Ibid.*

132. *Ibid.*

described as a vital blow for Australia's jealously guarded principle of free speech. A number of banners were prepared and all the banner staves were partly sawn through. At 7.30pm the largest crowd that had assembled in Ballarat for many years, estimated to be at least 2,000, had gathered and the resulting fracas was still described with glee by Williams and Murphy more than fifty years later.<sup>133</sup>

King opened the meeting but had only spoken for a few minutes before a police sergeant, in charge of a large number of foot and mounted police, asked if he had a permit to conduct a street meeting. When King answered "No", he was immediately pulled down from the monument. McKeagney climbed up and commenced to speak until similarly challenged by the police. Then King and McKeagney broke free from the police, and were picked up by a motorcycle and taken to the CPA rooms.<sup>134</sup> Meanwhile back at the monument, the police had panicked and charged into the crowd, wielding their batons. Many of the crowd responded angrily and their banner staves came into use.<sup>135</sup>

*The Courier* was not amused. The heading "Street Demonstration Challenge to Authority" and its report showed little sympathy for the plight of the unemployed:

To affect their purpose, the police were obliged to use their batons and many heads, which happened to be in the way, are still giving the owners feeling reminders of the disorder which trespassed on the usual tranquillity of Friday evening in the streets.<sup>136</sup>

The next week the BT&LC entered the campaign. It held a crowded meeting at BTH at 7.30 pm then marched to the Galloway Monument where a similar crowd to April 1 had gathered. Secretary Miller commenced speaking but was asked to stop, which he did; Rowe then stepped up and the process was repeated. The police were more restrained, and after several speakers, the BT&LC settled the question of the right to speak at the monument. All subsequent meetings were held there without police interference.<sup>137</sup>

Chung was there and his animosity towards Hogan was clear; "It was a Labor government at the time – Ned Hogan's political squad was sent up, and, my word, they let the batons fly when the workers moved from the Trades Hall."<sup>138</sup> Like Williams, Chung also articulated the unfairness that the workers felt: "They set up three taxes. When I was

133. Ibid; *The Courier*, April 1, 1992.

134. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat in the Depression."

135. Ibid.

136. "Street Demonstration Challenge to Authority," *The Courier*, April 2, 1932.

137. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat in the Depression."

138. Chung, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 5.

only 17, I was paying three taxes – a federal tax, a state tax and an unemployment relief tax – and that latter one was especially for the relief of the unemployed.”<sup>139</sup>

The major effect of the April 1 meeting was to divide the local unemployed from the militants, and shortly after, a resolution was carried at a meeting of the BUA that no member of the CPA could be a member of their organisation. The BUA moved to BTH,<sup>140</sup> where the ALP was also given a room for a library and permission to run a soup kitchen.<sup>141</sup> Local Communists had little influence<sup>142</sup> over the Communists among the unemployed.<sup>142</sup> The irony of protesting to the Minister for Railways about the direction by the manager at BNRW that no political meetings could be held at the factory, and in the next report endorsing the action of the Secretary in preventing a meeting of unemployed being held in the Main Hall seemed to be lost on delegates.<sup>143</sup> The impotence of the labour movement was made clear at a meeting in August 1932 when 200 people met at BTH to discuss unemployment. Secretary Miller presented resolutions approved by the BUA, the BT&LC, the ALP and the CPA that covered the formation of a provincial council of employed and unemployed, protests against conscription for forestry work, and the most revealing stated that the economic difficulties of workers could be solved by the political action of workers if there was sufficient interest. While some supported redress through the ballot box, Rowe and Gordon Shore, another leading member of the CPA who was later expelled, called for direct action, and Shore said: “All big reforms had been brought about by the sword.”<sup>144</sup>

At most public meetings on unemployment, militants and moderates confronted each other.<sup>145</sup> At a later large meeting at the Ballarat Town Hall, chaired by the president of the BT&LC, BUA and the BT&LC resolutions demanded a 100 per cent increase in sustenance payments and travellers’ rates and a halving of the distance that the unemployed must travel before becoming eligible for another sustenance issue were carried. Rowe demanded the restoration of the 10 per cent cut in wages, the abolition of “speed up” in industry, referring particularly to the BNRW, and the urgent need to

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139. *Ibid.*, 6.

140. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression.”

141. BT&LC Minutes, June 25, 1931.

142. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression.”

143. BT&LC Minutes, November 16, 1931.

144. Gordon Shore, Saffin Papers.

145. Saffin Papers, “Case Studies Ballarat 1930–39.”

abolish the rationing of work.<sup>146</sup> The BT&LC did attempt to get some common ground, but the futility of their resolutions demonstrated the divide that had developed within the labour movement.

In late 1933, James Jones became president of the BUA and declared war on the BT&LC. He favoured mass action: “The ALP favoured capitulation to capitalism.”<sup>147</sup> He accused Secretary Miller “of being ‘yellow’ and leaving the workers easy prey to capitalism – of which parliament was portrayed as the executive committee.”<sup>148</sup> Jones was struck off the register for sustenance payments and complained of police harassment. Others called for strike action, undeterred by the fact that many Ballarat employed were living below the breadline and strikes would add pressure to the unemployed already depending on the goodwill of the community.<sup>149</sup> But one speaker at least still had faith in the BT&LC: “This institution built by the workers stands today as the only bulwark between the said workers and the oppression of capitalism.”<sup>150</sup> From then on, most attention was given to tactics on how to contain the militants; however, there was no common ground on what strategic approach to the future should be taken.

### **The Broadening of Industrial Campaigns**

By 1934 the local CPA activists turned to their workplaces, where they could use their influence more comfortably and successfully and used the BT&LC to bolster their campaigns. The introduction of a shop committee at BNRW is a good example. Unlike the MTHC, the BT&LC became an active supporter of shop committees and had regular reports. While the MTHC sought to exercise organisational power by attempting to limit the committees’ activities and casting certain behaviour as inappropriate or even illegal,<sup>151</sup> the BT&LC encouraged them and delegates Rowe and Restarick were active in assisting their spread to other sites. leading the campaign organised by the CPA with representatives of all the railway workshops, and eventually, a Central Council of Shop Committees was constituted.<sup>152</sup> In NSW tension climaxed with the expulsion of the

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146. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression.”

147. BT&LC Minutes, August 1, 1933.

148. Saffin Papers, Part VI: Ballarat 1930–39.

149. BT&LC Minutes, August 1, 1933.

150. Saffin Papers, Part VI: Ballarat 1930–39.

151. Brigden, “A Vehicle for Solidarity.”

152. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat in the Depression.”

Central Council of Railway Shop Committees from “observer” status representation at meetings of the Sydney Trades and Labour Council.<sup>153</sup>

Above all their understanding and implementation of solidarity gave them the unity to maintain a radical program of workplace reform. The following episode has all the ingredients, including old scores that have not been forgotten. Generations later, this episode is still passed around workplaces, and still the spirit of Eureka is invoked.

At the BNRW in the early 1930s, two foremen (the Little Czar and Split Pin) were sent to the USA to learn the new “speed-up” method of production known as Taylorism:

On their return, resentment and frustration reached such a pitch that one morning someone threw a rotten orange and hit the little Czar on the back of the neck as he was writing at his desk. Pandemonium broke loose – all the truck shop rose and cheered to a man, the Czar dashed into the office and brought out all the top brass. Work stopped while they tried to find the culprit, who without doubt would have been sacked on the spot, but such was the solidarity of these harassed men that no one spilt the beans. This incident brought a fresh wave of reprisals from the management. Hardly a day went by without someone being fined for minor offences. This went on for weeks, but while it increased the resentment, they still didn’t find out who threw the orange. The Little Czar and his underlings had established their spot system, and in so doing, had produced the finest crop of militant workers that Ballarat had had since the miners rose in revolt at the Eureka Stockade nearly 100 years before. They buried the “Split Pin” face down. Occasionally, I meet the Little Czar at a friendly game of bowls, and although both of us have mellowed a lot with age, I still haven’t forgiven him for the ruthlessness and inhumanity to his fellow men, but if he wants to know who threw that orange, I’ll tell him now.<sup>154</sup>

Tony Restarick was recounting that incident, 50 years later in 1983, by which time it was folklore among workers and in researching this thesis it was repeated to me. It had been practised and retold by every generation. Just remember they have power even beyond death, revealing the darker side of unity that is often not acknowledged.

Rimmer and Sutcliffe identify Rowe as the guiding spirit behind the inauguration of the first stable shop committee in the Victorian railways,<sup>155</sup> a decision of the 1934 ACTU Conference that provided for the setting up of shop committees combining the activities of all unions within a workplace – a powerful tool for broader reforms. Factory

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153. Geoff Warburton, “Shop Committees in the New South Wales Railways,” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 17, no. 3 (1975): 255–264.

154. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 112.

155. Malcolm Rimmer and Paul Sutcliffe, “The Origins of Australian Workshop Organisation, 1918 to 1950,” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 23, no. 2 (1981): 222.

committees sprang up during the 1917 Russian Revolution and were well suited to the large workforce from disparate unions at the BNRW.

While the new unionists from the 1890s had broadened the goals of the labour movement, other issues began to emerge which went beyond individual unions' usual interests, in particular occupational health and safety, sick leave, and long service, as well as the long-running issues such as hours and methods of work. Rowe called the first mass meeting of the workers, then delegates were elected from each shop, irrespective of the union to which they belonged. These delegates met and elected officers, a constitution was drawn up, and a duplicated newsletter, *The Red Signal*, was issued periodically, which played an important part in organising workers.<sup>156</sup>

However, the committee was received with little enthusiasm by the unions in the shop and was rejected out of hand by the manager. As the formation of a shop committee was official policy of the ACTU, the committee pushed its claim for recognition through the BT&LC but took the opportunity to attack arbitration in April 1934, which proved to be a step too far:

After the decision just given in the Arbitration Court this council is convinced of the class bias of the court and we therefore are of the opinion that the unions should withdraw from the court and in order to regain our lost conditions and repel further attacks we shall endeavour by setting up shop committees in every factory to prepare the workers for organised mass struggle.<sup>157</sup>

This resolution was met with adjournment motions at three subsequent meetings until August when a resolution instructing delegates to vote in favour of arbitration at the forthcoming ACTU Congress was carried.<sup>158</sup> As had happened several times during the BT&LC's history, a step back would be taken when unity was more important than solidarity. The Militants stepped back from attacking arbitration and BT&LC supported the shop committee concept. The manager was instructed to deal with the shop committee, but the grapevine reported that he was furious with the decision, requesting the staff board to transfer Rowe from BNRW. The reply rejecting his request pointed out with some logic that the trouble had already begun and transferring Rowe would only

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156. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat North Workshops." The initial officers were President Hugh Cook (car shop) Secretary Ted Rowe (fitting shop) and other delegates were Bert Black boiler shop, Jim Wight (tender shop) Tony Restarick (truck shop) Bill Irwin (copper shop) Bill Kilgour (blacksmith shop) Alf Temby (motion branch) and Watty Wilton (under gear).

157. BT&LC Minutes, May 24, 1934.

158. BT&LC Minutes, August 16, 1934.

spread the agitation over a wider area. The manager was to deal with the committee and try to confine its activities to BNRW.<sup>159</sup>

The first demand was for a drinking tap in the truck shop, which was rejected. The whole procedure of going through the BT&LC to the staff board had to be gone through again. After several months' delay, the request was granted and a plumber installed the bubbler drinking tap: "It was a momentous occasion. The tap was unveiled during one lunch hour. Some of the bosses were there but all of the workers had a drink to celebrate their first victory for over two years."<sup>160</sup> Regular weekly mass meetings were held, with most of the complaints being for better equipment.<sup>161</sup> The pioneering work of the shop committee at the BNRW set the tone on industrial safety issues in the 1930s. It was fertile ground. Williams's description of the workshop when the "speed-up system" was introduced in 1929 was of eight pneumatic riveting guns, three oil furnaces and other assorted pneumatic tools, all in operation at once in the tin shed, which made the place "a replica of Dante's Inferno, where three men had eyes knocked out by flying rivets, one spent over 12 months in a mental institution after a mental breakdown, as well as a long record of ulcers and hernias and a suicide."<sup>162</sup>

One boilermaker, Micky Edwards, was so harassed for being 10 minutes late on the day the railway commissioners inspected the shops, that he jumped the fence and disappeared. He was still missing the next day, so many of the men knocked off and lost a day's pay searching for him. He was found late in the afternoon drowned in the Blue Dam with his pockets full of blue metal to make sure of getting out of his misery.<sup>163</sup>

Sick pay was not available to blue-collar workers and the shop committee implemented a relief fund to pay a worker full pay if he was off sick for a period that was longer than six weeks. The contribution made was sixpence per pay during the time that anybody was drawing on the fund. This fund remained a part of the committee's activity, only lapsing with the introduction of sick pay after WWII.

Compensation for industrial deafness was also pioneered here and became widely accepted. The campaign was initiated by BT&LC delegate, Bert Black, secretary of the Ballarat Boilermakers Society and assisted by unionist Stan Willis, a Melbourne

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159. Ibid.

160. Ibid., 5.

161. Ibid.

162. Ibid., 5.

163. Ibid., 6.



boilermaker who wrote a book on the subject.<sup>164</sup> Compensation that amounted to many thousands of dollars was obtained for those deafened in those years of “speed up” in the truck shop: “We got \$5000 compensation for one man, and that opened up a whole new era in the case for industrial deafness.”<sup>165</sup> Restarick believed this activity stimulated general interest in the Blacksmiths Union, the AEU and the ARU, and these all functioned again with monthly meetings, as well as with many new names being added to the shop committee, officers of the unions and the BT&LC.<sup>166</sup> The shop committee movement produced many well-known trade union leaders not only in Ballarat but also in other places – names such as Brown, Willis, Laurie Carmichael, and Jim Ralston.<sup>167</sup> As Restarick said: “The shop committee’s authority was never challenged within BNRW, even when the strongest challenge thrown out by the Industrial Groupers occurred in later years. They attempted to boycott the shop committee and concentrated their activities upon the unions.”<sup>168</sup> Hagan refers to shop committees being useful to the ACTU, as unions had already extended their right to be part of disputes within a state when union officials had been able to intervene in an industrial tribunal around shop agreements for higher wages and agreements beyond a single union.<sup>169</sup>

### **The Rise of Fascism Reverberates through the Labour Movement**

Ballarat was a community struggling to regain economic strength and provide employment. There were indications of dissatisfaction with the existing social economic and political order. There was also evidence of the appeal of a new order represented by socialism and communism and the still young and attractive Soviet model. There were signs of concern among established authorities with the activism and appeal of the worse than secular- the godless creed of Communism. These were the determining features of the local response to that violent watershed, the civil and ideological confrontation of the mid 1930s, the Spanish Civil War. Curtin, elected as federal ALP leader when Scullin

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164. “History,” Stan Willis Trust, accessed November 11, 2019, <https://stanwillis.org.au/trust-history>.

165. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

166. Ibid. Restarick identified Charlie Chung (BT&LC), Phil Scobie, Horrie Mitchell, George Hulse (BT&LC), Norm Broadford, Beau Williams (BT&LC), Keith McMahon, Lew Bird (BT&LC), and Frank Knight (BT&LC).

167. Ibid. Rowe also identified Jacky Brown who became the secretary of the ARU. Teddy Rowe became one of the federal councillors of the AEU. Stan Willis (his son, Ralph, became Minister for Industrial Relations) was a prominent member of the Newport Shop Committee and became secretary of the Victorian Branch of the Boilermakers Union.

168. Ibid.

169. Hagan, *The ACTU*.

resigned in 1935, maintained the ALP's strict non-interventionist policy towards Spain, believing if he "said anything about Spain, he might split Labor from top to bottom."<sup>170</sup> The BT&LC picked up the issue with enthusiasm, identifying that a more remote enemy was, in a way, easier than dealing with the one at home. John Bongiorno, a leading Ballarat Catholic, identified the tension, too:

With some reason, they (the Communists) argued that the old church was equally as guilty as the capitalist, were in league with them, exploiting the workers. No one today would deny that ... It was the dynamism of the "commo" activist who eventually provoked a Catholic reaction.<sup>171</sup>

One of the first episodes that divided Australians on attitudes to Fascism was the expulsion of Egon Kisch, which has an interesting Ballarat link. In February 1933, the day after the Reichstag fire in Germany, the Jewish Czech Kisch, one of many prominent opponents of Nazism, had been arrested, imprisoned, and then expelled from Germany. His works were banned and burnt as part of the Nazi takeover. Kisch was invited to Australia as a delegate to the All-Australian Congress Against War and Fascism in 1934, but the Australian Government refused him entry.<sup>172</sup> When his ship, the *Strathaird*, berthed at Melbourne, he took matters into his own hands and jumped six metres from the ship onto the quayside, breaking his leg. He was bundled back on board but this nerve-wracking action mobilised support.<sup>173</sup> The BT&LC protested.<sup>174</sup>

Joan Rosanove became Kisch's first legal representative after being asked by Katharine Susannah Prichard to represent him in his attempt to visit Australia in what became a famous case including the use of Gaelic as part of the language test to exclude unwanted arrivals.<sup>175</sup> Rosanove, who had grown up in Ballarat, was a daughter of Mark and Ruby Lazarus and had done her articles with her father in Ballarat, becoming the first woman in Victoria to be admitted to the bar. Mark Lazarus had begun a tradition of Jewish lawyers practising in Ballarat "whose sympathies were aroused for the underdogs of the era, the

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170. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope's Battalions*, 40.

171. John Bongiorno, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, 6.

172. Carolyn Rasmussen, "Kisch, Egon Erwin (1885–1948)", in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol.15. ed. J.Ritchie (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press. 2000) accessed August 19, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kisch-egon-erwin-10755>

173. Farrell, *International Socialism & Australian Labour*.

174. BT&LC Minutes, November 8, 1934.

175. Ibid.

labouring man who worked long hours for little wages and less security,”<sup>176</sup> and ran unsuccessfully for the ALP in 1919 and 1926.<sup>177</sup> Because of the protracted court proceedings, Kisch achieved great notoriety, as he travelled around Australia and spoke on the dangers of Hitler’s Nazi regime, another war and of concentration camps at many meetings, before he finally left Australia in March 1935.<sup>178</sup>

Dave Aronson, later to purchase the Lazarus firm in Ballarat, and who acted for the BT&LC for 20 years, was also active in the Kisch campaign, taking a year away from university to campaign with Kisch, speaking at factory gates and at street meetings at night.<sup>179</sup> Kisch visited Ballarat and went to see the Eureka flag at the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, showing the worldwide interest that Eureka still received. However, most interestingly, he was directed to visit Nathan Spielvogel (brother of Fred Spielvogel, president of the BT&LC in 1922) who showed him a Eureka collection in a room in an empty council house not then available to the public, with diggers’ licences, arrest warrants and reports and pictures of the times.<sup>180</sup>

Beleaguered Spain, the focus of idealists around the world, gained early support from the BT&LC. A battleground of the two contending ideologies – Christianity and Communism was soon being fought out in Ballarat, although not in such a bloody way.<sup>181</sup> A civil war between the Republicans, who were loyal to the democratic, left-leaning and relatively urban second Spanish Republic, and the Nationalists, a largely aristocratic conservative group led by General Franco, broke out in 1936. The Spanish African army in Morocco rebelled against the government and was transported to Spain by fascist Italian and German aircraft to fight with Franco.

It is believed 66 Australians were involved fighting for the Republicans.<sup>182</sup> Kevin Rebbecchi, who had a noteworthy Ballarat connection, was there. Rebbecchi’s family came to Australia during the gold rush in 1850, part of the Swiss/Italian diaspora who settled in the Central Highlands and were involved in the Eureka Stockade. His ancestor

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176. Isabel Carter and Lillian Carlton, *Woman in a Wig: Joan Rosanove, QC* (Sydney: Lansdowne Press, 1970), 4.

177. *Ibid.*

178. *Ibid.*

179. Jon Faine, *Taken on Oath: A Generation of Lawyers* (Sydney: Federation Press, 1992).

180. Kisch, *Australian Landfall*.

181. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions*.

182. Amirah Inglis, *Australians in the Spanish Civil War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

Antonio married Lalor's cousin, Margaret Masterton, immediately after the uprising and Kevin's father became secretary of the Federated Clerks Union in Melbourne.<sup>183</sup> Kevin was only 21 when he died near the French border on 1 January 1939. His family have only recently identified his grave.<sup>184</sup>

In Ballarat, this far-off event was closely followed. Supporters of the civil war used all the new communications technology of the twentieth century – motion pictures, posters, books, radio programs and leaflets were all influential. Social media may be a new phenomenon in the political space, but film was similarly effective in the 1930s. The documentary *The Spanish Earth* which premiered in America in July 1937, showing the struggle of the Spanish Republican Government against the rebellion by General Franco's right-wing forces backed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, was dramatically used to advertise the Spanish Republicans' need for military and monetary aid, with the Roosevelts inviting Ernest Hemingway to show the film at the White House.<sup>185</sup> The Australian Catholic Truth Society published more than 300,000 pamphlets on the conflict in Spain in 1936 alone, detailing tales of slaughter and carnage that had been exacted against the church.<sup>186</sup> Looking back in 2007, Eric Hobsbawm wrote that "in creating the world's memory of the Spanish Civil War, the pen, the brush and the camera wielded on behalf of the defeated have proved mightier than the sword and the power of those who won."<sup>187</sup>

The MTHC in April 1937 condemned the destruction of Guernica and manifestations of Fascism in Australia,<sup>188</sup> but the Spanish Civil War issue first erupted in Ballarat in 1936, when the BT&LC passed resolutions condemning the Franco forces' attempt to overthrow the republican government. At BT&LC meetings on 29 September and 8 October 1936, the council offered moral and financial aid "in support of the heroic struggle of the Spanish people against Fascism and its bestial Moorish murderers."<sup>189</sup> E. Peters, state president of the ALP and a Catholic, soon bought into the debate, attacking

183. *The Age*, September 2, 1927.

184. Sharon Upham, Rebbecchi family history, personal communication.

185. "The Spanish Earth, at the 55th St. Playhouse, is a Plea for Democracy," *The New York Times*, August 21, 1937, accessed December 21, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1937/08/21/archives/the-screen-the-spanish-earth-at-the-55th-st-playhouse-is-a-plea-for.html>.

186. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope's Battalions*.

187. Eric Hobsbawm, "War of Ideas," *The Guardian Australian*, February 18, 2007, accessed February 17, 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/feb/17/historybooks.featuresreviews>.

188. MTHC Minutes, April 29, 1937.

189. BT&LC Minutes, September 29, 1936.

the BT&LC and the BT&LC carried a resolution attacking Peters.<sup>190</sup> On 15 October 1936, the MTHC also dissociated itself from the statement of Peters by a vote of 51 votes to 41.<sup>191</sup> But Peters was part of a VCE that was becoming increasingly hostile to the Left.

The debate soon went out into the local community. On Sunday 4 October 1936, Bishop Foley ascended the pulpit at the conclusion of mass at Ballarat's St Patrick's Cathedral and denounced the BT&LC resolution. He concluded: "You men before me and those of you in unions said to have been represented at this (BT&LC) meeting ... will not allow your money to be used for the purpose of subsidising savages."<sup>192</sup> Foley's intervention was followed by numerous letters to the editor of *The Courier*, until by March 1937 there were at least two every day from regular writers.<sup>193</sup> As Hurley says, "The division of a decaying ruling class fighting against the slave class attempting to gain its 'freedom' versus 'anarchy' and 'godless barbarism' were consistent themes."<sup>194</sup> Local MLA Hollway had his pro-Franco views on Spain well aired in *The Courier*: "Conflict had to some extent been limited, and there was a reasonable prospect of at least temporary peace in Europe."<sup>195</sup>

The BT&LC supported a well-attended CPA meeting where Rowe gave a public address on the Spanish Civil War.<sup>196</sup> The CYMS also took up the topic from a different direction. Among its leaders were John Larkins, a budding solicitor, Bongiorno<sup>197</sup> (they met above his shop) and Sheehan, later to become an ALP politician.<sup>198</sup> So when the opportunity came to debate the merits of the Spanish Civil War with the BT&LC, they were ready to take up the challenge Rowe issued through *The Courier*.

On 21 April 1937, a crowd of more than 800 turned up at the Ballarat Town Hall. They were there not so much to debate but to make clear which side they were on in the

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190. BT&LC Minutes, October 8, 1936.

191. MTHC Minutes, October 15, 1936.

192. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat in the Depression," 11.

193. Hurley, "Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers; the Ideological Battle in Ballarat 1936-1951." Articles included "See Things as They Are", "Student of Recent Events", "Democrat", "Campion", and those who decried pseudonyms such as Ted Rowe (BT&LC), Beau Williams (BT&LC), C. A. Russell, J. Conlon (an inspector of Catholic schools in the area), J. J. Walsh, Gerard Sherry (whose father ran a business at the Catholic bookstore in Bridge Street), A. Cleary and D. S. Spero.

194. Ibid.

195. *The Courier*, March 20, 1937.

196. BT&LC Minutes, February 25, 1937.

197. John's son, Paul, is one of Australia's most respected political journalists. He chaired Channel 10's *Meet The Press* program from 1996 to 2012.

198. Monsignor McInerney, *Ballarat and District 1920-1940: An Oral History*, interview, 1983, 147.

Spanish Civil War, which was unfolding on the other side of the world. A debate on the same topic a fortnight before at the University of Melbourne also attracted a large crowd between 1000 and 1500, of whom two-thirds were Catholics.<sup>199</sup> In his autobiography *The Quest for Grace*, Manning Clark likened the atmosphere, even before the combatants entered the room, to being in the outer at a Carlton–Collingwood AFL game.<sup>200</sup> It is worth noting that the Ballarat event was community based; it was not restricted to academic circles.

Many first-hand accounts of the meeting are still available, and even 30 years later, they remain vivid and consistent. Monsignor McInerney recalled: “The Communists were successful in locking the doors so that their protagonists could be the first in and get the front seats. But the CYMS outwitted them by getting through the window and they occupied these first seats.”<sup>201</sup> *The Courier* concluded:

If there were any who supposed that the protracted correspondence in *The Courier* concerning the situation in Spain had left the general public a little weary on the subject, the attendance at last night’s debate at the City Hall would have come as a startling surprise. Long before eight o’clock, the hall was packed full and the partition between it and the concert hall was thrown open. By the time the debate had begun, the crowd had stretched most of the way to the far wall.<sup>202</sup>

In 1937 who was winning was certainly not apparent to the combatants fighting it out. For them, the Spanish Civil War was a war to the death between two hostile ideas of life, and both sides were at least agreed on this. The debate served to deepen the bitter conflict in Ballarat at both personal and institutional levels.<sup>203</sup> While it engaged the broader community, the Spanish Civil War crystallised two groups of believers in Ballarat. This is significant in what it suggests about the dynamics of the town itself. One might think the lack of anonymity in such a community would discourage political extremism. But while the lack of anonymity might have discouraged some would-be participants, prominent identities for both sides emerged.

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199. Colin H. Jory, *The Champion Society and Catholic Social Militancy in Australia, 1929–1939* (Sydney: Harpham, 1986).

200. C. H. Manning Clark, *The Quest for Grace* (Melbourne: Viking Press, 1990).

201. McInerney, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

202. *The Courier*, April 22, 1937.

203. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.”

The deepening rift in the labour movement between the largely Catholic right wing and the left wing was also noted by Williams. He believed the entry of Bishop Foley into the controversy led to a large influx of Catholic members to branch meetings of the union:

This happened in other areas throughout Australia, too, but this, in my estimation, was the first development of Catholic organised attendance at union meetings for the purpose of having a policy of the Catholic Church adopted by the unions. This was the beginning of what later became the Movement under Santamaria and the Industrial Groupers as they carried their policy into the Labor Party.<sup>204</sup>

*The Courier* did not take an editorial position on the Spanish Civil War but reported it in detail every day. The ACTU at their 1937 Conference pledged solidarity with the Spanish Government and called on its Executive to intensify their support for Spanish relief. Franco won the Civil War in 1939 and ruled Spain for 36 years, although he never overcame his links to Fascism and Naziism. But in the Ballarat branch of the ALP the sectarian division between Catholic and Militants becoming increasingly evident.

In 1937, a series of bans was imposed on Communist activity in Ballarat. Communists were refused permission to hold street meetings<sup>205</sup> and the Returned Soldiers League(RSL) agitated for the proscription of all halls for Communist meetings.<sup>206</sup> The manager of the BNRW attempted to censor union notices<sup>207</sup> and Hollway urged the dismissal of Communists at the BNRW.<sup>208</sup> Historian, Colin Jory, saw the 1937 debate as an ideological watershed, while Patrick O’Farrell, historian of the Catholic Church in Australia, argues that not only did the Spanish Civil War bring “frontal conflict between Catholicism and Communism”<sup>209</sup>, but that it dominated, almost exclusively, “the social thinking and apostolic energies of Australian Catholicism for the next twenty years.”<sup>210</sup> It got underway in Ballarat much earlier than in most other centres.

The final hours of the 1937 ALP conference clearly showed the impact of the Spanish Civil War debate. A motion expressing support for the Spanish Government against

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204. Williams., 16.

205. *The Courier*, September 25, 1937.

206. *The Courier*, September 7, 1939.

207. *The Courier*, August 26, 1939.

208. A. C. Williams, “History of the ASE Later the AEU.”

209. Fay Woodhouse, “Reviewing the 1937 Spanish Civil War Debate at the University of Melbourne 70 Years On,” in *Labour Traditions: Proceedings of the Tenth National Labour History Conference*, eds. Julie Kimber, Peter Love, and Phillip Deery (Melbourne: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2007), 206.

210. *Ibid.*

fascists was amended by the agenda committee in an attempt to appease the disparate elements. The motion was modified to an anodyne statement that the conference recognised that the most satisfactory form of government for any democratic government was one elected by adult franchise. The Tramways Union refused to vote for it if Russia were included as one of the dictatorships, and at the other end of the spectrum, Ballarat's Tom Carey led 40 delegates to also vote against it. The motion was carried.<sup>211</sup> The VCE kept the Left at bay to such an extent that they sacrificed almost all semblance of democratic procedure in order to minimise what they saw as Communist influence.<sup>212</sup>

In 1938, Arthur Calwell's denunciation of the Left, lumping together "misguided idealists, Communists, near Communists, half-baked Communists and ex-Communists and ... some damned fools who don't know where they stood,"<sup>213</sup> made it clear within the labour movement that Communism was the real threat and put him in line with the drawing rooms of Ballarat. Bate, describing a particular middle-class household, articulates a very similar mood, except they included Catholics and unionists:

In their Webster Street drawing room and others like it in Sturt Street and Wendouree Parade, the sense of a carefully divided world, ordained by God, was kept alive. Catholics, Communists, unionists, strikers, drunks, swearers, unmarried mothers and larrikins were on the devil's payroll.<sup>214</sup>

## Conclusion

It is difficult to overestimate the significance of the Great Depression for the BT&LC. As unemployment grew, the failure of the unions to protect their members led to a decline in faith in unionism, and Communists and militants led rank-and-file criticism of the existing leaders. At the BT&LC, the CPA by turning to issues of industrial safety they were able to build a very strong constituency, which ties in with an observation by Turner, a CPA member from the mid-1940s to the late-1950s, who believed that "most Communist trade unionists were militant trade unionists first and Communists second."<sup>215</sup> In his thesis, Douglas Jordan states that "what distinguished Communist union activists

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211. Saffin Papers.

212. White, *John Cain and Victorian Labor 1917–1957*.

213. Strangio, *Neither Power nor Glory*, 280.

214. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 129.

215. Ian Turner, *Room For Manoeuvre: Writings on History, Politics, Ideas and Play* (Melbourne: Drummond Publishing, 1982), 134. Quoted in Douglas Jordan, "Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960" (PhD thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne, 2011), 2.



from other trade union militants was their broader understanding that trade union activity could not be limited to economic struggles but had to address broader political issues.”<sup>216</sup>

Many union members accepted the industrial militancy of their Communist leaders but did not support their political outlook. In Ballarat this balancing act was successfully followed by the CPA members at BT&LC by being firmly embedded in their community at work and play and for a long period, public unity was maintained. That changed after WWII when the media became a powerful tool to spread the Cold War rhetoric.

If the ALP’s role was to build a fairer society by civilising capitalism, it “crumbled when capitalism itself foundered and the labour movement not only had no coherent overall strategy ready to implement but was unable to fashion one in a crisis.”<sup>217</sup> So workers were dealt severe blows by what had hitherto been regarded as the two traditional instruments for achieving their ends – ALP governments and the Arbitration Court. At no other point in the labour movement’s history in Australia has the belief in the democratic process been more sorely tested. Yet the electorate rejected radical solutions at the ballot box every time there was a popular vote, and in Ballarat voted for ALP renegades who had moved to the conservative side.

While the later battle was portrayed as between Christianity and Communism, the underlying current was the sort of capitalism which had created the Great Depression. Fitzgerald in his definitive book *The Pope’s Battalions* identifies the battle over the Spanish Civil War as shaping a generation of politically active young people as did the Vietnam War in the 1960s.<sup>218</sup> The Great Depression left a long-term legacy for the adults who bore the brunt of it and the many children who grew up in an atmosphere of insecurity. The cost was not shared equally and the workers who were still employed were the ones who funded the support of the unemployed. By the end of the 1930s, Fascism was in the ascendancy in Europe and the British leaders of the Commonwealth came to the late realisation that appeasement was not working, so Australia was off to another war just 20 years after bearing a heavy cost of that earlier conflagration. In declaring war, the words of the Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, set us firmly back as

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216. Douglas Jordan, “Conflict in the Unions: The Communist Party of Australia, Politics and the Trade Union Movement, 1945–1960” (PhD thesis, Victoria University, Melbourne, 2011), 2.

217. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, 182.

218. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions*, 1.

members of the British Empire: “There can be no doubt that where Great Britain stands, there stands the people of the entire British world.”<sup>219</sup>

Ballarat had stepped away from the brave and optimistic world of Clara Seekamp in 1855 although another wave of immigrants was coming:

No, the population of Australia is not English but Australian, and *sui generis*. Anyone who emigrates to this country, no matter from what clime or of what people, and contributes towards the development of its resources and its wealth, is no longer a foreigner ... The latest immigrant is the youngest Australian.<sup>220</sup>

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219. “Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies: Wartime Broadcast,” Australian War Memorial, accessed May 20, 2020, [https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/prime\\_ministers/menzies](https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/prime_ministers/menzies).

220. *The Age*, January 5, 1855.

## Chapter 7

### A Co-Dominant Tree 1939-1960

*(Occurs when two or more branches emerge from the same junction and the stems lack the reinforcing ridge required for the branches to be supported properly increasing their susceptibility to storms and heavy winds, making them prone to failure)*

There was a storm  
And I cried  
And Mr Bongiorno a prominent member  
Of the Italian League of Anti-Fascists (Ballarat Branch)  
Gave me lemonade to drink

And all the grown-ups  
talked about having a public meeting  
to be called “Help Russia with a Second Front”  
and Comrade Williams

of the Communist Party  
thought it would be a good idea

to dress me up  
in a miniature Red Army uniform  
and I cried again

and Mr Bongiorno  
gave me another lemonade.

—Jas. H. Duke<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Now a mature tree, BT&LC had been through some major ideological battles but the fiercest was to come. After the BT&LC focused on the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s, the onset of WWII led to a temporary truce between the Militants and the Groupers, but the final phase was played out in the Cold War post-war period. It was no longer just a sectarian dispute; the Catholic Church was now sharing a common cause with other conservative institutions in the community with the mutual goal of suppressing

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1. Poem by Jas. H. Duke. Jas H Duke (1939–1992), one of Australia’s most famous Sound Poets, was born in Ballarat. ‘In 1987, Jas H Duke produced one of the great poetry books of our time – *Poems of War and Peace*. It was remarkable for its variety and breadth: 268 pages of his poems, instructions for sound poems, translations of German poets and a selection from *Destiny Wood*. Track 4: Interview with Bill Marshall for 3PBS-FM radio (1977).’ Poem provided by Don Drummond, ALP candidate for Ballarat, 1958. Comrade Williams was a leading delegate to BT&LC.

CPA members, socialists, supporters, and civil libertarians.<sup>2</sup> In the other states, different personalities and the benefits of power and influence largely overrode ideological purity, but in Victoria, it was played out with great intensity until the inevitable split.

BT&LC delegates were regular contributors to the daily newspaper and led the arguments in their workplaces and debating clubs. Some withstood the wrath of the Catholic Bishop of Ballarat from the pulpit. It began in 1935 and culminated in 1955, and had an intensity that became more entrenched, more spiteful, and more divisive, until the political climax of 1955 with the breakaway of the ALP (Anti-Communist) (ALP A-C) Party, later to become the DLP. While there are numerous accounts of how this ideological conflict divided Australia little has been written about how this was played out in this particular community. Provincial centres have not been seen as significant participants in the ideological battles of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Yet Ballarat participated in, and was deeply affected by, the great ideological battles of the century and many key figures who shaped the outcome lived in Ballarat. The intensity of debate among some sections of the community, and the production of leaders in this clash of ideologies in the 1930s and the decade after World War II was distinctive in Ballarat.

Whereas in Melbourne the industrial and political wings were more separated, and the key players returned to their suburban homes spread throughout Melbourne, in Ballarat they were the same people, going to the same churches, shopping in the same neighbourhoods, drinking in the same pubs. The union officials who were delegates at BT&LC ran the political wing- the ALP. Militancy within the Ballarat Trades Hall was increasingly a cause for concern within Ballarat's Catholic and Protestant middle-class communities.<sup>3</sup> It was a measure of the strength of the tree that it did not split asunder unlike its younger branch, the ALP. While the political wing split dramatically, the industrial wing continued with limited disruption organisationally. The workplace connections heightened by strong geographic connections often overrode the religious divisions.

Many Ballarat identities played leading roles in the national debate: Bishop O'Collins, fifth Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ballarat serving over 29 years in that role

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2. Hurley, "Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers." Appendix: Religious Affiliations for Ballarat, Victoria & Australia of 1933, 1947 and 1954 – Commonwealth Census figures.

3. Ibid.

was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire (KBE) in 1980 for services to religion and the community.<sup>4</sup> Bishop O’Collins was a member of the coordinating group of three Catholic prelates who supervised Bob Santamaria’s Movement. Robert Joshua, Ballarat’s federal MP, one of the seven federal MPs expelled from the ALP, became the federal president of the newly formed party, the DLP; Sheehan, a minister in the Cain Government, who, despite being Catholic, remained loyal to the ALP;<sup>5</sup> and Rowe, a leading member of the CPA, who had become a powerful voice at the BT&LC until he left to become the first Communist elected official of the AEU in 1943.<sup>6</sup> The BT&LC stayed firmly in the control of the Left who fought out the conflict in the pages of *The Courier*, but it was a losing battle that ended with the loss of all political representation for more than 20 years and a retreat into a ‘ghetto’ mentality. The BT&LC was regarded as the main bastion of the Left in regional Victoria and became a constant problem for the MTHC secretaries. It was subjected to constant surveillance by ASIO but unity still prevailed.

## **BT&LC in WWII**

The effects of this war were very different from those of WWI – the nature of the war itself against Fascism and Nazism and the immediate threat after the Japanese entry meant Australia’s shores were threatened. Unity of purpose was assisted by the state of the economy as Australia was a supplier of materials as well as soldiers: for the first time in a generation there was full employment.<sup>7</sup>

In August 1938, Attorney-General, Menzies spent several weeks on an official visit to Nazi Germany and strongly supported the appeasement policies of the British Government under Chamberlain, believing that war should be avoided at all costs.<sup>8</sup> A BT&LC resolution made clear their opposition to that view: “That in endorsing English Prime Minister Chamberlain’s actions, the Lyons Government was not expressing the

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4. “O’Collins, James Patrick,” *It’s an Honour*, Australian Government, 14 June 1980, accessed December 5, 2019.

5. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.”

6. Thomas Sheridan, *Mindful Militants: The Amalgamated Engineering Union in Australia 1920–1972* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

7. Peter Matthews, and Gordon Ford, eds. *Australian Trade Unions: Their Development, Structure and Horizons* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1968).

8. A. W. Martin, “Menzies, Sir Robert Gordon (Bob) (1894–1978),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 15, ed. John Ritchie (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), accessed December 5, 2019, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/menzies-sir-robert-gordon-bob-11111>.

opinion of a huge majority of the Australian people.”<sup>9</sup> With Lyons’ sudden death in April 1939, Menzies was elected leader and war was declared on 3 September 1939. In June 1940, the Menzies Government declared the CPA an illegal organisation under the National Security (Subversive Organisations) Regulations. During the period of illegality, the CPA grew rapidly. At the time it was banned, it had 4000 members; in the next two years, it reached 15,000, and 50,000 were reading its illegal press. The circulation of *The Catholic Worker* – which declared itself opposed to both Communism and Capitalism and edited by Santamaria – was initially 5000 a month, which rose to 55,000 a month in 1940.<sup>10</sup> The CPA maintained its existence without significant hindrance through the work of its front organisations despite varying levels of state repression and surveillance. One of those was the Soviet Friendship League (ASFL), and in September a motion that the BT&LC affiliate was carried,<sup>11</sup> although the ALP had banned members joining the league.<sup>12</sup> Rowe’s surveillance included a raid on his house by the forerunner of ASIO in 1940, and his wife’s hats were destroyed on the grounds that they might have been concealing seditious material.<sup>13</sup>

In August 1941, Menzies resigned the prime ministership because of disunity in the UAP’s ranks. The ALP, led by Curtin, won in October 1941, with the UAP electing Hughes as its leader. The BT&LC took out government bonds, invested in the Austerity Loan, donated to the Red Cross, and workers were exhorted to support the war loan.<sup>14</sup> A resolution was also carried that workers must be ready to bear arms beside the armed forces in an emergency, and that a detachment of workers in each factory be trained in a voluntary defence corps.<sup>15</sup>

In 1942, with Rowe re-elected president, Williams vice-president, Miller secretary and Black assistant secretary of the BT&LC, this executive was the most left wing in the Council’s history.<sup>16</sup> In August 1943 Curtin led the ALP to its greatest-ever victory, largely due to his handling of the war situation. The ALP won two-thirds of the seats in the House of Representatives with a two-party preferred vote of 58.2% and had a 17-seat

9. BT&LC Minutes, August 23, 1938.

10. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.”

11. BT&LC Minutes, September 4, 1941.

12. BT&LC Minutes, August 21, 1941.

13. Macintyre, *The Reds*, 398.

14. BT&LC Minutes, February, 19, May, 11, and November 12, 1942.

15. BT&LC Minutes, February 5, 1942.

16. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

swing. Menzies was elected Leader of the Opposition.<sup>17</sup> In December 1942, the Curtin ALP Government lifted the ban on the CPA. BT&LC urged full support for the war on Japan in 1943 and they endorsed a push for the British Government to set up a second front in Europe to help the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> In June 1943, Rowe was elected to the AEU's Commonwealth Council, which led to his move to Melbourne. His energy had been prodigious. In 1943, he ran for the CPA in the state election and a Ballarat Council by-election, including in his list of activities his membership of the Central Committee for Air Raid Prevention and his position as an area warden, a job that covered some 6000 people in the city. Geoffrey Blainey, who was at Ballarat High School at the time, remembers digging the trenches they ordered.<sup>19</sup> Tom Sheridan's highly regarded history of the AEU gives a detailed account of the later period of Rowe's life: "For the next 10 years 'Red Ted' Rowe was to be the stormy petrel of the AEU, personifying for his opponents what they saw as the sinister effects of Communism on the AEU."<sup>20</sup> After Rowe's move to Melbourne, Williams became president of the BT&LC.

During WWII, many workers were also air raid wardens and helped in the billeting of American soldiers in private homes when the war extended to the Pacific. At the BNRW, the war effort was supported by 11-hour shifts, and work was often continued on the weekend on essential military vehicles. The shop committee was active in raising help for the allied countries – food parcels for Britain and sheepskins for Russia – which raised over £100, and in appreciation, the Soviet embassy presented the BNRW with the Soviet flag.<sup>21</sup> As the federal government had requested that the Union Jack be flown with the national flag of the allies on their National Day, the Russian flag was enthusiastically hoisted on 7 November 1944, also the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. This brought into the open the underlying conflict that had been building in workplaces between the Groupers and the Militants. The Groupers tried to make an issue of the flag-raising and called on their supporters not to work on that day. Reports estimated that between three to 10 men out of 350 refused to work. The episode received publicity in the *Barrier Miner*<sup>22</sup> and the *Argus*.<sup>23</sup> Honouring the Soviet Union was not restricted to the

17. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

18. BT&LC Minutes, May 11, 1942.

19. *The Courier*, May 14, 2019.

20. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants*, 205.

21. A. C. Williams, "Ballarat North Workshops."

22. "Flag Incident at Workshop," *Barrier Miner*, November 9, 1944.

23. "Russian Flag Incident at Railway Workshop," *The Argus*, November 8, 1944.

BNRW. On the same page as the reporting of the Ballarat flag incident, there was a lengthy report of a dinner at the newly opened Australia–Soviet House in Melbourne to celebrate the 27th Anniversary of the Union of Soviet Republics. Jock Miles, secretary of the CPA, sat between a clergyman and a woman doctor, and the chief justice of Australia at the time, Sir John Latham, the lord mayor of Melbourne, and various archbishops attended.<sup>24</sup>

The Hospital Employees Union (HEF) General Hospital Division deserves mention here as they did attempt to engage women in the broader movement. On 17 February 1944, the first woman delegate, Mrs Gladys Conn, was admitted to the BT&LC representing the HEF which was noted in the minutes by the president as a precedent,<sup>25</sup> and then she was followed at the next meeting by the credentialling of Miss Olive Anderson who was representing the HEF No. 1 Division.<sup>26</sup> However there is no further evidence of Del. Conn or Anderson in the minutes after twelve months and no further mention of women as delegates until 1981.

### **The Cold War Comes to Ballarat**

The post-war period saw a marked change in community attitudes towards Communism. A growing mood of intolerance saw public accusation and denial becoming the method by which this was expressed. Two major national strikes – the Queensland railway strike and the NSW coal strike – also hardened attitudes. In Ballarat, the *Light* said: “The Queensland railway men like sheep came out and put their necks under the red axe, and for the next six weeks, Comrade Brown and the Reds barbequed the railway men over a slow fire.”<sup>27</sup> The Ballarat Church of England diocesan journal, the *Church Chronicle*, regarded “with dismay the increasing tendency to use the strike as a method of forcing claims; it is the Communists who are mainly responsible for these methods.”<sup>28</sup> Within the labour movement, three forces were in play: the Industrial Grouper unions, the Militants,

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24. Ibid.

25. BT&LC Minutes, February 17, 1944.

26. BT&LC Minutes, March 2, 1944.

27. “The Railway Strike,” *Light*, December 14, 1950.

28. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.”



which included the Communist unions, and Secretary Williams described the third group as left union leaders who were freemasons,<sup>29</sup> who gradually coalesced with the Militants.

In 1945, Australia had 2.1 million wage and salary earners of whom 1.2 million were members of trade unions with Communist influence.<sup>30</sup> The 1945 ACTU Congress is generally recognised as representing the height of Communist influence. It created a climate for anti-Communist organising within unions and gave impetus to Santamaria's wider political agenda.<sup>31</sup> In bodies such as the RSL, the practice of exposure and expulsion of Communists was adopted, which later became fashionable throughout the community.<sup>32</sup> In 1940, Hollway became the leader of the UAP and following the defeat of Cain's second ministry in 1947, became the premier and treasurer in a Liberal–Country Party coalition in the State Parliament. The alliance of conservative forces was able to build on those within the labour movement. Hollway was adept at using this division to his political advantage. But among Liberal politicians, he was exceptional in the extent to which he was prepared to co-operate with the right-wing section of the ALP. He enjoyed a good personal relationship with Secretary Stout from the MTHC,<sup>33</sup> who at that stage was as actively opposed to the Communists as he was.<sup>34</sup>

In 1949 as premier, Hollway established the Royal Commission into Communist Activities in Victoria. But Royal Commissioner Sir Charles Lowe stated in the Commission's report:

There was no evidence to show that the Communist Party was controlled from abroad. Funds came from various local sources, but there was no evidence that they came from overseas and of the 14 alleged cases of manipulation of union elections only one case had any substance.<sup>35</sup>

This finding was released in April 1950, the day after the Menzies Government introduced the Communist Party Dissolution Bill into the Federal Parliament.<sup>36</sup> It is no

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29. Video Interview of Beau Williams by Ross Fitzgerald in 1997 for *The Pope's Battalions*, provided by Kaye Williams.

30. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope's Battalions*.

31. Ibid.

32. Vicky Rastrick, "The Victorian Royal Commission on Communism, 1949–50: A Study of Anti-Communism in Australia" (PhD thesis, Australian National University, Canberra, 1973).

33. Kate White, "Hollway: An Atypical Liberal Leader?" *Politics* 13, no. 2 (1978), accessed March 15, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00323267808401673>.

34. Ibid.

35. Report of Royal Commission, *Inquiring into the Origins, Aims, Objects and Funds of the Communist Party in Victoria and Other Related Matters*, Parliament of Victoria, 1950.

36. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope's Battalions*.

coincidence that this report was released with convenient timing to avoid it being used to hinder the introduction of the Menzies Bill.

The Communist Party Dissolution Act was passed, but the legislation was declared unconstitutional by the High Court. The following year, after a double dissolution, Menzies reintroduced a bill to outlaw the Communist Party, and then in September 1951, he held a referendum to change the Constitution to enforce the Act. The “No” vote won 50.56 per cent to 49.44 per cent, with NSW, Victoria and South Australia supporting the “No” case.<sup>37</sup> An active part was taken in the “No” campaign by the BT&LC, but the majority voted “Yes” in Ballarat, compared to Bendigo where the “No” vote was conclusive.<sup>38</sup> The anti-Communist campaign fought out in *The Courier* and *Light* over a prolonged period had been part of setting the trend of public and private conservatism in Ballarat. *Light* lamented the loss and predicted that “the Red boys [were] likely to celebrate the victory by an extra special oversized strike.”<sup>39</sup> The editor blamed the defeat largely on the federal leader of the ALP, Dr Evatt. While anti-Communists found common cause with the Catholic Church, the RSL and other conservative elements, the BT&LC found new allies among civil libertarians.

From 1941 in Victoria, the Catholic Social Studies Movement (the Movement) had used parish priests to assist it in identifying unionists who would be sympathetic to the formation of anti-Communist groups within the trade unions. The priests compiled lists of Catholic union members in their parish, indexing them by trade, and then selecting those whom they thought would be suitable as activists in their workplaces, especially during election campaigns. Other duties included fundraising, promoting sales of *News Weekly* and being active in the ALP.<sup>40</sup> In September 1945, an extraordinary meeting of bishops discussed a paper prepared by Santamaria, as the head of Catholic Action, that advocated for a national industrial movement to overcome the Communist influence in the unions. The paper was circulated before the meeting and was accompanied by a letter from the Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. The bishops pledged £10,000 a year to establish a small staff in each state, with a subcommittee of Cardinal Gilroy of Sydney,

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37. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

38. Cleary, *Bendigo Labor: The Maintenance of Traditions in a Regional City* (Bendigo: Cleary, 1999), 127. Ballarat Yes 50.47%, No 49.5%; Bendigo Yes 46.76%, No 53.2%.

39. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers,” 25.

40. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions*.

Archbishop Mannix and Bishop O’Collins of Ballarat to liaise between the Movement and the bishops,<sup>41</sup> Gilroy giving O’Collins his proxy vote.<sup>42</sup> The number of members was somewhere between 5000 and 10,000, about half from Victoria.<sup>43</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Movement flourished in Ballarat. The views of the Catholic community were significantly shaped by the role played by Bishop O’Collins in his support of Santamaria, the National Civic Council (NCC), and later the DLP. Santamaria himself frequently referred to the support he received from Bishop O’Collins, dating back to the 1940s.<sup>44</sup> In his biography of Bishop O’Collins, McCarthy (the bishop’s nephew) says that establishing the Ballarat diocesan journal *Light* in 1942, with Father McInerney as its editor, confirmed the bishop’s strong support for the NCC and DLP.<sup>45</sup> Continuing under the editorship of Father George Pell, *Light* remained a vehicle for anti-Communist and conservative views.<sup>46</sup> A regular one-page feature “Industrial Front” would report on the activities of the unions. “The Man with the Candle” segment would exhort the congregation to support anti-Communist organisations such as the NCC, and regular space would report on the activities of domestic and international Communists and “fellow travellers”,<sup>47</sup> whom they had identified as particular unionists, politicians and peace activists.

The Groupers always participated at the BT&LC. Long-term unionists still remember the regular Thursday meetings being very well attended, with lively debates that continued throughout the 1950s. Jim Burns, an active DLP member and delegate from the Painters Union, was quick to make clear standing orders were always followed and recounted going trout fishing after a meeting with one of the militants.<sup>48</sup> He adds another dimension to these layers, stating that the Young Christian Workers (YCW) in Ballarat were opposed to Santamaria but many became active in the DLP under the leadership of Frank Brown, an ARU delegate to the BT&LC.<sup>49</sup>

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41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.”

44. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.”

45. William J. McCarthy, *James Patrick O’Collins: A Bishop’s Story* (Melbourne: Spectrum, 1996).

46. O’Connor, “They Did What They Were Asked to Do.”

47. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers,” 20.

48. Jim Burns, former BT&LC secretary, interview by author, November 12, 2019.

49. Ibid.

Williams initially joined the CPA in 1932 but left in 1947 as the party grew increasingly rigid in his view.<sup>50</sup> In 1952, he joined the ALP, which had also become divided on sectarian lines, although of a different sort, and in 1963, he even became the ALP candidate for the federal seat of Ballarat when it was a lost cause. Cleary, drawing on the many interviews he conducted, commented that the switch did not appear to change his relationship with the Communists at the BT&LC “but it highlighted the genuine altruism of the local Communists and why the Trades Hall remained a beacon of hope for the working-class.”<sup>51</sup> Betty Borchers stated that “there was nothing subversive about the local Communists; they were merely battling for the working class.”<sup>52</sup> Williams also identified a number of Catholics who always resisted the attempt by church leaders to interfere in the labour movement, including returning their membership of the Holy Name society. For Williams, unity was always uppermost. His other revealing comment was that he made sure the BT&LC did not create martyrs. As he said: “You can’t have too many martyrs – every martyr has friends.”<sup>53</sup> Those few words sum up the difference between the use of formal externally-derived authority and internal power dynamics, as Brigden defines it- ‘collective movement power’ and ‘power over’. While one tendency may have the ascendancy how they exercise that power is still shaped by the leadership who determine how unity is maintained. As outlined later in this chapter, during this period MTHC and Bendigo Trades and Labour Council maintained their authority by exercising ‘power over’ but BT&LC still maintained ‘collective movement’ power.

The Groupers’ leader who opposed Rowe in the BT&LC was Maurie Calnin, but he never garnered sufficient support to be part of the executive. Charlie Chung, and one the CPA group, had become secretary of the ARU and had support within the BNRW but was troubled by the Groupers among the station staff, the goods sheds and the track gangs.<sup>54</sup> When Chung enlisted in the army, the Militants lost control of the ARU to the Catholic Action group, who retained control until the split in 1955, cancelling their affiliation with the Trades Hall in 1940.<sup>55</sup> According to Merritt, the Holy Name Society provided some inspiration for the Grouper side which captured the local ARU branch.<sup>56</sup> However, Chung

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50. Adjournment Eureka Stockade. November 30, 2004.

51. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*, 107.

52. *Ibid.*, 195.

53. A. C. Williams, interviewed by Ross Fitzgerald, 1997.

54. A. C. Williams, “Ballarat North Workshops.”

55. *The Courier*, May 23, 1940; BT&LC Minutes May 30, 1940.

56. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants*.

noted some ingenuity regarding the Boilermakers Union being subverted from within. While the Blacksmiths Society had Andy Mooney, a Grouper representing them at the BT&LC, the plan for the Boilermakers went astray. The members soon won over the Grouper Mick Collins, who had been induced to attend union meetings:

Mick was a Sinn Feiner and knew all about the Troubles in Ireland and was basically a socialist, so the boilermakers made Mick the president of the union and he made a fine job of it supporting the militant line. The AEU had Maurie Calnin but he was never a match for Ted Rowe and any support that he gained came from outside the workshops.<sup>57</sup>

Calnin also stood for a full-time position in the AEU and was defeated in a close ballot in 1949. While the Groupers captured the local ARU branch early, the Left always kept control of the AEU. Merritt, however, makes the interesting point that neither side had the initiative on militancy, and that the constituency that had elected and re-elected Communist organisers also elected and re-elected anti-Communist organisers and merit as industrial militants was the common characteristic valued by the members.<sup>58</sup> This seems to be another example of the internal dynamics determining that the ‘collective movement’ was more important than union officials attempting to shape election outcome by exercising ‘power over’.

In 1945 while the Grouper faction could make no progress at the BT&LC, it did control the Ballarat ALP branch, and Secretary Miller, continued as campaign secretary with endorsement from the BT&LC.<sup>59</sup> In the same year another BT&LC delegate, Black stood at the state election for the CPA, his vote dropped to 5 per cent and Hollway was again elected.<sup>60</sup> *The Courier* hardened its attitude towards the BT&LC. This was also reflected in the opinions expressed in the Letters to the Editor section by authors such as “True Aussie”.<sup>61</sup> The progressive editors of old were gone and the BT&LC was regularly accused of Communist domination. In 1946, the BT&LC called for a more neutral attitude in election reporting, and if no improvements were made in this area, the paper would be declared “black”.<sup>62</sup> The Letters to the Editor section was used for editorial purposes, so the divisions within the BT&LC were played out in full public gaze. A letter

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57. Chung, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 5.

58. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants*.

59. BT&LC Minutes, October 25, 1945.

60. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

61. *The Courier*, February 2, 1951.

62. BT&LC Minutes, November 21, 1946.

from delegate Tom Crowe, supported by an editorial<sup>63</sup> was followed by a letter from delegate Black, who claimed that Crowe’s letter “marked a real milestone in the Labor-splitting career of that gentleman.”<sup>64</sup>

The BT&LC directed that unauthorised statements could not be made to the press by delegates and disassociated itself from that attack.<sup>65</sup> However, unauthorised material continued to appear. Hostility at the BT&LC meetings did occur on one occasion in March 1950 when delegates Lancaster and Williams came to blows. Although eyewitnesses “saw nothing and heard nothing”, the delegates were censured and warned that further unseemly conduct would be dealt with.<sup>66</sup> In 1950, *The Courier* suggested that the BT&LC spent “more time on matters of no concern to unionists in discussing international affairs than on important local matters.”<sup>67</sup>

The challenge to *The Courier* to publish a full report of all the BT&LC’s decisions and allow the public to decide<sup>68</sup> was, unsurprisingly, not accepted. In 1951, the BT&LC banned *The Courier* reporter from its meetings,<sup>69</sup> which added to its isolation from the broader community. *The Courier* editorial in April 1951 on the federal election was blunt: “As the federal election proceeds, it becomes clear as many electors feared, the issue will be one of all-out Socialism and otherwise. The socialistic aims of the Labor Party, wholeheartedly supported by the Reds that it professes to fight,”<sup>70</sup> gives an indication of the climate the labour movement faced.

Gil Duthie – a Methodist minister (and another with a Ballarat connection as he attended Ballarat High School) was removed from his parish in South Gippsland for his left-wing views. He became the long-time ALP Federal Member for Wilmot, described a physical altercation in the House between Reg Pollard and Jack Mullens over support for the referendum to ban the CPA in 1951.<sup>71</sup> Mullens became one of the seven Victorians to join

63. *The Courier*, September 19, 1947.

64. *The Courier*, September 24, 1947.

65. BT&LC Minutes, October 2, 1947.

66. BT&LC Minutes, March 23, 1950.

67. *The Courier*, July 11, 1950.

68. BT&LC Minutes, July 13, 1950.

69. *The Courier*, February 2, 1951.

70. *The Courier*, April 16, 1951.

71. Gil Duthie, *I Had 50,000 Bosses: Memoirs of a Labor Backbencher, 1946–1975* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1984).

the DLP in 1955, and Pollard was the Member for Ballarat from 1937 to 1949 and a good friend of the BT&LC.<sup>72</sup>

Groupers tried to take action to quash what they perceived to be destructive Communist influence. In 1948 a group of delegates moved “to consider that the Communist Party is a disruptive element in the trade union movement... and urge all unionists to strike at their first opportunity to remove all such individuals from executive positions in their unions.” This motion was lost as was the motion to form an anti-communist movement within the TLC which the executive declared would be in direct breach of the objects of the council.<sup>73</sup> At the BT&LC, the most provocative attack concerned allegiance to the King. In March 1950, Grouper delegates Carter and Hughes moved that a photograph of the King be purchased and hung above the chair. Delegates would have to take an oath of allegiance to the King before being allowed to take their place in the chamber.<sup>74</sup> This was indeed a shift in allegiances for previously anti-British Catholics who had seen Archbishop Mannix held in London by the British government for more than a year in 1920 because of his advocacy for Irish Home Rule.<sup>75</sup> The photograph issue was debated for a month and twice referred to the MTHC executive, who quite wisely invoked the spirit of fraternalism rather than hierarchy and advised that the BT&LC should determine its own actions, and at a subsequent meeting, said that members of the BT&LC were masters of their own destiny.<sup>76</sup> In June 1950, Carter still pressed for a compulsory declaration of allegiance to the King to include “that the signatory of the declaration shall resist His Majesty’s enemies from overseas or from wherever they may come.”<sup>77</sup> While the motion was lost, the RSL still donated a photo of the King.<sup>78</sup> Although not recorded in the minutes, anecdotes suggest that on the death of the king in 1952 the photo was removed and no replacement with the new queen appeared. The interference of the RSL, an unrelated organisation, in the BT&LC showed the depth of animosity at the time.

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72. Barry O. Jones, “Pollard, Reginald Thomas (1894–1981),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 18, ed. Melanie Nolan (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2012), accessed August 12, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/pollard-reginald-thomas-15473>.

73. BT&LC Minutes, June 14, 1948

74. BT&LC Minutes, March 23, 1950.

75. Niall, *Mannix*.

76. Melbourne Trades Hall Council Executive Minutes, May 4, 1950 and May 25, 1950, 1/2/1/23, University of Melbourne Archives.

77. BT&LC Minutes, May 16, 1950.

78. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.”

Numerous records from the times noted political discussion in large workplaces and as workers travelled to work by bicycle. Norm Borchers reported bitter arguments.<sup>79</sup> Written in 1950, Frank Hardy's book *Power Without Glory* was another weapon used by the Militants to discredit the Groupers. The novel used the thinly disguised pseudonym of "John West" to portray John Wren, a close friend of Archbishop Mannix, as a corrupt manipulator of the gambling industry and of governments. Much of the book was printed in secret, and the first edition of 8000 copies sold out within a month. Vic Little, a printer and later the BT&LC fraternal delegate to the MTHC, was one of the main activists behind the scenes. Hardy was charged with criminal libel but was acquitted in 1951.<sup>80</sup> The BT&LC invited Hardy to speak at a Council meeting in June 1953.<sup>81</sup> Lew Bird had the task of driving Hardy back to Melbourne and reported that they stopped at every pub on the way and drank the money donated to the guest before they got to Melbourne, but they had made their point.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the defeat of the referendum in 1951, Menzies' anti-Communist campaign did not abate. In the lead-up to the 1954 election, the defection from the Soviet Embassy, in spectacular fashion, by Vladimir Petrov and his wife impacted on the ALP in the 1954 election.<sup>83</sup> Petrov's information was also used to justify the establishment of a Royal Commission into Espionage, which commenced in 1954. The findings were limited but reinforced Menzies' image as the anti-Communist Cold War warrior and in Ballarat entrenched his standing as the mainstay of Empire.

There has always been a strand of intellectuals and independent thinkers who have been influential in Ballarat and around whom like-minded people coalesced, going back to the days of 'Tommy Touchstone' and the Lazarus family. Many of them, such as the Aronsons, were staunch supporters of the BT&LC. Their house became a hub of left activism in Ballarat. In 1939, Dave and Alice Aronson took over the office of Mark Lazarus and Sons.<sup>84</sup> In the 1930s, Aronson had been part of "The Swanston Family", which was a group of left-wing activists. Writers Judah Waten, Alan Marshall and Vance

79. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

80. Paul Adams, "Francis Joseph (Frank) Hardy (1917–1994)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 19 (Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2018), accessed May 5, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hardy-francis-joseph-frank-19531>.

81. BT&LC Minutes, June 25, 1953.

82. Burns, interview by author.

83. Ibid.

84. Faine, *Taken on Oath*.



and Nettie Palmer, as well as artists such as Yosl Bergner, Noel Counihan and Vic O'Connor, became lifelong friends as the many phone calls recorded in his ASIO file attest.<sup>85</sup>

When war broke out, Aronson enlisted, refusing the routine offer of a commission to those who had degrees. His wife, Alice, a member of a local Ballarat Jewish family, the Abrahams, and only the second woman admitted to the Bar in Victoria, carried on the practice. They had met when they were both campaigning against Franco's fascists. It was unique – husband and wife practising together and both being politically radical. The Aronsons supported the Ballarat labour movement not only through their practice, especially representing the BT&LC and workers with compensation claims, generous donations to candidates and fundraising, but also by their sponsorship of the weekly *Labor Speaks* in *The Courier* and broadcast on 3BA and on which Alice was a regular speaker. 3BA banned broadcasts by the CPA in 1945.<sup>86</sup> Their close friendship group included the CPA members of the BT&LC. The Aronsons viewed this period as having copied quite a savage anti-Communist campaign that had been taking place simultaneously in the USA, where the notorious House Un-American Activities Committee and the McCarthy Senate committee were holding their inquisitions.<sup>87</sup> Dave Aronson's obituary tells of a lifelong activist for ordinary people:

A firm believer in law not only as a great protector of individuals, but part of a wider political struggle, he attended his first political meeting at the age of 12 and at his death, aged 83, was still fighting the workers' cause representing ex-service personnel in the Maralinga case.<sup>88</sup>

The National Archives of Australia has a number of ASIO files on individual Ballarat citizens, which includes subscribers to *Our Women*, the Union of Australian Women's magazine, and a large file on the Ballarat Communist Party, including BT&LC delegates. Alice Aronson, has a note on her file that says she "is accepted to be a Communist by the

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85. Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch, File No. A6122, Security and Intelligence Records, National Archives of Australia (Canberra, 1945–1954).

86. BT&LC Minutes, March 15, 1945.

87. Faine, *Taken on Oath*.

88. Fran Hogan, "Obituary – David Aronson," *Plaintiff*, April, 1999. Hogan later became a County Court Judge.

average person in Ballarat.”<sup>89</sup> However, most telling is the report to the officer-in charge, Special Branch, on 21 January 1954:

As instructed, I visited the City of Ballarat. I contacted six informants. Most activity is centred around the local trades hall and railways. During my enquiries, I visited the local State Electricity Commission, the Base Hospital, the postal establishment, the Ballarat brewery, and I also contacted persons who were familiar with the political trend within the Victorian Railways, Tramways and Trades Hall.<sup>90</sup>

Included in the surveillance by Special Branch was those who organised around the issue of peace. This group also included many BT&LC delegates, not members of the CPA, while surveillance of the industrial unit of the CPA at the BNRW continued, although Rowe went to Melbourne in 1943 and Williams left the CPA in the mid-40s, their activities continued to be recorded by ASIO.<sup>91</sup>

While Ballarat had active peace organisations in the 1930s, similarly made up of a mix of unionists, clergy, BT&LC, Communists and radical intellectuals, the Australian Peace Council (APC), established in July 1949, became the target for conservatives. In 1952, ASIO reported that the APC had made arrangements for a speaker in Ballarat who would dine at the residence of Mr and Mrs Aronson before the meeting.<sup>92</sup> Another report stated:

It is known he (Aronson) is a leader of the local APC, and at his private home, Aronson is in the habit of conducting film shows that are aimed at furthering the ends of the Peace movement. These films appear to be well attended and collections of money to assist the Peace Council have been taken there. I was given to understand that when these films are shown, there is always a good collection of cars parked in the near vicinity of the house and subsequently a list of the car numbers were sent on to add to his file.<sup>93</sup>

His wife, Alice, committed even more “dreadful” crimes. Her file stated:

This person is the wife of David Aronson and is also a solicitor by profession. During the year 1942 she took an active part in assisting the Communists in the Ballarat Trades Hall on the issue of facilities for women, i.e. creches etc. She is

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89. Chung, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

90. Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch. Security and Intelligence Records, National Archives of Australia Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch, File No. A6122. Those publicly released were Lew Bird, Lorna Bird, George Barrett, Bernard Connolly, John Clifford Restarick, Dave Aronson, Edward Rowe, Isobel Dowling, and Alice Aronson.

91. Ibid.

92. David Aronson, A6274, Vol. 1, 1954–1985, Security and Intelligence Records, National Archives of Australia.

93. Ibid.

active in the Peace movement, being present at meetings conducted *in her husband's home* [emphasis added].<sup>94</sup>

In contrast, Kenneth Baird who also attended these events is listed in the ASIO file but is described in the following way:

He mixes well amongst the upper classes. He comes from an old Ballarat family who have always been considered to hold conservative politics [*sic*]. He is not considered to possess Communistic tendencies, yet he was known to have left-wing views and was also a generous donor to the ALP.<sup>95</sup>

The Catholic Diocese journal '*Light*' asserted that the CPA had recruited "dupes and dopes from nearly every class and type of Australian, layman and cleric, larrikin and lawyer."<sup>96</sup> These recruits soon became the "parlour pinks, fellow travellers [and] Commobuts (I'm not a Communist but ...) that joined the peace movement."<sup>97</sup> Not only ASIO but Stout, the MTHC secretary, and Clarey, the ACTU president, worked closely with the Movement from 1942 onwards, informing it of areas where Communist successes threatened. By the end of WWII, an anti-Communist faction had openly emerged on the floor of the MTH,<sup>98</sup> but it had been clear at the BT&LC from the mid-1930s.

Fitzgerald suggests the membership of another conservative clandestine organisation—The Association, may have been as high as 100,000, with Sir Thomas Blamey still its titular head.<sup>99</sup> The Association distrusted any government instrumentality that owed allegiance to the "socialist" ALP government, especially Attorney-General Evatt, despite Chifley's determination to put the Communist-led miners in their place. Liberal politician Richard Casey acted as an intermediary between the Association, the industrial groups and Liberal Party leaders Menzies and Magnus Cormack.<sup>100</sup> While Ballarat was not the only place subjected to this sort of surveillance, it worked. Many people retreated from public engagement and disengaged from debate at their workplaces.

94. Alice Aronson, File No. A6119, Vol. 1, 1954–1985, Security and Intelligence Records, National Archives of Australia.

95. Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch, File No. A6122.

96. Hurley, "Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers," 30. Quoting from *Light*, November, 1951.

97. Ibid.

98. Sheridan, *Mindful Militants*.

99. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope's Battalions*.

100. Andrew Moore, "Fascism Revived? The Association Stands Guard, 1947/52," *Labour History* 74 (1998), accessed August 12, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27516556>.

The split in the political wing headed for the predictable ending. Precipitated by an ALP National Executive enquiry into the Victorian ALP branch and the decision to hold a special Victorian conference in February 1955 to elect a new state executive to lead into the National Conference in Hobart in March 1955, the Victorian branch cracked wide open. At the Hobart conference, seven Victorian federal MPs and 18 state MPs were expelled from the ALP.<sup>101</sup> In the Victorian election in May 1955, the Liberal Party, led by Henry Bolte, won a majority in its own right and *The Courier* was pleased by the suggestion he was hinting that decisive action would be taken against the “Reds” at the BT&LC.<sup>102</sup>

### **Power and Influence in Post WWII Ballarat**

The Conscription and Depression splits in the labour movement “were precipitated by the pressures of office in times of crisis, with the party torn over the dilemma of where Labor governments owed their ultimate allegiance: nation or class. The 1950s Split was different.”<sup>103</sup> While often framed around issues of belief, this was also about positions of power and influence in a large regional city. The contributing factors were different and complex. There were powerful competing personalities, regional variations and the Cold War was polarising the world.

Ballarat as a ‘Place’ is a central aspect in considering this period of BT&LC history. It reflected a specific series of social relationships and the development of a particular identity that framed industrial relations. The long association between Australian Irish Catholics and the ALP is well documented. A breakdown of those of Irish heritage in the federal caucus is informative: in 1901, it was 12 per cent; in 1931, 33 per cent; in 1941, 44 per cent; and in 1951, 40 per cent, while the long-term average for Catholics in the Australian community was around 25 per cent.<sup>104</sup> Contrary to popular perception, Catholics in Ballarat were a smaller group than the state average, making up 17.5 per cent of the population while a predominantly Protestant community of 70.4 per cent in 1933 was evenly spread between conformists and non-conformists. Approximately 13 per cent did not state a religion during the period. All the figures remained stable until the 1954

101. McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*.

102. *The Courier*, May 21, 1955.

103. Costar, Love, and Strangio (eds), *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective*, viii.

104. *Ibid*.

Australian Census.<sup>105</sup> Peter Love has noted that ‘as the only party not conspicuously tainted with sectarian prejudices, Labor provided a natural home and an outlet for their political aspirations.’<sup>106</sup> While the original alignment was based around their socio-economic position, anti-British feelings and the encouragement of their church leaders, by the 1950s there was a substantial Catholic middle-class and a significant section of the church hierarchy in Victoria was prepared to openly oppose the ALP.<sup>107</sup> By 1950 Ballarat was a very different place than the one Scullin had made his mark on in 1913. The local newspaper was conservative, as was the local Catholic monthly newsletter, *Light*, a major difference being that *The Courier* was not known for any criticism of capitalism, unlike *Light* which reflected Catholic concern for the effects of both capitalism and socialism.<sup>108</sup>

As Heather O’Connor states in her thesis on the role of womens’ religious orders in Ballarat: “Ballarat in the 1950s could be described as a somewhat self-satisfied, comfortable city, dominated by conservative elected officials whose power and influence was challenged but not threatened by a labour movement steeped in history, but mired in division...”<sup>109</sup> The social divisions were reinforced by a strong private school structure. The marriage of Jessie (later mayor of the City of Ballarat) and Gordon Scott (later mayor of the City of Ballarat and local MLA) was a typical outcome of such a social structure. As Jessie Scott said: “I was still at Queens Grammar School when I was invited to a Ballarat College Prefects’ Dance and I’m afraid it was love at first sight. I was 18 and Gordon was 10 months older.”<sup>110</sup> Social ties were thus cemented through the private school network and the prime real estate location on Wendouree Parade, also segmented by religion to a certain extent related to the location of the churches and schools- another example of spatial fix.

Catholic families were prominent in business, legal and accounting firms, as well as there being leading Catholic doctors, dentists, and chemists in the community, but with the

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105. Hurley, “Catholics, Communists and Fellow Travellers.” Appendix.

106. *Ibid.*, 2. Love drew on figures from Leslie F. Crisp’s *The Australian Federal Labour Party, 1901–1951* (London: Longmans, Green, 1955).

107. Declan O’Connell and John Warhurst. “Church and Class: (Irish-Australian Labour Loyalties and the 1955 Split).” *Saothar* 8 (1982): 46–57.

108. O’Connor, “They Did What They Were Asked to Do.”

109. Heather O’Connor, “They Did What They Were Asked to Do: An Historical Analysis of the Contribution of Two Women’s Religious Institutes within the Educational and Social Development of the City of Ballarat, with Particular Reference to the Period 1950–1980” (PhD thesis, Australian Catholic University, Ballarat Campus, 2010), 37.

110. Jessie Scott, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983, Tape 96.

exception of Murray Byrne MLC and James Coghlan,<sup>111</sup> they did not seek public office, although their names frequently appeared as local leaders in civic affairs, fundraising and charitable pursuits.<sup>112</sup> Whether it was the distancing from politics that had developed from the Scullin era that inhibited this occurring, it has not been well documented. For Catholics, perhaps their concentration in the professions also meant that their economic interests were not being impacted by local government in the same way as the leading Protestants, who, as real estate agents and developers, featured strongly in the Council Chambers. Prominent Protestant businessmen and landowners in Ballarat dominated local and state government until the 1970s, many of whom continued as councillors for long periods, often being returned in uncontested elections. An examination by Bate of the records of the City of Ballarat and the Shire of Ballarat between 1950 and 1980 reveals a consistent pattern of voters returning businessmen, real estate agents, developers and wealthy tradesmen to the two councils.<sup>113</sup>

Until the 1970s, the city had its own recognizable local “aristocracy”, both Catholic and non-Catholic, whose membership dominated the “select” sporting and other clubs segregated by religion such as the Ballarat Club, and the Ballarat, Buninyong and Mt Xavier golf clubs,<sup>114</sup> where they intersected with other community leaders, all of whom shared similar backgrounds. As *The Courier* put it in 2002:

These clubs offered a form of networking in pleasant and tranquil surrounds decades before that term became fashionable. And, it would be fair to say, many civic and commercial initiatives that have helped shape this city have had their incubation in the wine room of the Ballarat Club.<sup>115</sup>

However post WWII, these “initiatives” did not include protecting the interests of the labour movement. Networking also occurred at the BTH and the Railways Institute, but it did not result in discernible public benefit for the labour movement.

Up until the 1950s most Ballarat children were brought up in strong religious households, going to church or mass as a family every Sunday. For a girl this meant living with her parents, until leaving on the arm of her father, to be handed over to a husband of the same religion whom she would promise to “cherish and obey” as the prevailing pattern. The

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111. Murray Byrne MLC 1958–1976; James Coghlan, Mayor City of Ballarat 1992–93.

112. O’Connor, “They Did What They Were Asked to Do.”

113. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

114. O’Connor, “They Did What They Were Asked to Do.”

115. *The Courier*, January 4, 2002.

boy's role also was to join his father's workplace, whether at Ronaldson & Tippets or the Railways Workshop and join his lodge or if it was a Catholic household there were a different set of workplaces to choose from and the YCW and Knights of the Southern Cross. On Saturday night Catholics went to the St. Pat's dance, and the Protestants went to the Town Hall. In Ballarat, it also meant going home with your new husband or wife for Mum's Sunday roast, restaurants were for "toffs."

Most women knew their place in whichever part of Ballarat they lived. Restarick, a CPA member and the BT&LC president in 1946, commented that "Married women didn't work. Their idea was you got a boyfriend, and when you got married, you didn't have to worry, so you left."<sup>116</sup> As many jobs were not available to married women they left because they had no choice, Without irony, he then said: "I thought Ballarat was just about the right size for being able to engage in any sporting or cultural activity without having to rush halfway around the world and nearly everybody used to come home for lunch,"<sup>117</sup> which, of course, depended on the wife being there with the cooked meal and the cricket pants or the shirt ready for the next sporting or cultural activity.

Doug Cotton recounted the following episode:

Several young wives of the men from the Ballarat North Workshops got part-time work in one of the afternoon tea places. They'd only earn little, but the husbands of these poor lassies were just taken aside and told if you continue to allow your wife to work, you will be thrown into the lake every night until they stop. They continued to work, so word got around and these poor unfortunates – three or four men – came out with their bicycles and all the eyes in the shops were watching them as they jumped on their bikes and rode off down the street. Then all hell broke loose and they were descended upon by these workers, who herded them down Macarthur Street to that little jetty that is there, carried them out there and gave them a little lecture, to much shouting and cheering, and tossed them in. They were told that if these women did not stop that work and allow some young person who didn't have a job to take their jobs, it would happen every night.<sup>118</sup>

While this was still in the context of the belief in the 1907 Higgins's Harvester Judgement, which determined a fair and reasonable wage for a working man to support a family of five (in 1907 he set that at for an unskilled labourer at seven shillings a day), these attitudes remained entrenched in Ballarat. Lake's assertion: "When Justice Higgins decreed in the Harvester judgement of 1907 that a man should be paid sufficient to keep a

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116. Restarick, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

117. *Ibid.*

118. Doug Cotton, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project*, interview 71, 1983.

wife and three children in ‘frugal comfort’, he was locking men into breadwinning just as surely as he was confirming women in dependency”<sup>119</sup> played out in Ballarat until the late 1960s. Until 1969, Higgins’s ruling was the basis for setting Australia’s minimum wage standards that enabled employers to pay women a minimum rate of pay that was at least 25 per cent less than for male employees who were doing the same or similar work.

### **Twenty Five Years in Exile for the Political Wing**

In April 1955, Joshua was one of seven Victorian members of the Federal Parliament who were expelled from the ALP and went on to form the ALP (A-C), later the DLP, becoming its federal President.<sup>120</sup> In 1955 Joshua declined an offer from then prime minister Menzies not to run a Liberal candidate for Ballarat, although the seat was a marginal one and Menzies’ proposal might have secured his return.<sup>121</sup> So Dudley Erwin comfortably won Ballarat in 1955, with the support of ALP A-C preferences, and held the seat until he retired in 1975.<sup>122</sup> Isobel Dowling, wife of the ALP candidate for the 1955 election, Austin Dowling, recalled the marvellous support given by the small group of ALP members during an election they knew they would lose. The “Don’t Vote for Commo Dowling” sign painted on the Ballarat Showgrounds fence amused Dowling, and it remained for many years as a memento.<sup>123</sup> Norm Borchers and Max Hocking claimed the BT&LC was a symbol of hope in times of distress, which people turned to and working-class people would rather go to than an office of a Liberal member given that there were no local ALP politicians.<sup>124</sup> However, the BT&LC’s power and influence had become diminished.

Although the Canberra press gallery dubbed him “Deadly Dudley”, Erwin’s career prospered in the 1960s thanks to the buffer of Joshua. Joshua continued to stand at five subsequent federal elections, each time ensuring Erwin won comfortably. It took a further three terms to win the seat back for the ALP. However, the DLP vote in Ballarat was not substantially different from its vote across Victoria, usually about one per cent higher

119. Lake, “Historical Reconsiderations IV,” 130.

120. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions*.

121. Browne, “Joshua.”

122. I. R. Hancock, “Erwin, George Dudley (1917–1984),” in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 17, ed. Diane Langmore (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), accessed August 19, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/erwin-george-dudley-12464>.

123. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

124. *Ibid.*



than the state average. Figure 7 shows the popular following for Joshua and demonstrates how his and the DLP voting patterns in Ballarat contributed to the continuing frustration and animosity of the labour movement against the powerful hold of conservative forces in Ballarat.

	Liberal Candidate	Primary %	ALP Candidate	Primary %	DLP Candidate	Primary %	Liberal 2 pp %	ALP 2 pp%
1955	D.Erwin	38.2	A.Dowling	38.1	R.Joshua	23.7	57.9	
1958	D.Erwin	39.9	D.Drummond	42.8	R.Joshua	17.2	55.4	
1961	D.Erwin	42.8	A.C. Keane	38.5	R.Joshua	17.9	59.9	
1963	D.Erwin	48.2	'Beau' Williams	36.8	R.Joshua	14.9	59.9	
1966	D.Erwin	49.4	D. J. Pollock	34.9	R.Joshua	15.6	63.8	
1969	D.Erwin	44.0	D. J. Pollock	39.3	R.Joshua	13.6	59.0	
1972	D.Erwin	41.8	D.G. Williams	45.7	A.Balkin	12.6	53.5	
1974	D.Erwin	45.9	D.G. Williams	43.7	B.Hanrahan	7.5	54.8	
1975	J.Short	50.9	D.G. Williams	39.1	B.Hanrahan	4.0	58.9	
1977	J.Short	48.0	N.Baker	37.0	Griffin	5.0	52.3	
1980	J.Short	46.0	J Mildren	45.2	J Cotter	3.2		50.7

Figure 8. Federal election results for the seat of Ballarat from 1955 to 1980. Source: Australian Electoral Commission.

Robert Joshua joined the ALP because he supported bank nationalisation, and in 1951, he was urged by Sheehan to “have a go” for the federal seat.<sup>125</sup> After a bitter preselection, Joshua was defeated by a local teacher and a previous candidate, Kevin Glover, 344 to 284, but the result was overturned by the VCE. At that time, affiliated union members who paid the political levy with their union membership were entitled to vote in preselections for which they needed a receipt or a “pence” card from the union.<sup>126</sup> Union members had been told by their officials that they could vote without these documents, given that lists had been supplied to the returning officer, but the result was declared

125. Ibid.

126. Don Henderson, email, CFMEU 4 April 2020.

invalid; Glover was declared ineligible to stand when nominations reopened and Joshua won preselection.<sup>127</sup>

Not only did the VCE rule out Glover and install Joshua, it decided to expel another candidate for preselection, Jack Henry, president of the BT&LC from the ALP.

Obviously this was an attack on the BT&LC, as most of the allegations related to the BT&LC and union matters, which emphasised that the VCE regarded that Ballarat was a major battleground. While many people agreed Joshua was a good candidate, the episode left a very bitter taste in the mouth at the BT&LC.<sup>128</sup> In 1951, Joshua was elected to the federal seat of Ballarat, where he defeated Pittard, the sitting Liberal member, by winning 51.2 per cent of the vote; he also held it again comfortably in 1954. Joshua's politics and religious beliefs were not easy to classify – his father was a non-practising Jew, his mother a non-conformist, he married a Catholic, and he became a devout Anglican.<sup>129</sup>

At first glance, the biography of Sheehan, the last state member of parliament to have his office in Trades Hall, suggests a pedigree that would have guaranteed his political future; however, his path was not to be easy. Sheehan was caught in the turmoil and had one of the shortest-lived experiences in the parliament, becoming the minister for housing for three weeks before the Split, but a ministerial role not achieved by any of his Ballarat predecessors. Born in 1916, Scullin was his godfather, his mother and Scullin's wife were great friends, his father was a union official and he attended St Patrick's College, where he matriculated.<sup>130</sup> He learned his debating skills in the school's Literary and Debating Society, and as a student teacher he made his first political speech supporting the ALP candidate for Hampden. After attending Melbourne Teachers' College in 1936, he completed a BA Dip Ed, and was President of the Student Council. He joined the Rushworth ALP branch in 1940, and, after war service in New Guinea, was appointed to Ballarat High School. Sheehan became an executive member of the RSL in 1950, he was

127. Saffin Papers, Ballarat (a) The Glover Case, 259.

128. BT&LC Minutes, February 7, 1952.

129. Geoff Browne, "Joshua, Robert (1906–1970)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 14, ed. John Ritchie (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), accessed August 12, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/joshua-robert-10647>.

130. Jack Sheehan, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project* interview, 1983; Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

also in the National Theatre, was an A grade tennis player and a club delegate for the Ballarat Association.<sup>131</sup>

On his return to Ballarat after his service in WWII, Sheehan joined the Grouper-controlled Ballarat ALP branch, which had a membership of approximately 50 to 60. He was soon being noticed. In 1949, the then prime minister, Ben Chifley, spoke at the Ballarat Town Hall in support of Ray Hyatt, the ALP candidate (and Postal Union delegate to BT&LC), and Sheehan moved a vote of thanks to him. Chifley asked him afterwards whether he was interested in politics. He replied: “Yes, but of course, for a teacher there’s many aspects of federal politics to be considered.” Chifley said: ‘You’re cut out for it, young man. Think about the federal seat one day.’<sup>132</sup> After losing in 1950 to Hollway, Sheehan remained undeterred. The president of his campaign committee was Joshua and the secretary was Tom Carter, the BT&LC delegate from the Tramways Union, who both later defected to the DLP.<sup>133</sup> In 1952, Hollway was expelled from the LCP on the redistribution issue and made the shock decision to move from Ballarat to contest the seat of Glen Iris, which then left an opportunity for Sheehan to capitalise on, which he duly did to become part of the first majority ALP Government in Victoria.<sup>134</sup> While *The Courier* had used Evatt’s visit to Ballarat to describe Sheehan as “a defender of Communism” and believed that electors would be opposed to “oligarchic socialism” and would vote to keep out influences adverse to country welfare,<sup>135</sup> it was proven wrong, and in 1952, the ALP exceeded its position of 1929 when Sheehan was elected to the Legislative Assembly and Jack Jones elected to the Legislative Council to become the first representative of Ballarat Province, the first upper house election where adult franchise applied. The victory of Hollway was another surprise for *The Courier*.<sup>136</sup>

However, the Cain ALP Government (1952–1955) was always hampered by the deepening sectarian divisions, and by the time Sheehan had been appointed the minister for housing on 1 April 1955, after the expulsion of the Barry-Coleman group, a no confidence motion in the Assembly was soon carried on 20 April. With a deep sense of loyalty to John Cain Snr., Sheehan spoke against the motion, outlining the Cain

131. Jack Sheehan, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

132. *Ibid.*, 5.

133. *Ibid.*

134. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

135. *The Courier*, December 5, 1952.

136. *The Courier*, December 8, 1952.

Government's achievements, and in response to an interjection from the Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist) leader Bill Barry, he stated that he had been in the ALP since he was 17, was dedicated to its cause, and railed against the outside influences involved in "the Split". When he was accused of "following the Communist line" before his loyalty to Australia, Sheehan replied that he was still a reserve officer of Her Majesty's forces and that he would mobilise immediately if the security of the country was threatened.<sup>137</sup> The Split in the ALP was formalised, and the Ballarat seat was divided into two. Contesting Ballarat South, Sheehan was defeated by Scott with the aid of Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist) preferences. The Australian Labor Party (Anti-Communist) became the DLP in 1957. Ballarat South was not regained for the ALP until 1982 when Frank Sheehan won at his fourth attempt.

Although ending on opposite sides after the Split, Joshua matched Sheehan for memory loss when he claimed:

He did not know NCC members. Secretaries and officials of official parties could not be members, but (DLP) party members and NCC members were as close in feelings and spirit to make that question almost a technicality. He denied it was a Catholic Party and said "I can see no fault in any man as long as he acts sensibly in a way you can understand." From his viewpoint, those men were free from bigotry and were inspired by their personal ideals, which happened to coincide in motive and aim.<sup>138</sup>

In an interview, Sheehan's similar dismissal is not surprising, but has to be understood in his role of maintaining some semblance of unity among the warring factions:

At that particular time in Victorian history, Labor was united, although there were rumblings that the action of the right wing was gaining too much power. "I saw no sign of any of this".<sup>139</sup>

Burns, BT&LC president then secretary, was expelled from the DLP for the temerity of mentioning Santamaria's name at a DLP conference and then agreeing to debate with Santamaria on The 7.30 Report. Santamaria did not turn up but DLP Senator Jack Little did and asserted he did not know Santamaria although Burns on the receiving end knew that he was in Santamaria's office "every other day".<sup>140</sup>

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137. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

138. Saffin Papers, interview with Robert Joshua. Robert Joshua approved of this version of the interview by signing the transcript.

139. Sheehan, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

140. Burns, interview by author.

In Ballarat after 1955, the Protestant and Catholic middle class were on the same side, which guaranteed that the ALP did not hold the federal seat of Ballarat for 25 years. Families (and neighbours and friends) divided strongly on political issues and the role that Church authorities played in shaping those issues. The father of former Victorian premier, Bracks, joined the DLP, along with many other Catholic families in 1955, and “Bracks junior admitted to many spirited political discussions around the family kitchen table during his teenage years and later.”<sup>141</sup> These events split the cohesive Catholic church of the 1930s. At Sunday mass in the late 1950s at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Sheehan’s supporters sat on one side and DLP supporters on the other. When the Split came, Catholic families who had remained loyal to the ALP, such as the Carrolls and the Sheehans, were ostracised in the Catholic community. If you were a supporter of Jack Sheehan, you sat on one side of the church:

As they came out of church, someone said: “About time you Communists stopped coming to this place.” There wasn’t a word said. He (Bill Carroll) just dropped him, and punched him, on the steps of St Patrick’s Cathedral. That’s how they settled it in that period.<sup>142</sup>

At the 1980 federal election, the ALP candidate, Mildren, beat the sitting Liberal member, Jim Short with a two-party-preferred vote of 50.7 per cent – the era of the DLP was over. Joshua died in 1970, one of the few non-Catholics in the DLP, a factor that was considered to have been crucial in his unexpected election as leader. His burial with the rites of the Anglican Church in the Eganstown Catholic Cemetery was equally unusual. Gough Whitlam later noted that Joshua had managed to “hold himself aloof from the extremes of bitterness and vituperation which characterised these tempestuous times.”<sup>143</sup> Probably one of the most important signposts that the bridges had been mended was the invitation by Bishop O’Collins to then opposition leader Bill Hayden and Mildren to meet with him when Hayden visited Ballarat during the 1980 campaign; *The Courier* photograph took half the front page.<sup>144</sup>

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141. Barry Donovan, *Bracks and Kennett: My Part in Their Rise and Fall – An Insider Tells* (Melbourne: Information Australia, 2000), 191.

142. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope’s Battalions*, 143. From interview with Beau Williams.

143. Browne, “Joshua.”

144. *The Courier*, October 10, 1980.

After 1955, maintaining vigour was a struggle at the BT&LC, and in November 1956, there were only 15 delegates present;<sup>145</sup> however, change came quickly. In 1957, white-collar unions had begun to affiliate: two key unions were the Australasian Society of Engineers and the Victorian Teachers Union.<sup>146</sup> Australia's population at the 1954 census was just under nine million. By 1969, it was three and a half million more, much of the increase due to immigration. Ballarat's population had declined from 46,793 in 1901 to 40,231 in 1947 but rose to 71,900 by 1980.<sup>147</sup> In Creswick, the Catholic Church supported Dutch migrants and, through Bishop O'Collins, bought the Railway Hotel to be used as a hostel.<sup>148</sup> The GNP growth of 4.4 per cent each year from the beginning of the 1950s to the end of the 1960s meant that there was steady sustained growth and investment. By 1967, manual workers had decreased to 39 per cent of the workforce, white-collar workers comprised 41 per cent, and the number of unionists as a proportion of the workforce was 58 per cent.<sup>149</sup> In 1954, less than 2 per cent of the workforce was unemployed and for the next 18 years the proportion only rose above 3 per cent once. The proportion of women in the workforce had also begun to rise rapidly. The fastest growing categories were in commerce, finance and the "white collar" sections of the public service.<sup>150</sup>

### **The Many-Headed Hydra<sup>151</sup> – The Victorian Provincial Trades and Labour Council Association (VPT &LCA)**

After preliminary efforts in the 1930s,<sup>152</sup> the move to formalise another peak body to protect provincial interests occurred. The introduction of this layer, in a many-layered movement, was only possible because of the resistance to a hierarchy amongst the unions and the maintenance of 'power for' against 'power over'. Rowe had already met resistance to the shop committee structure, with the opening of another avenue for workers to unite around issues outside the individual union's authority. Undeterred, he

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145. BT&LC Minutes, November 25, 1956.

146. BT&LC Minutes, May 30, 1957.

147. City of Ballarat. "Ballarat Heritage Study (Stage 2), July 2003.

148. McInerney, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

149. Hagan, *The History of the ACTU*.

150. City of Ballarat. "Ballarat Heritage Study (Stage 2), July 2003.

151. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (London: Penguin, 1955). The Hydra of Greek mythology possessed many heads, Later versions of the Hydra story added the regeneration feature to the monster: for every head that had been chopped off, the Hydra would regrow two heads.

152. BT&LC Minutes, November 15, 1931.

was instrumental in restarting discussions on a regional peak council. Towards the end of 1936, discussions were held between Ballarat, Maryborough and Bendigo Trades and Labour Councils, and in 1937, the first formal conference of the VPT&LCA, with Rowe being elected president, took place. Geelong, Wonthaggi, Mildura, and Castlemaine joined in the next year.<sup>153</sup> A new constitution was adopted by the Annual Conference in October 1940, with the MTHC entitled to representation but not the right to vote. The aim of the organisation was “to expand and consolidate trade unionism in Victoria in cooperation with other working-class organisations for the ultimate attainment of socialism”<sup>154</sup> – each affiliated council was represented by five delegates.

A post-War conference was held in 1948, and up until that time, the VPT&LCA had been functioning actively.<sup>155</sup> However, tension occurred when Stout, the MTHC secretary delivered his report and was criticised for his lukewarm complacency. The formation of the ALP Industrial Groups was also strongly opposed.<sup>156</sup> So it was not surprising that the struggle with Stout at the MTHC had been intensifying in the lead-up to the 1949 conference when new trades and labour councils had been set up in Shepparton, Wangaratta and Benalla and the request for a full-time secretary/organiser had been sent to the MTHC without response.

In March 1949, Stout, threatened on many sides, decided to “cut off one head of the hydra” and exercise ‘power over’. The MTHC circularised a note to all Victorian labour councils to let them know that the MTHC only recognised Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Castlemaine, Central Gippsland (Yallourn), Maryborough, Mildura and Wonthaggi. The BT&LC responded in April, pointing out that the MTHC had no power or authority to say who Ballarat should or should not recognise. However, the MTHC did have one important power bestowed through the ACTU in 1927: delegates to ACTU Congress would not be accepted from any labour council that was not affiliated with the MTHC.<sup>157</sup> Undeterred, Albert Richardson and Percy Outen were nominated by the VPT&LCA, although not delegates of an affiliated body, and went to Sydney to attend the 1949

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153. A. C. Williams, “Victorian Provincial Trades and Labour Council Association.” Vice-President Bill Galvin, Secretary Jack Walshe from Bendigo, and in 1939 Geelong, Wonthaggi, Mildura and Castlemaine became affiliated.

154. Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton*, 17.

155. A. C. Williams, “Victorian Provincial Trades and Labour Council Association.”

156. Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton*.

157. Rule 4C–A, MTHC. “PT&LC shall not be recognised by the ACTU unless Council is officially recognised by the branch of the ACTU of the State concerned.”

ACTU Congress. Predictably, Stout had not submitted their credentials and Albert Monk, the ACTU secretary, refused to recognise them. Aronson, the BT&LC legal representative, argued that Ballarat could not be deprived of representation but to no avail.<sup>158</sup> So while the legality was not tested, the autonomy of the peak bodies had been considerably lessened by these events. The VPT&LCA went into recess.

This dispute involved the use of organisational power by one peak body, in this case the MTHC, to assert control over another peak body, the VPT&LCA. At the same time organisational power was at work in the Bendigo Trades and Labour Council where Groupers had been successful in removing the entire left-wing leadership with the support of the Country Party Government. On 26 July 1951, supported by police, three trustees forced open a window, forced an inner door, and changed the locks using a Governor-in-Council approved appointment of new trustees by the state government, which was hotly contested by the lawyer, Jack Lazarus (another of Mark Lazarus's children) representing the old Council. Duis, on behalf of the trustees, said in an interview that "Stout and Jordan met us right-wingers and told us what to do to empty the Communists out."<sup>159</sup> In July 1951 the minutes of the new Bendigo Trades Hall Council directed that "the secretary to write to the National Catholic Rural Movement to thank them for their co-operation and assistance in forming the new THC Council."<sup>160</sup> The National Catholic Rural Movement became the NCC and was also known as the Movement. This dispute was just one in a long line that was grappling with the chaos as Groupers and Militants battled for dominance.

The VPT&LCA was reformed in 1957 with Mildura, Maryborough, Bendigo, Castlemaine, Ballarat, Geelong, Central Gippsland, and Wonthaggi as members.<sup>161</sup> Initially, the MTHC was the protector of the Groupers, but by 1952 a marked change took place. What has so often been demonstrated throughout its history, the union movement in Victoria has always been flexible, perhaps not very agile, but never moribund; tortuous as its processes seem to outsiders. Shifting factional alliances have never allowed those with the organisational power to be so confident of their authority that they could ride out the storm below, and the role of the MTHC through this period is one of the best

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158. Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton*.

159. *Ibid.*, 63.

160. *Ibid.*, 76.

161. A. C. Williams, "Victorian Provincial Trades and Labour Council Association."



examples. While Stout's target was initially the Communists, by 1952, disputes with the Grouper faction had begun to dominate and dissension had become apparent within the VCE as well. Stout's character was intricate; someone who knew him well judged that his attitude to Communism was quite beyond the grasp of reason.<sup>162</sup> Yet as Fitzgerald describes, Stout became increasingly worried by the missionary zeal of the Groupers and by 1954, the anti-Grouper campaign achieved considerable momentum, which culminated in Evatt's public attack on the Victorian branch of the ALP. As Fitzgerald says, "After 1954, Stout allied himself with the Militants – though usually at arm's length from the Communists – to fight the Grouper forces."<sup>163</sup>

## Conclusion

The sectarian divide that had become entrenched after WWII caused the BT&LC to become more and more isolated and embattled, culminating in the loss of public political power. With the split which created the DLP, supported by sermons in the churches and the conservative media, proved a potent political scare tactic over many years. "The Reds under the bed", assisted by the Groupers certainly resonated in Ballarat when the great schism divided old friends, neighbours, workmates, and family members. As one unionist said: "Although my sectarian great aunts would never vote Labor as it was too "Catholic", most of the rest of those I knew regarded Menzies as an enemy. The aunts only changed once the DLP split occurred and the Labor Party became less "Roman."<sup>164</sup>

With no ALP politicians to represent them, no media to put their interests to the public, the hegemony of Ballarat was clearly in the hands of Protestant business leaders. While the Catholic leaders maintained a role in the social life of Ballarat, they abdicated on the political front, probably relieved to see their economic interests protected by the former Victorian premier, Bolte, and his erstwhile Ballarat Grammar schoolmates.

The existence of the DLP after 1955 irretrievably undermined the traditional and powerful influence of the Catholic Church in the labour movement. Perhaps against Santamaria's intentions, the existence of the DLP facilitated the absorption of middle-class Catholics into the political culture of the secular but Protestant-dominated

162. Saffin, *Left and Right in Bendigo and Shepparton*.

163. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope's Battalions*, 144–5.

164. B. Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

ascendancy represented by Menzies' Liberal Party.<sup>165</sup> The fragmentation of the Catholic vote in the longer term also ended Santamaria and his supporters' hopes of creating a discrete political force. Perhaps the last word should be left to Whitlam who could still see the humorous side after the agony he and the labour movement had gone through:

Cardinal Clancy used to often relate his conversation with Gough when Gough had inquired as to whether or not St Mary's Cathedral might be available for a funeral. This surprised Cardinal Clancy given he was not expecting Gough to convert to Catholicism. Gough explained: "No, it was not for a Catholic funeral, it was because he wanted to be buried in the crypt, claiming he was willing to pay but would only require it for three days."<sup>166</sup>

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165. Fitzgerald, Carr, and Dealy, *The Pope's Battalions*.

166. "Team Whitlam," *The Australian*, 22 October, 2014.

## Chapter 8

### A Grand Old Tree

*(A biological treasure which has developed unique aging characteristics, ranging from hollows and bark fissures to large volumes of dead wood and complex canopy structures that form micro-ecosystems and enables it to support a myriad of species)*

When I was mayor, the State Cabinet asked me if they could have the privilege of sitting in Ballarat; that was the first occasion they had sat here. They arrived and I was welcoming them and a lot of them gave me a kiss because they were personal friends of mine through Gordon being in parliament, and they had a wonderful time. A very happy, relaxed visit and they had their cabinet meeting in the Council Chamber.

—Jessie Scott<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Young, energetic, educated and opinionated, the new generation, free of the constraints of the Menzies' years and in the Eureka spirit, were not content to let others decide for them how their society would be organised, and women were now insisting that they would be part of that decision-making, too. While the Groupers had been reduced in influence, so too had the CPA. When the dismantling of the USSR began occurring, some members broke away to join the China aligned Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) that had been formed in 1963. Later the pro-Soviet Socialist Party of Australia, formed in 1971, drew others including Dave Aronson.<sup>2</sup> Some such as Williams joined the ALP.

The healing had been helped in the 1960s by the relatively low unemployment and the high productivity, which resulted in the wages growing and the living standards improving for most Ballarat workers – cars, electrical appliances, and carpets had begun to appear in working-class homes. However, in the 1970s, another change was also having an impact on Ballarat when a worldwide pattern of investment had begun replacing local autonomy. Large multinational companies had been moving their businesses to whichever country offered the best advantages in labour relations, tax and environment supervision. The introduction of globalized companies caused a decline in local manufacturing and dissipated local control.<sup>3</sup> Ballarat was ripe for investment- long

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1. Scott, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 6.
2. Faine, *Taken on Oath*.
3. Hagan, *The History of the ACTU*.

term family businesses particularly in manufacturing needed to modernize and were ready to consider offers.

The new secretary at the BT&LC in the 1980s faced a daunting scenario, but Shearer modernised and re-energised the movement to prepare it for the new challenges. He was able to motivate this peak body to, again, actively participate in the big changes that were occurring. By the early 1990s, unemployment was 15 per cent,<sup>4</sup> the attacks on wages and conditions that commenced under the Kennett Liberal Government in 1992 continued with the Howard Workplace Relations legislation in 1996, which made the last decade of the twentieth century one of the busiest and militant in the history of the BT&LC. New industries were being created; the decaying old workplaces of M. B. John and Ronaldson and Tippett were just reminders of the past and new assertive working-class voices again began to emerge from BT&LC.

### Unity Is Strength

More than any other figure for most of the twentieth century at the BT&LC, Beau Williams was a recorder, mentor, leader, and enabler – a “lumper” not a “splitter” – although he earned his nickname while splitting wood in the Enfield forest with his mates. The hat he used to wear resembled the one worn in the popular film *Beau Geste*, and the nickname stuck for life.<sup>5</sup> In 1932, he was elected as a delegate to the BT&LC, which became an association that lasted for 46 years until 1978.<sup>6</sup> Williams was elected secretary of the BT&LC in 1956 and remained in that position until 1975. His role in maintaining the BT&LC as a determined and successful centre for the left, yet maintaining its links to all factions, made sure that Ballarat was not taken lightly in other parts of Victoria. His wide circle of “comrades”, including Jack Brown, gave Ballarat standing in many circles.

By the 1970s, the long period of dominance of the delegates from BNRW was coming to an end. When Secretary Williams retired in 1975, many of the older comrades had taken lower profiles and a greater diversity that represented the white-collar workers was

4. *The Courier*, November 19, 1991.

5. Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives Adjournment – Eureka Stockade: 150th Anniversary Speech, Hansard, 30 November 2004, accessed March 12, 2020, [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansardr/2004-11-30/0095/hansard\\_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/genpdf/chamber/hansardr/2004-11-30/0095/hansard_frag.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf).

6. A. C. Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 19.

starting to occur. While these workers had been participating at the BT&LC for a long time, they began to take on more substantial roles and women became leaders, actively mentored by Secretary Williams.

Although unity was maintained at the BT&LC, it was the only Victorian peak body to remain firmly shaped by the left from 1924. In later years, and with Brown appointed their fraternal delegate to the MTHC in 1951 and remaining so until 1975,<sup>7</sup> they had a firm ally. Fraternal delegates to each other's trades halls have always been maintained, as has the determination to resist the imposition of a hierarchy. The MTHC, on several memorable occasions, had been tempted to test its "power over", particularly in the heat of the Grouper dispute, where it went a step further in Bendigo to claim the building as well.

Brown, born in 1912, had a similar pathway through his early life as many of his Ballarat comrades: he became a "lad labourer" for the railways in 1926, saw the impact of the Great Depression, and after a short sojourn in a Catholic seminary in 1931, joined the CPA. Brown was elected to the ARU State Council in 1936 and became its secretary in 1942.<sup>8</sup> Rimmer & Skinner also note: "J. J. Brown, an ARU member at the North Melbourne workshops, was substantially responsible for the shop committee formed there in 1934."<sup>9</sup> Williams remembered Brown being identified by Rowe at the beginning of his interest in unions:

I remember Teddy Rowe, who used to go to Melbourne to get the shop committee going and meet people in Melbourne and so on, coming back and saying "I've got a very good prospect; his name is Brown, he's just started to get interested in the trade union movement." Now Jack Brown was the first Communist secretary elected and for the rest of his life he did a pretty good job on the railways.<sup>10</sup>

Brown clashed repeatedly with the leadership of the MTHC while also withstanding attempts by the Industrial Groups to defeat him until 1954, when he narrowly lost the ballot for secretary of the ARU. When the railways refused to re-employ him, as had been

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7. BT&LC Minutes, February 6, 1958, May 8, 1975. Letter from J. J. Brown resigning and thanking them for the honour to have been their representative. 22 May 1975 Vote of thanks for his services to BT&LC from 1951.
  8. Stuart Macintyre, "Brown, John Joseph (Jack) (1912–1989)," in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 17, ed. Diane Langmore (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007), accessed August 19, 2020, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/brown-john-joseph-jack-12258>.
  9. Rimmer and Sutcliffe, "The origins of Australian workshop organisation, 1918 to 1950," 226.
  10. A. C. Williams, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

a long-held practice, Stout, Brown's avowed enemy within the MTHC, stepped in yet again to apply the "unity is strength" principle. He vehemently defended Brown's right to be re-employed, which occurred. Brown won the secretaryship back in 1956, left the CPA in 1968, and remained state secretary and federal president of the ARU until 1975, when he was appointed to the board of the Victorian Railways.<sup>11</sup>

On the death of Stout, Mick Jordan, a long-term official, was appointed as his replacement in 1964. If balancing "power over" and "power for" to maintain unity remains an underlying principle of the peak bodies, Jordan opted firmly for "power over" in this period. The bitter dispute regarding the 27 unions who refused to pay affiliation fees to the MTHC has been well documented.<sup>12</sup> In November 1967, the MTHC executive decided that 27 of the 83 affiliated unions should be suspended. Those unions who were refused voting rights represented more than half of all Victorian unionists. In 1968, the desperation shown by the MTHC to maintain their power over led to an escalating set of issues, including the rights of provincial peak bodies.<sup>13</sup> While Stout had managed the tension by performing an ideological turnaround of Olympian standard in his relationship with the Groupers, Jordan was determined to maintain power over at whatever cost. Ballarat was his target for two major reasons: firstly, Brown was the voice at the MTHC meetings who repeatedly clashed with the right-wing executive and whose union was one of the 27 refusing to pay affiliation fees; and secondly, the BT&LC owned an impressive asset – its building. With the loss of affiliation fees and a substantial debt of \$236,067 in 1967,<sup>14</sup> Jordan probably believed he could solve several problems with this move.

### **VPT&LCA Unites Again**

In 1968 as well as changing the name from the MTHC to the VTHC, a number of rule changes were submitted to provincial councils, including taking control of all property and assets, with all affiliation fees previously paid through provincial councils to be paid to the VTHC and allocated to provincial councils by the VTHC.<sup>15</sup> The BT&LC's response, predictably, was to reject the proposition; it called a meeting of the VPT&LCA

11. Macintyre, "Brown."

12. Brigden, "A Vehicle for Solidarity." David Plowman and D. H. Plowman, "Unions in Conflict: The Victorian Trades Hall Split 1967–1973," *Labour History* 36 (1979):47–69, accessed August 19, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27508353>.

13. Plowman and Plowman, "Unions in Conflict,"

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.; BT&LC Minutes, July 11, 1968.

and matching recommendations were made at the next meetings of the Geelong THC and the BT&LC,<sup>16</sup> as well as the other provincial peak bodies. The resolutions included that the moves would be resisted by all possible means, noting that there had been no major divisions in the movement in Ballarat, and that these rule changes would force upon Ballarat trade unionists the divisions that were present in metropolitan Melbourne.<sup>17</sup>

On 2 October 1968, when a resolution to suspend standing orders to hear VTHC comrades Jordan and Stone was moved at BT&LC, dissent from the chairman's ruling was immediately moved by delegate Knight who demonstrated that the rebellion had not abated. However, the ruling was upheld and at the conclusion, Jordan made it clear he would not recognise the VPT&LCA. That was gratuitous given that the peak bodies had been consulting with each other constantly and were in accord. In November 1968, the BT&LC authorised the secretary to take the unusual step of sending the following statement to the secretaries of all the unions and to the MTHC:

You will be aware that the executive of the VTHC has proposed alterations to Rule 4 ... These alterations ... will impose severe restrictions on the type of discussions which may take place on provincial trades and labour councils and by instituting the right of appeal by one union against a decision of a provincial council would ensure control by VTHC over provincial bodies. My council is addressing an appeal to the Victorian Trades Hall Council and the affiliated unions, including the unions comprising the 28 not now attending the Council meetings that every effort be made to settle the present dispute. This dispute is retarding the work of trade unions throughout the state. Without unity, it is not possible to adequately campaign on behalf of its members.<sup>18</sup>

Here is a clear example of Brigden's "power for" at work as the BT&LC was indicating its capacity to go straight to individual unions for support, using the time-honoured appeal for unity to "get your house in order" before you come after us and unity mattered. No further action was taken. Jordan died early in 1969 and was replaced by the more conciliatory Ken Stone. Plowman's analysis that the VTHC Split eroded its authority because it attacked the basis of "that tenuous authority- prestige, achievement, resources, its ACTU and ALP connections and its focus as a centre of trade union authority"<sup>19</sup> and was also a salutary lesson to those who failed to understand the nature of unity in the labour movement. They identified the forces for solidarity and unity see-sawing during

16. Sargent, *100 Years of Struggle*.

17. BT&LC Minutes, July 25, 1968.

18. BT&LC Minutes, November 29, 1968.

19. Plowman and Plowman, "Unions in Conflict," 67.

the dispute and noted that the leaders of the rebel unions underestimated the pressures exerted on both sides to restore unity: “Being out of the VTHC had that fish-out-of-water feeling about it and was repugnant to a union philosophy grounded on solidarity.”<sup>20</sup>

Underpinning the conflict was the continuing issue of funding for the regional bodies, an issue that had been reoccurring since the 1930s. In 1975, the VTHC carried a resolution to raise \$8000 by imposing a levy on affiliated unions that would financially assist the Ballarat and Bendigo Trades Halls.<sup>21</sup> The issue of funding did not go away, and in 1985, the VPT&LCA set up a picket outside the VTHC until a negotiated truce had been worked out with the new secretary, Peter Marsh.<sup>22</sup> However, it was not until John Halfpenny’s election as secretary of the VTHC in 1987 that the hostilities ceased. In 1988, Secretary Shearer asserted firmly that “the Ballarat Trades Hall is not in any way directed by the Victorian Trades Hall Council – we are an autonomous body. The Trades Hall belongs to all trade unionists in Ballarat.”<sup>23</sup> While the fraternal rather than hierarchical nature of the relationship is still firmly maintained, the financial survival of provincial halls is a continuing risk for all regional peak bodies in Victoria. This issue is still contentious and there are no benefactors like the Bootmakers’ Union who was prepared to lend more than £4000 to BT&LC for many years, accepting repayments of £100 per year at least until 1945 when the record becomes opaque. In 1944 the BT&LC balance sheet showed a surplus of £3/10.9.<sup>24</sup>

In 1976, when Secretary Williams retired, his successor was Jim Burns, who had been secretary of the local branch of the left-wing Painters and Decorators Union. Burns was an energetic delegate of the BT&LC, which included a term as president in 1973, and an active DLP member until he was expelled from the party. His appointment was another pragmatic example of unity is strength. His view of his elevation by the left was realistic. The left had the numbers so he could be controlled, and he had good working relationships with many of the left figures, with high regard for Lew Bird, “a saint of the union movement”, and Restarick, “the sharpest and best mind in the BT&LC,”<sup>25</sup> both of

20. Plowman and Plowman, “Unions in Conflict,” 59.

21. BT&LC Minutes, June 5, 1975.

22. BT&LC Correspondence, May 23, 1986.

23. *The Courier*, September 15, 1988.

24. BT&LC Minutes, August 8, 1940, July 20 1944.

25. Burns, interview by author; Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*, 113.



whom had continued with the CPA. By this time, resources which were never large had also been severely depleted by essential repairs.<sup>26</sup> Burns remained as secretary until 1981.

While the sectarian divisions between the Left and Right had disappeared by the 1980s, energy had turned to exhaustion. At this stage, the history of the BT&LC could have been ruled off – after Burns left, Frank Knight took on a caretaker role as secretary of the BT&LC. The old leaders had gone, the building was in a bad state of repair, the caretaker secretary was in no position to re-energise the organisation, various unions had been amalgamating, and union decision-making was becoming centralised. The BT&LC had no other source of income except affiliation fees at this stage. Don Henderson, President in 1976, recounted vivid memories that exemplified the sorry state of affairs:

Frank Knight was down in the basement sorting out old rubbish as he called it. He had thrown an oil painting aside and when I asked him “Why?” he said some idiot put Justice Higinbotham up. I convinced him that Justice Higinbotham was a very important person and had a huge impact in the wool-processing factories, which had by now retreated to Geelong. Justice Higinbotham is now in pride of place at the Geelong Trades Hall. I looked at some letters and asked about them. He said they are just dust catchers. I went through a few and found an original letter signed by Raffaello Carboni of Eureka fame and convinced Frank not to throw anything out until Andrew Reeves from Melbourne University Archives had been through things. Andrew just could not believe his luck, especially with the Carboni letter. Frank was doing his best. He had the biggest heart and always found a way to support the underdog.<sup>27</sup>

## **Community Engagement**

For most of its history, the BT&LC has engaged in issues of community concern, but after WWII, it was so consumed and isolated by its internal struggle that its presence was not obvious in local forums. One of the few examples was after the 1944 bushfires, when through BT&LC, meat workers volunteered to clear dead animals.<sup>28</sup> In 1945 in spite of BT&LC’s initiative in the creation of a youth centre, the refusal to follow the accepted protocol for appointment of the president reflected open opposition by Ballarat public figures. President Catlow (police magistrate) retired and Bert Black, a long-time delegate at Trades Hall, the only vice-president available for election as set out in the constitution, did not get the nomination.<sup>29</sup> However, by the 1960s, the BT&LC felt emboldened to

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26. BT&LC Minutes, March 5, 1931 Balance Sheet presented 24.17.9.

27. Henderson, email.

28. BT&LC Minutes, December 19, 1944.

29. Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch, File No. A6122.

engage in the community again. Two issues re-energised them: the failed attempt to “Save the Trams”, and the ultimately successful opposition to conscription and the Vietnam War, reminding the BT&LC of an earlier victory, a reinforcement sorely needed.

Trams were first used in Ballarat for public transport in 1887. At its peak in 1937, the Ballarat tramway network was the largest in Australia operating outside the capital cities, with seven principal routes and more than 20 kilometres of track. However, throughout the 1960s, patronage fell and operating losses mounted. From 1962 onwards, the State Electricity Commission and the Bolte Liberal Government attempted to close the system but did not have the required parliamentary support in the Legislative Council until the 1970 election; the state government then closed the tramways in both Ballarat and Bendigo. Most of the network was replaced with private buses on 19 September 1971.<sup>30</sup> Restarick had represented the BT&LC on the Save the Trams Committee and there had been petitions, meetings with politicians and alliances developed with Bendigo, but the the inevitable consequences had ensured, and in 1968 the BT&LC resolved that *The Courier* should be congratulated for raising the issue of the Bolte Government’s provision of public transport while recognising that the trams would be abolished.<sup>31</sup>

The Vietnam War did not go unnoticed either at the BT&LC throughout the 1960s. What had begun during the early 1960s with a handful of critics expressing their opposition grew into an issue that drove protests around the globe. In 1966, the then prime minister, Harold Holt promised to go “all the way with LBJ” and the Australian Government was among the staunchest supporters of the USA’s Vietnam commitment, pledging ground troops in 1964, of whom 40 per cent were conscripts; 521 Australians died and 3000 were wounded before the withdrawal in 1971–1972. In 1965, delegates reported attending a meeting at the Richmond Town Hall to protest against sending troops.<sup>32</sup> However, a rearguard action was still being pursued by delegates Burns and McGarry, who had put forward a resolution at the same meeting condemning the Seamen’s Union for refusing to provide tugs for American ships in port, but it was lost 2 to 12.<sup>33</sup> In 1966, there was a well-attended anti-conscription meeting at the Ballarat Civic Hall,<sup>34</sup> one still remembered

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30. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

31. BT&LC Minutes, November 29, 1968.

32. BT&LC Minutes, May 20, 1965.

33. Ibid.

34. BT&LC Minutes, June 16, 1966.

for Austin Dowling’s heartfelt and moving speech against conscription, where he drew on his experience as a WWII pilot. The local Anti-Conscription Committee relied on old networks of religious and peace groups and Secretary Williams was delegated to attend meetings. New groups emerged, too, including the Australian Independence Movement, the Youth Campaign Against Conscription and Save Our Sons.

Sir Arthur Nicholson, at a meeting of the City of Ballarat in April 1970, announced that “the Vietnam War was part of our way of life”<sup>35</sup> and that “demonstrations against the war were not loyal.”<sup>36</sup> The council was dealing with a request from the local committee to stand in front of the town hall holding placards. Unsurprisingly, this was refused.<sup>37</sup> The BT&LC was not deterred and pledged full support, urging all Ballarat residents to support the moratorium. The Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union delegate reported that about 60 to 70 per cent of members had attended a previous rally and he expected a similar number to attend.<sup>38</sup> The public meeting went ahead with two minutes silence outside the town hall and then outside the ranger barracks. Max Spry, a Methodist minister; Kaye Barry, president of the Moratorium Committee; and conscientious objector Bill Reynolds spoke.<sup>39</sup> Another Ballarat activist, Brian Pola and former St Pat’s student, was one of three La Trobe University students, dubbed the “La Trobe Three”, who were jailed indefinitely in Melbourne’s notorious Pentridge Prison in 1972 for disobeying a university order to stay off campus and apologise. They were denied a trial or the right of appeal.<sup>40</sup>

What is interesting to note and certainly underestimated by politicians is the importance of memory in maintaining an independent view among members of the labour movement. Rita Mathews was still impacted by her grandfather’s view of war drawn from WW1 in 1983:

He was standing in the battlefield somewhere in France with two mates, one each side of him, and a shell burst- killed them and left him standing. He said in the trenches it was terrible. When the two brothers joined the Navy in the Second World War -oh he was dead against it. He said you don't know what war is like. Oh he was getting so ill in those days of the Vietnam war but he was so against it,

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35. *The Courier*, April 28, 1970.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. *The Courier*, September 18, 1970.

39. *The Courier*, September 19, 1970.

40. Brian Pola, *Yarowee: A Radical Life* (Ballarat: Brian Pola, 2007).

oh yes dead against it, any war. He said it is a pity that heads of the countries couldn't have a roundtable conference and come to some agreement without sending all the men to fight, He always thought that war was more about moneymaking.<sup>41</sup>

Australian society was moving on and the Whitlam years had left their mark in Ballarat. By 1976, when Jessie Scott, Mayor of Ballarat, whose husband Gordon had been a Liberal member of the Victorian Parliament, was feeling secure in welcoming her Cabinet friends to Ballarat, changes were afoot. Indeed, as the first woman to become mayor of the City of Ballarat she was part of that change, although her attempt to prevent her younger colleagues bringing “dreaded” politics into the chamber was determined. As she said:

This was the first time really in the history of the Council that party politics had reared its head. I had to contend with that and control the meeting. It was getting rather out of hand at the first council meeting. I grabbed the gavel and gave it a bang on the table and said, “That will be the end of party politics.” And that was really the end of trouble in the Council during my term.<sup>42</sup>

Bracks, later to become an ALP premier, was a typical example of the emerging young politically aware Ballarat boy from the Whitlam era. However, he was not the only one, and the “Ballarat Boys” were joined by the “Ballarat Girls.” The resolve of a considerable group to intervene in the City of Ballarat’s long drawn-out dispute regarding Bakery Hill changed the political landscape as well as saving a significant streetscape in Ballarat. Individual unions, the ALP and the BT&LC all played their part in a victory against a large multinational company and a complacent and acquiescent council. Green bans had been placed on specific sites for environmental or conservation reasons, part of a campaign begun in the early 1970s by the New South Wales Builders Labourers Federation in support of residents’ groups.<sup>43</sup> This new combination of activists from many sections of the community with unions, was able to draw on support from various quarters:

Through the green bans movement of a “subaltern counterpublic”, these groups threatened by developers’ activities ‘devised and circulated a counter discourse that identified developers’ interests as problematic for the environment and they

41. Matthews, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*.

42. Scott, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940*, 15.

43. Verity Burgmann and Meredith Burgmann. “‘A Rare Shift in Public Thinking’: Jack Munday and the New South Wales Builders Labourers’ Federation.” *Labour History*, no. 77 (1999): 44–63.

presented an oppositional interpretation in which their own interests and needs in resisting developments coincided with those of society at large.<sup>44</sup>

In Ballarat only at the last minute did activists engage with Norm Gallagher and the Builders Labourers Federation but that brought immediate results. It scored a world first though when McDonalds agreed to modify existing buildings in Ballarat.

In 1977, Bakery Hill – a significant landmark from the Eureka story as the location for the Ballarat Reform League’s “monster” meetings – was back in the news and another memorable battle had begun at the place where the diggers had burnt their licences and the Southern Cross had been raised for the first time. The complacency of the council was on show, where it had used its right to compulsorily acquire 27 titles<sup>45</sup> at the entrance to the main shopping centre of the city so that it could sell the site to the Travelodge motel chain in 1971. Council’s action demonstrated a complete disregard for the heritage and history of this precinct that is hard to believe now that it has these aspects as the centrepiece of its tourism and planning strategies. The announcement was made in June 1971 at a civic reception attended by 60 parliamentarians, local dignitaries, and Travelodge executives for the \$2.5 million project that consisted of eight levels, 144 rooms, a restaurant and a swimming pool on the site bounded by Victoria, Humffray and Curtis streets. The buildings on the site, dating back to the Eureka era in 1854, included the office of the former *Ballarat Times*, whose erstwhile editors, Henry and Clara Seekamp, published the first newspapers on the goldfields – the *Ballarat Times and the Buninyong and Creswick Advertiser* – in March 1854, and were also the publisher of the Reform League Charter.<sup>46</sup> The irony of the recent investment in Sovereign Hill (also opened in 1971) to re-create Ballarat’s heritage seemed to be missed by those local dignitaries who handed over the land in June 1971 with no heritage study undertaken. In 1976, Travelodge, having just made the final payment to the council, began to negotiate with two worldwide fast-food chains, McDonalds Systems and Pizza Hut Australia Ltd, to sell the land it had just acquired to them.<sup>47</sup> Not only had the land been sold to Travelodge on a time-payment scheme but no caveat had been included regarding the conditions if their plan did not proceed.

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44. Ibid., 47.

45. *Ballarat News*, May 25, 1977 (With grateful thanks to Jack Harvey for his meticulous record-keeping).

46. *The Courier*, November 25, 1976.

47. *The Courier*, November 4, 1976.

Jeremy Harper, local lawyer and ALP candidate in the 1976 state election, in a letter to the *Ballarat News* was the only voice to be heard on this aspect.<sup>48</sup> Letters to the Editor again became the focus for debate as they had so often before. The junior branch of the National Trust, led by Geoff Hendy, was the first organisation to put its name to the dissent and from that core group that became the Save Bakery Hill Action Group (SBHAG) in April 1977.<sup>49</sup> The Ballarat Chamber of Commerce and the Bridge Street Traders Association declared themselves in favour of demolition, although 3000 people had signed a petition against the demolition.<sup>50</sup> Undeterred, the City of Ballarat approved the new plan, which involved the demolition of the historic buildings, with only one dissenter, Cr John Dick. The tenants were given notice to quit.<sup>51</sup>

On 16 April 1977, a rally was organised by the SBHAG, which was attended by more than 200 people, with the lead speaker being Ron Radford, then director of the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery (and later the director of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra) soon captured the media's attention. *The Courier* headline read: "Ballarat being Raped: Radford."<sup>52</sup> The metropolitan media had begun to take notice and David White, the then ALP member for Doutta Galla, raised the issue in State Parliament.<sup>53</sup> Anne Beggs-Sunter, who had researched early rate books and directories, was able to prove that some of the condemned buildings did date back to the gold era despite some attempts to denigrate those claims and that the site still included a group of early buildings.<sup>54</sup>

The mayor complained regarding the Eureka flag being brandished at the rally, which brought a stiff rebuff in the Letters to the Editor section of *The Courier*.<sup>55</sup> The Ballarat ALP branches and the BT&LC stated their support for the retention of the buildings in the media, including in *Scope*, the newsletter of the 28 left-wing unions at the VTHC.<sup>56</sup> The Ballarat Chamber of Commerce congratulated the council on its decision, describing the buildings as "a ramshackle collection of slums"<sup>57</sup> and the Ballarat branch of the Real

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48. *Ballarat News*, May 25, 1977.

49. *The Courier*, April 9, 1977.

50. Alfred Heintz, "Battle of Bakery Hill – Secene of Past and Recent Battles," *The Australian Municipal Journal* 59, no. 925 (1980).

51. *The Courier*, March 8, 1977; March 10, 1977.

52. *The Courier*, April 16, 1977.

53. *The Herald*, April 20, 1977.

54. *The Courier*, April 23, 1977.

55. *The Courier*, April 23, 1977. Letter from Meredith Harvey.

56. "Journal of the 27 Unions suspended from VTHC," *Scope*, April 28, 1977.

57. *The Courier*, April 28, 1977.

Estate and Stock Institute commended the council on its intention to demolish the buildings.<sup>58</sup> The SBHAG was supported by a group of planners and architects who undertook a detailed study of the site and McDonald's, obviously sensing the mood, offered a three-week moratorium on the demolition plans.<sup>59</sup> However, on the same day, Travelodge issued Supreme Court writs to the tenants that stated they were required to leave within eight days.<sup>60</sup>

It was suggested to the SBHAG that it should call Norm Gallagher, the Builders Labourers' Federation secretary, to discuss the issue. On 12 May 1977, Gallagher announced that a black ban had been placed on all McDonald sites in Australia until the company dropped its plans to demolish the historic buildings on the site.<sup>61</sup> While Gallagher attracted the most media attention, Don Henderson of the Building Workers' Industrial Union and a delegate to the BT&LC was also a member of the Building Industry Group that met every Monday morning at the VTHC where all the building unions except the Victorian Operative Bricklayers' Society (VOBS), a Grouper union, supported the ban. The bricklaying contractor already had been given the job and the VOBS secretary Giles claimed that his workers were short of work. Henderson noted that the local VOBS organiser did not support Giles and assisted to win the Bakery Hill dispute.<sup>62</sup> However, *The Courier* enthusiastically reported the division and added editorial comment: "The readiness with which a militant union is prepared to cut off an avenue of work for members of less aggressive and more responsible unions should be borne in mind in Ballarat."<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the last words belonged to BT&LC Secretary Jim Burns who remembers well receiving a phone call to say that the demolition had started. He went straight there and said to the workers: "If you pull this building down, you will never get another job in Australia" and work stopped.<sup>64</sup>

On 23 June 1977, the battle of Bakery Hill was over when plans to retain and integrate the existing buildings into the design were submitted to the City of Ballarat for approval. The black ban was lifted and the dispute with McDonald's led to an agreement with

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58. *The Courier*, April 23, 1977.

59. *The Courier*, April 30, 1977.

60. *Ballarat News*, May 25, 1977.

61. *The Courier*, May 12, 1977.

62. Henderson, email.

63. *The Courier*, May 13, 1977. Editorial.

64. Burns, interview by author.

unions regarding site allowances, which became known as the Fast Food Agreement.<sup>65</sup> The Bakery Hill development was the first time McDonald’s had repurposed historic buildings and changed from its standard plan anywhere in the world.<sup>66</sup> David O’Sullivan, the Sovereign Hill chairman, said he had not given the SBHAG “a chance in hell” when it approached him, but he noted that “the Bakery Hill battle helped to create a change in attitude which was coming over this city and, naturally enough, our city fathers think they did it all themselves.”<sup>67</sup>

Until 1983, voting in local government elections had been the prerogative of only a segment of the population as a property-based voter franchise applied. In 1983 the new Victorian ALP government led by John Cain expanded the voting franchise to include people 18 years or over who were registered as voters on the state electoral roll and the number of owners or occupiers per rateable property who could be enrolled was limited to one. Consequently, the number of voters who could participate in local government elections increased by 30 per cent.<sup>68</sup> In 1975, a blueprint for involvement in opening new branches and getting active in local government began in Ballarat. With shades of Tom Mann hovering, there was even an ALP volleyball team.<sup>69</sup> A focus on winning local municipal seats as part of strong community participation was a key element of the labour movement’s state and federal political revival in the 1980s.

The first BT&LC identity to stand had been J. Eva in 1906, then McAdam and Whitrick at the amalgamation election in 1921 stood without success. While Rowe, Loft, Whitrick and Williams had made concerted efforts from 1937 to 1942, only Secretary Miller polled reasonably well in 1935 and 1936. However, in the Borough of Sebastopol, E. Kent, an AEU member and a BT&LC delegate was successful, and was mayor in 1930 and 1939, although he was not successful when he stood at the state level for the ALP against its former leader, Hogan, in 1935.<sup>70</sup>

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65. Henderson, email.

66. Beggs-Sunter, “Fortieth Anniversary.”

67. Heintz, “Battle of Bakery Hill,” 43.

68. Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, “Local Government Electoral Review: Stage 1 Report,” accessed June 22, 2020, [https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0029/164927/Stage-1-report-Local-Government-Electoral-Review.pdf](https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0029/164927/Stage-1-report-Local-Government-Electoral-Review.pdf). Appendix 3, 2014.

69. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

70. *Ibid.*



This new engagement was more successful in the 1980s. Glen Ludbrook, Jim Reeves (mayor 1986–87), John Barnes (mayor 1999–2001, 2004–2005), Catherine Laffey, John Hynes and Bryan Crebbin (mayor 1983–84, 1985–87) were ALP activists who were elected to local government. When the Sebastopol Council was merged with several neighbouring ones, Karen Overington won election to the larger City of Ballarat council at its first election in 1996, serving in that role until her election to parliament in 1999. Overington was “a daughter of Trades Hall”; her father, Charlie Brown, having been a formidable lifelong unionist, state president of the HEF 2 Branch and a delegate to the BT&LC. Overington, in her first speech in the Legislative Assembly, said: “I grew up in a household where issues of equality and social justice were part of regular discussions. From an early age, I was encouraged to recognise social injustice and empowered to go about setting things right.”<sup>71</sup> Geoff Howard, a teacher and a unionist, was elected to the former City of Ballarat in 1989, (mayor 1993–94), left it in 1994, and then was re-elected to the newly formed City of Ballarat in 1996 and served until 1999 when he was also elected as an ALP member of the Legislative Assembly.<sup>72</sup>

One of the roles many peak bodies have assumed is social mobilisation by galvanising activists additional to union members – forming labour–community alliances. While the BT&LC did not have a leadership role in the Save Bakery Hill campaign, it did take the initiative to establish a palliative care program in Ballarat by convening a meeting on 4 October 1984 to hear Dr Taffy Jones from Geelong speak on the care of the dying. This meeting was the outcome of a discussion between Frank Self, a leader in the labour movement in Geelong, and Secretary Shearer. Self had come to Ballarat to visit Lorna Bird, who had lifelong connections to the BT&LC, when she was ill with cancer and suggested that Ballarat could have a similar palliative care service as the one that was operating in Geelong. Secretary Shearer then wrote to doctors, prominent locals, and the religious fraternity, inviting them to attend a meeting to hear Dr Jones speak and see if a similar service could be established in Ballarat:

We expected just a few to come along. The room was packed – standing room only – and Brian Murray, the president, myself, and Harold Foo hosted the

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71. Karen Overington condolence motion, Hansard, Legislative Assembly, August 30, 2011. Daniel Andrews speech quoting her first speech to parliament.

72. Re-Member: A Database of All Victorian Maps since 1851, Parliament of Victoria (Victoria, 2001), accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/people-in-parliament/re-member/details/24/11>.

meeting on behalf of the BT&LC. We did get a shock at the level of interest. As always with worthwhile things, community interest is always forthcoming and the major players were keen to go forward with the establishment of the hospice.<sup>73</sup>

A steering committee was formed and in 1985 an incorporated association was established. State funds were granted in April 1987, which led to the purchase and refurbishment of a property. This project has culminated in the opening of a purpose built palliative care hub in Alfredton in September 2019.<sup>74</sup>

## **Globalisation and the Free Market**

By the 1980s, the popular word was “globalisation” and the free market was embraced by both sides of the political divide. The challenge was how to do it. In 1983, Australia and Britain both faced a fork in the road: their economies needed restructuring and inflation brought under control: “While Thatcher and the Conservatives lit a bomb under the British unions, Hawke and the ALP took the path of consensus by striking the Accord agreement.”<sup>75</sup> During an era which embraced Thatcher and Reagan and saw the collapse of Eastern European Communism, major recessions and the emergence of new competitive Asian “Tigers”, the return of the ALP to political influence was a feature of this period. From 1982 to 2000, the ALP was in government in Victoria for 11 of the 18 years and at the federal level from 1983 to 2000 for 13 of the 17 years.

Globalization immediately impacted on Ballarat’s “status quo”, causing a major restructuring of ownership in the private sector. Even from the 1950s, government incentives, such as payroll tax concessions and cheap land, became sufficient enticements for international companies to look to Ballarat. Textile companies (Lucas and Morleys) were taken over by Courtaulds, and financial incentives were offered to other international firms – such as Valeron Corporation, Villiers (a subsidiary of English firm, Bendix) in 1955 and Lloyd’s Holdings – to move to Ballarat. Timken (USA), Unilever and Wormald arrived in 1963. Bate summed up the changing Ballarat industrial canvas:

73. Graeme Shearer, interview with author, May 24, 2019.

74. “History,” Ballarat Hospice Inc., accessed October 20, 2020, <https://ballarathospicecare.org.au/who-we-are/history>.

75. “The Accord ‘Saved Us from Thatcherism’,” Matt O’Neil, *RN Breakfast*, ABC Radio National, May 31, 2013, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/breakfast/accord/4725598>.

Apart from the outright ownership by companies – like McDonald’s, Coles, Myer, McEwans, Angus & Robertson, Mars, McCains, Timken and Morley – there were merger and licence arrangements that reduced Ballarat’s autonomy. M. B. John moved into and out of an arrangement with Hattersley, the largest valve manufacturer in Britain, and Ronaldson and Tippett – faced with increased international competition and failing, perhaps through generational weakness, to maintain earlier inventiveness – were kept afloat by its licence arrangement with Wisconsin.<sup>76</sup>

The fact that distant boards of directors were now controlling a large part of the private economy had immediate and probably unforeseen implications for the powerful Ballarat establishment. As Bate says: “The days of the direct approach resulting in a firm answer from a local proprietor were gone”<sup>77</sup> and the owners no longer met at the Ballarat Club or the Buninyong Golf Club or their masonic lodge. No local loyalty also made it easier for those companies to move on after tariff protections had been removed so the traditional manufacturing base in Ballarat was slowly dismantled.

Similarly decision-making in the labour movement was being centralized in remote metropolitan offices. Since the 1980s, the tension between class politics and popular politics has been gradually shifting the pendulum towards a greater separation between the political and industrial wings. By the time the ALP got parliamentary representation again in Ballarat in 1980 after 25 years, the Federal Parliament in 1973 had established the Remuneration Tribunal, which had direct consequences for the BT&LC. The office allowance meant that an office, paid for by the parliament, was provided for the elected representative, and while acknowledging this may have had limited impact in capital cities, in Ballarat it had an immediate effect. Mildren, head of department at Ballarat College of Advanced Education,<sup>78</sup> elected to the Federal Parliament in 1980 after a close pre-selection contest with BT&LC secretary Jim Burns, set up his electoral office in a prominent location in Lydiard Street North that was paid for by the parliament (although he did spend the first year at BTH). After 1981, Jack Sheehan’s desk, when he was the short-lived Minister for Housing in 1955, and a hole in BT&LC budget was all that remained as a reminder of the times when the local politicians had their offices at BTH.

76. Bate, *Life after Gold*, 192.

77. *Ibid.*, 192.

78. John Mildren, Australian Honours Search Facility, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://honours.pmc.gov.au/honours/awards/2000479>.

The 1980s brought the Prices and Income Accord between the ACTU and the Hawke Government. The unions agreed to wage restraint, while the ALP promised improvements to pensions and unemployment benefits, tax cuts, superannuation, and Medicare, once it was in office. The first accord was struck in February 1983, and there were six subsequent accords, culminating in Accord Mark VII in October 1991, which, from 1993 onwards, became increasingly focused on enterprise bargaining, although the Industrial Tribunal had to be satisfied that any enterprise agreement that had been negotiated would not disadvantage employees who would otherwise have been covered by the standard award – the “no disadvantage test”.

While Secretary Shearer recognised the advantages, he also foresaw the detrimental effect on the overall unity and sense of purpose of unionism: “individual unions forget their common goal of a more egalitarian society when they sit down to achieve a better deal for only their members.”<sup>79</sup> His view was:

Enterprise bargaining did deliver for the Australian economy and the strong, but the weak, without bargaining power, were the losers, with there being no mechanism to have a flow-on from what the stronger unions had achieved. What compounded the problem was that workers then believed that unionism was only about enterprise agreements and a wage rise.<sup>80</sup>

When wages and working conditions were negotiated at the level of the individual organisation rather than at the industry-wide level of bargaining for an industry award, the major industry unions with greater bargaining power had an immediate advantage over the smaller unions:

The metal trades federation unions would conduct mass meetings at the Trades Hall, which were attended by workers from all the major workplaces including Bendix, John Valves, Timkens, and Amcast. They would fill up the Hall passage and spill out onto the street when pursuing wage increases or additional conditions. All those workers were as one supporting each other, regardless of where they worked. Enterprise bargaining, however, saw separate meetings held at the respective workplaces as wage increases were negotiated based on negotiations with individual companies.<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps the least understood (and least appreciated) is the compulsory superannuation guarantee system. In 1992, the Keating ALP Government introduced it through a tripartite agreement between the government, employers and the trade unions. This

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79. “The Re-Emerging Trades Hall Belongs to All Workers,” *Ballarat News*, September 15. 1988.

80. Shearer, interview by author.

81. *Ibid.*

reform led to the establishment of union-based not-for-profit superannuation funds (mutual funds membership-based). These funds have remained under substantial challenge, not because the burden of pensions has been substantially reduced for the federal government but because the funds collectively are now significant participants in national policy decisions. The growth of superannuation in Australia has led to the funds seeking investment options for large amounts of money with the capacity to influence corporate Australia which is a direct challenge to the direction of government policy disrupting government and for-profit investors.<sup>82</sup>

The ACTU provided active support to educate Ballarat unionists regarding the benefits of the Accord, sponsoring a week-long recruiting visit led by the ACTU official, and later president, Jennie George. More than 300 new members signed up.<sup>83</sup> Quarterly shop steward meetings were held and Victor Jose, organiser with the AMWU, noted the role of the BT&LC in discussing industrial issues and strategies, sharing knowledge, and looking at the larger agenda of the ACTU's campaigns.<sup>84</sup>

Secretary Shearer, however, always understood the importance of the local peak body: "The Trades Hall belongs to all trade unionists in Ballarat. We are trying to get back to problems more relevant to Ballarat while still looking at general problems in the trade union movement."<sup>85</sup> Another consequence was that from 1970 to 2001, tariff protection for manufacturing industries reduced from 35 per cent to 5 per cent, which moved Australia a long way towards the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) goal of free trade access to developed nations. While this culminated with the final closure of Australian car manufacturing in 2017, it had been preceded by textiles and footwear, pulp and paper, and meat processing, with major consequences for Ballarat. While Ballarat still maintains an innovative manufacturing base, the old giants had gone the way of H. V. McKay, who deserted Ballarat for a better offer in 1905.<sup>86</sup> In Ballarat, employment in the primary industries and in the manufacturing industry accounted for 52 per cent of total employment in 1910–11, but by 1999 it had reduced to 19 per cent and continued to

82. "About United Workers Superannuation Funds," United Workers Union, accessed June 6, 2021, <https://unitedworkers.org.au/superannuation/>.

83. Ibid.

84. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

85. *Ballarat News*, September 15, 1988.

86. Lack, "McKay."

steadily decline to be 8.6 per cent in 2016.<sup>87</sup> The growth in the service sector has compensated for that, with education and training now employing 11.1 per cent of the workforce, and the health care and social assistance sector now being the largest in Ballarat with 18.7 per cent of the workforce.<sup>88</sup>

In a sign of the times to come, youth unemployment by 1991 was estimated to be 30 per cent, with overall unemployment at 15.2 per cent. The broadly-based campaign “Which Way, Ballarat?”<sup>89</sup> sent a delegation to Canberra to discuss this high rate of unemployment which they believed had been caused by the decline in manufacturing. The defeat of the ALP in the March 1996 election brought to an end the longest continuous period in recent decades during which a powerful trade union movement had a central role in the formation of national socio-economic policy.

## New Voices

In Ballarat, the change from the traditional manufacturing workforce to a greater concentration of employees in health, education, transport, tourism and other service industries maintained the numbers of unionists but posed a challenge to the BT&LC to ensure its relevance to these new unionists. In the 1970s, workers were still employed in 315 factories, ranging from heavy-iron foundries to garment manufacturers.<sup>90</sup> However, while the largest industry in Ballarat was still manufacturing, now based on food processing – with Mars Ltd and McCain’s being the largest employers – the biggest employer in the region became state government-funded health care.<sup>91</sup>

Productivity increased as tasks became more automated and mechanised, whether by using containers in transport or computers in commercial businesses. These new workers were better educated and were not necessarily aligned to the ALP, but the attempts by authority to control them led to militancy in areas not seen in Ballarat before. In 1970, HEF1 pickets were removed by police to allow staff to enter Lakeside Hospital as part of

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87. “City of Ballarat Community Profile: Employment by Industry,” accessed November 20, 2020, <http://economy.id.com.au/ballarat/employment-census>.

88. Ibid.

89. “Which Way, Ballarat?” *The Courier*, November 8, 1991. The organisations involved in the campaign included the BT&LC, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Ballarat Regional Board, the Ballarat University College and local municipalities.

90. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

91. “City of Ballarat Community Profile: Employment by Industry,” accessed November 20, 2020, <http://economy.id.com.au/ballarat/employment-census>.

a statewide strike of 4000 workers. About 15 per cent of the staff continued to work, and the mayor of Ballarat at the time, Cr Wills, actively participated by using 3BA and BTV6 to call for volunteers and by visiting the hospital to talk to volunteers. This was front page news.<sup>92</sup> In November 1970, the Bolte Liberal Government introduced tough new penalties for strikers. He said of striking teachers in 1968 – “They can strike till they’re black in the face; it won’t make any difference” – and when teachers threatened to sit on his doorstep in protest, he quipped: “I don’t have a doorstep low enough for them.”<sup>93</sup> The hostility from conservative governments and media hastened the politicising of this new breed of militants. So while the public debate was hard to win, their resolve was strengthened through the 1970s with the widespread opposition to the Vietnam War and Whitlam giving them hope that change was possible.

This new militancy being practised by Ballarat workers in the service industries was certainly viewed as a threat by *The Courier*. Editorial comments and reporting were quite different to that used for disputes in the traditional manufacturing workplaces. In March 1976, the teachers’ strike drew the ire of *The Courier* editor, whose editorial “When Teachers Go Out On Strike” questioned the legitimacy of the strike. On the same page, a strike of 300 workers from Johns Valves in its second week was treated with a factual account of meetings taking place, progress being made, and no editorial interpretation.<sup>94</sup>

The significance of the changing militancy culminated in the 1986 Nurses Strike, the longest strike in their history. When the Cain government took steps to recruit hundreds of English and Irish nurses, bans were put on taking nurses from England, and the government was presented with a list of demands about employment from the Victorian branch of the Royal Australian Nursing Federation (RANF) led by the secretary Irene Bolger.

Most nurses still pinned their hopes on the State Industrial Relations Commission, but the proposed wage rises offered through a changed career structure meant some nurses would be downgraded into lower classifications – some with even lower pay - and qualifications allowances withdrawn. Bans on elective admissions and wearing uniforms began from 20 August. The angriest reaction came from St Vincent’s where 150 resigned in response to eight stand-downs. Two weeks after putting the bans on, another stop work meeting was

92. *The Courier*, June 17, 1970.

93. *The Age*, June, 1 1970.

94. *The Courier*, March 24, 1976.

held. 3,500 nurses resolved to maintain the bans until the employers agreed to their claims.

Almost beyond comprehension, the decision of Ballarat nurses to join the strike causing a halt to elective surgery and admissions and, finally, led to walk-outs to support claims that involved qualifications allowances, career structure, and pay rises for first-year nurses and students. Skeleton staff were installed on the wards while picket lines, tents and caravans were set up outside local hospitals. Finally, in December 1986, the Industrial Relations Commission handed down a decision that gave nurses many of the pay rises and conditions that they had originally sought. 20,000 nurses had been on strike for 50 days, which was one of the longest strikes of a state-wide predominantly female workforce in Australian history, and it showed that a largely female workforce could sustain mass industrial action.<sup>95</sup> BT&LC endorsed resolutions to support the RANF in its fight with the State ALP government about pay and working conditions and requested all affiliated unions to recognise picket lines set up by the RANF, and at a later meeting after a request from Secretary Bolger for financial support for striking Ballarat nurses conducted a collection of money.<sup>96</sup>

A “Ballarat Girl” this time was actively involved at a broader level. Lisa Fitzpatrick was raised in Ballarat. She was not from a trade union background: her father was a supporter of the DLP. She trained at Prince Henry's Hospital where she became interested in union issues and was elected Senior Job Representative. In 1986, she was elected to the Branch Council at the time of the nurses' strike. When the position of Branch President became vacant in 1990, Fitzpatrick took on the role and in December 2001 she was elected unopposed as Branch Secretary.<sup>97</sup>

One local initiative did occur in this period which has had a lasting importance: the establishment of the Sovereign Hill Historical Park. The Ballarat Historical Park Association, formed in 1968, opened Sovereign Hill in 1970 and had certainly benefited

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95. “The 1986 50-day Victorian nurses and midwives strike,” On the Record, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian branch), accessed November 20, 2020, <https://otr.anmfvic.asn.au/articles/the-1986-50-day-victorian-nurses-and-midwives-strike>. A digital exhibition to mark the 30th anniversary of the strike.

96. BT&LC Minutes, November 6, 1986, December 18, 1986.

97. James Tierney and Christina Cregan, “Lisa Fitzpatrick,” The Encyclopedia of Women & Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, accessed December 20, 2020, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0260b.htm>.



from the stated intention to make authenticity the benchmark in the creation of the exhibits.<sup>98</sup> This major business was one of the few to develop in Ballarat East and took advantage of the legacy of its early history. The Sovereign Hill Museums Association still operates as a not-for-profit community-based company, which currently enjoys annual ticketed visitation of over 700,000 at its museum and farm campuses. In 2016, it employed 380 staff (220 EFT) and had almost 300 volunteers to help operate the park. Until Covid almost 25 per cent of its visitor numbers originated from international markets, making it a very successful exporter of the Australian tourism product, being responsible for the reason why one in three mainland Chinese visited Victoria. Twice, in 1992 and 2005, Sovereign Hill was named as Australia's Major Tourist Attraction at the National Tourism Awards; it generates over 98 per cent of its operating income from entrance admissions and its commercial operations.<sup>99</sup>

In 1962, BTV6 provided Ballarat with its own television broadcasting station. Its local identity was a source of pride but later aggregated to become part of the WIN Corporation and its local content largely dissipated. Similarly, the amalgamation of the School of Mines (SMB) in 1968 with the Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education, and a change of name to the Ballarat College of Education at Mount Helen, meant that a substantial institution with a long history had disappeared. Its one hundred years of history had been subsumed into the college, its standing in the technological mainstream had been damaged and the new site lacked adequate public transport and was divorced from the regular life of the city.<sup>100</sup> The BT&LC had a long association with SMB including a seat on its council. Delegate Griff Beanland gave regular accounts from his first meeting in October 1939 to December 1976, during which time he had been SMB vice-president from 1943 to 1955 and honorary treasurer from 1955 to 1976.<sup>101</sup> He had also acquired a substantial ASIO file.<sup>102</sup> From the time of McKissock as MLA from 1908 to 1911, the

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98. Bate, *Life after Gold*.

99. Sovereign Hill Museums Association, submission to the *Inquiry into the Opportunities for Increasing Exports of Goods and Services from Regional Victoria*, the Rural and Regional Committee, Parliament of Victoria, accessed March 12, 2020, [https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/rrc/IEGS/20140901.Full\\_Report\\_EDIT\\_ORIAL.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/rrc/IEGS/20140901.Full_Report_EDIT_ORIAL.pdf).

100. Bate, *Life after Gold*; *The Courier*, August 21, 1986. Interview with former mayor Jim Reeves.

101. Perry, *The School of Mines and Industries*.

102. Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch, File No. A6122.

BT&LC was proud to maintain substantial funding for SMB and its operations had always been high on the BT&LC's agenda.<sup>103</sup>

When Knight indicated in 1984 that he wished to retire permanently, a search for a new secretary for the BT&LC began. Several influential union organisers sought help from their respective unions to guarantee funds to support the operation of the BT&LC. The timing was right and fortunately the will was there to again position Ballarat as a participant in the mainstream. Shearer was appointed in 1984<sup>104</sup> and a period of rebuilding began. The unions honoured their commitments and some of them who at first were apprehensive also became supporters of the push to re-invigorate the BT&LC.<sup>105</sup> The BT&LC was able to make a fresh start at a time when the ACTU was implementing the first Prices and Income Accord, so it was a time of renewal in many ways.

The consequences for the Ballarat workforce were immediate and obvious. In 1984, when the Ballarat Paper Mills, which had employed 300-400 people closed, workers, in appreciation of the support of the BT&LC, donated their union funds to it. Similarly, the abattoirs, with upwards of 600 people employed, closed in 1988, and the workers with whom Shearer had worked for 25 years donated their funds as well, which were used to renovate downstairs at BTH to make the affectionately known "dungeon" into a training room.<sup>106</sup>

One of Secretary Shearer's immediate tasks was to continue to organise the repair of the building where there was little funding available and the work that had already been performed had yet to be paid for. Apart from the obvious state of the building it was pigeon infested and the render on the exterior was falling away in large patches. The roof leaked in many areas and as a result internal plaster on ceilings and wall was in a very bad state This deterioration had been gradually getting worse from the 1960s onwards. By the mid-1980s the effects of that deterioration was glaringly obvious.<sup>107</sup> But Secretary Shearer in a determined fashion set about getting support from the government, the roof was repaired and in March 1987, the building was added to the Victorian Heritage Register.

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103. Dermody, "McKissock, Andrew Nelson (1872–1919)."

104. BT&LC Minutes, 26 July 1984.

105. BT&LC Minutes, August 17, 1984.

106. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*; Shearer, interview by Cleary.

107. Shearer, interview with author.

The Ballarat Trades Hall remains largely intact and is of significance because of its particular associations with the eight hours movement and the formation of the Victorian Labor Party, as a physical manifestation of the drive in the last century to establish unionism as an integral part of Victorian society and for its contribution on the historic townscape of Ballarat.<sup>108</sup>

Secretary Shearer was inclusive by nature and would openly discuss issues with delegates on a one-on-one basis and displayed that he genuinely appreciated their participation. He was also supported by an executive that had broad knowledge of the movement and its members were leaders in their own right.<sup>109</sup> They provided Secretary Shearer with the necessary stability during this period of rebuilding. He quickly identified the potential to recruit more unions as affiliates and within 12 months, an additional 15 unions had joined the BT&LC. He was also keen to ensure that training was available for delegates in the region, and in providing this training, the BT&LC had a new source of income. Shearer set about creating a working union centre, with individual unions occupying office space. His other aim to build services for members led to the Saines & Partners law firm leasing rooms. At various times, a financial services company and Members Equity home loans had occupied various offices at the BT&LC. As Secretary Shearer said: “This visual and operational union activity developed a healthy level of union and organiser camaraderie and the increased income was used not only for everyday operation expenses but also to begin much-needed repairs.”<sup>110</sup>

In the 1970s, the unions that were covering nursing and teaching, both female-dominated occupations, grew strongly. Most new union members in the white-collar sector were women. At the Federated Clerks Union there were almost four female recruits for every male.<sup>111</sup> These changes were occurring during a period of overall decline in union membership. At the same time, the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s had alerted many women to the structural disadvantages that regarded “male privilege” as

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108. “Victorian Heritage Database Report: Ballarat Trades Hall,” Heritage Council Victoria, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/62/download-report>.

109. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*. Brian Murray ARU) Harold Foo (BNRW), Frank Knight (previous acting secretary), Dulcie Corbett (liquor trades), Barry Ward, David Dawson, Dennis Noonan, and Jim Caddy (AMWU).

110. Shearer, interview by author. Unions who occupied offices while subject to amalgamation and name changes included the Victorian Public Service Association, the Nurses Federation, the Health Services Union, the CFMEU, the Miscellaneous Workers Union, the AMWU, the VIEU, the Australian Services Union, the Liquor Trades Union, the Australian Railways Union, the Electrical and Plumbers Union (shared), the Timber Workers Union, the Wool Classers Association, and the Transport Workers Union.

111. Bowden, “The Rise and Decline of Australian Unionism.”

normal, and the women in the trade unions at the time understood that the important issues in their lives had not necessarily been on their unions' agendas. Yet part-time largely female jobs in retail and hospitality had been increasing, the same as that which had been occurring in the clerical and administrative workforce, both in the private and public sectors. Also the pattern of family life had been changing and by 1981, 36.5 per cent of breadwinners were women.<sup>112</sup>

Ballarat attitudes took longer to shift as Rita Matthews describing her mother's surprise at seeing a female student with a child:

Charlie and I went over to the BCAE at Mt Helen and took Mum with us for a drive. Charlie had to go to the library and Mum said "That young girl going in, she has got a baby on her hip and on the other arm she's got a bundle of books." She said: "What would she be doing?" I said: "She's studying for something." With the baby on the hip, Mum couldn't get over it; there was nothing like that in her day. My dad's idea was that a woman's place was in the home. You didn't need any education. What was the use of educating girls he used to say: "You get married and you bring up a family, not thinking that if you were educated, you could help your family."<sup>113</sup>

The first female president of the BT&LC was Dulcie Corbett in 1989, but from 1981 as the lone woman delegate on the BT&LC<sup>114</sup> a forerunner in establishing a place for women at BTH. Corbett was an organiser with the Liquor and Allied Trades Union, which supported members working in breweries, malthouses, hotels, motels, boarding houses, and associated businesses and had an office at BTH. In a 1983 newspaper interview, in which she refused to give her age as men were not asked that question by journalists,<sup>115</sup> she expressed her confidence that women of all ages were engaging more in rank-and-file union activities. She made it clear that she was not prepared to resort to aggressive tactics when she was being confronted by such tactics from employers; instead, she would terminate the discussions and tell the employer where she could be found when they wanted a resolution. Corbett was the first of a number of women who undertook leadership roles at the BT&LC and deserves recognition as a role model and mentor for many of them, especially her friend and ally Arlene Martin from the HEF1 who became President in 1992 but who sadly died later in that decade. Helen

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112. Ibid.

113. Rita Mathews, *Ballarat and District 1920–1940: An Oral History Project*, interview 82, 1983.

114. BT&LC Minutes, February 12, 1981. Corbett's appointment was noted in the Minutes and she was congratulated for being the first woman to join the council in some years.

115. *The Courier*, May 2, 1981.

McKnight (Australian Education Union), became the third female President from 1997=99. Despite the commonly agreed view that unions need to recruit new female members, women’s participation in BT&LC and other regional trade union organisations still continued to trail behind their actual involvement in the workplace until 2000. Although it should be noted Karen Kyle was Secretary of the Bendigo Trades Hall Council for 26 years between 1989 and 2015,

A 2013 study that examined whether women’s participation in a de-identified trades and labour council had in any way changed the structure of the organisation to be more representative of the gendered workforce revealed many similarities to the situation in Ballarat (it could have been Ballarat!).<sup>116</sup> The study demonstrated how women had to negotiate the terrain in the male-dominated structure of a trade union organisation. It also provided insight into the processes of assimilation, the inventiveness of women participating in male-dominated organisations, and the strategies they would employ to resist the domination from the men while at the same time affirming that they deserved to be heard.

The women managed a delicate balance between assimilating enough to “stay in the game” and “keeping one’s sense of self intact and pursuing changes to make the workplace more equitable and inclusive.”<sup>117</sup> The observations were similar to how Ballarat women explained their responses. Corbett – who on becoming president was quoted as saying, “Don’t call me ‘luv’, and I don’t make the tea” – was aware that change needed to be accelerated in the previously male-oriented BT&LC.<sup>118</sup> The less-than-subtle differences that existed in the treatment of women at the BT&LC would no longer be tolerated under her watch. She considers that her major achievements had been to lift both the profile of women and the Trades Hall and to have strongly supported activities such as International Women’s Day. She attended as many functions as possible (although Secretary Williams, who accompanied her to meet the Prince and Princess of Wales at a civic reception, thought that was a step too far) and she insisted on leading rallies while she was president. Corbett was once taken aside and reprimanded by a male delegate for having used a dreaded four-letter word while at the same time she was expected to ignore the sexist jokes and repartee that was a constant part of the banter that the men used. The

116. Forbes-Mewett and Snell, “Women’s Participation in ‘a Boys’ Club’.”

117. *Ibid.*, 95.

118. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

advantage for women becoming more active in the peak body was the opportunity to come a fraternal delegate, as Corbett did at the VTHC. She gained strength by connecting with the activist women who were working in Melbourne in unions and the MTH, particularly Jan Armstrong.<sup>119</sup> However, the BT&LC never transgressed to the extent of the MTHC, which was still holding Miss Trades Hall contests in the 1960s.<sup>120</sup>

Corbett also represented the BT&LC in other forums and on various other organisations' governing bodies – for example, the steering committee for the Ballarat Hospice, the local TAFE board, and board of Ballarat Regional Industries, which employed people with disabilities.<sup>121</sup> She remembers well at her retirement function that the incumbent BT&LC president in his speech commented that he had resisted her participation and actively refused to recognise her in debate, but that he was wrong; in fact, he felt that women had a right to participate and that Corbett's contribution to the BT&LC had been greater than many other highly regarded delegates.<sup>122</sup> However Forbes-Mewett and Snell's study had demonstrated that women's resistance was often interspersed with their assimilation into the overall masculine structure of trades and labour councils over time. Despite attitudes having changed and progress having occurred, an entrenched culture dominated by men has been an obvious deterrent to women's participation. Brigden also mapped women's presence and absence over different periods at MTH and arrived at a similar conclusion reached by this study: "By taking a long view, periods of change that may have been regarded as ones of transformation, if looked at in isolation, were often subsequently undone by the forces of continuity."<sup>123</sup> In Ballarat, strong women had been asserting their right to participate, from Harriet Powell to Dulcie Corbett; however, their assertiveness had not created a culture of inclusiveness by the year 2000.

Cleary using Briggs as a reference describes the 1990s in Ballarat as another 'critical juncture,' historical moments of instability and change during which institutions are constructed (or reconstructed) then consolidated.<sup>124</sup> The 1990s was marked by union amalgamations, tariff reductions and then the ascent of Jeff Kennett as Premier of Victoria in 1992. Controversial moves included the sacking of 16,000 public transport

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119. Corbett, interview by author.

120. Brigden, "A Women's Place?"

121. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

122. Corbett, interview by author.

123. Brigden, "A Women's Place?" 380.

124. Cleary, *Ballarat Labor*.

workers, a major scheme for privatisation of state-owned services, including the electricity and gas utilities. Between 1995 and 1998, \$29 billion of state assets in gas and electricity alone were sold to private enterprise.<sup>125</sup> While the benefits to the State budget figures were indisputable in the short term, the social and longer-term economic cost of the Kennett reforms have been questioned by many commentators, academics and those who suffered economically through the period of reform. The largest public protest in Melbourne since the Vietnam War Moratorium occurred on 10 November 1992, with an estimated 100,000 people marching in opposition to the changes.<sup>126</sup>

The amalgamation of various unions had reduced the number of unions at the beginning of Secretary Shearer's period in office from 59 to 26 by 2005. The accelerated reduction of tariffs in the textile industry immediately impacted on Ballarat factories- Apparel Industries went into liquidation and Hilton the largest textile employer began downsizing.<sup>127</sup> However, in 1994 the newly created City of Ballarat from the merging of four neighbouring councils was now much more innovative, having built on the Regional Board for Planning and Development to establish the Ballarat Economic Development Board as a Special Committee of Council. It became known as Business Ballarat in 1996. Secretary Shearer played an active role in these forums. David Miller, who had worked for Mildren when he was the federal ALP member for Ballarat, became the executive director and the partnerships with the state and federal governments created new opportunities in the emerging new technology fields.<sup>128</sup> Businesses officially launched in 1995, such as Hakubaku, one of the leading noodle suppliers in Australia, and the Ballarat Technology Park at Mt Helen, grew from this period, which was a first step towards implementing a significant strategic initiative aimed at supporting and fostering new and emerging technologies. The principal focus was the information and communication technologies industry sector, with IBM being the first commercial tenant to establish headquarters for computing services throughout South-East Asia in Ballarat.<sup>129</sup>

While there was a spirit of cooperation in Ballarat, on the industrial front fortunes changed. The Kennett Government (1992–1999) in Victoria and the Howard Government

125. Tony Parkinson, *Jeff: The Rise and Fall of a Political Phenomenon* (Melbourne: Penguin, 2000).

126. *Herald Sun*, November 11, 1992.

127. *The Courier*, December 5, 1990 and April 2, 1994.

128. *The Courier*, May 18, 1998.

129. "Computer Services Here Will Create 100s of Jobs," *The Courier*, August 26, 1995. Official launch for IT Centre; *The Courier*, February 23, 1995.

(1996–2007) nationally spawned some of the most militant years that the BT&LC had experienced to end the century. The Howard Government passed the *Workplace Relations Act 1996*, which included the introduction of Australian workplace agreements, individual contracts that would override collective agreements, the expansion of the use of enterprise bargaining agreements, restrictions on union activity, and the outlawing of closed shops. In Ballarat, this led to some of the biggest rallies ever held as the winding back of working conditions and dismantling of government services by the Howard Government took on a frenetic quality. A National Day of Action in November 1996 resulted in 1800 metalworkers, then more than 350 teachers stopping work; however, this action was just the tip of an iceberg of seething discontent.<sup>130</sup>

Figure 9 shows unionists assembling outside Ballarat Trades Hall for the Day of Action, one of the largest assemblies of workers that had ever gathered in Ballarat.



Figure 9. Unionists protesting in the Day of Action rally, November 10, 1996.

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130. "District Teachers Rally against School Cutbacks," *The Courier*, November 22, 1996.



Enterprise bargaining, which had been first introduced in 1990–91, was a major change in the way unions conducted business. This period, and the years following, saw Shearer note that once wage increases had been negotiated, based on bargaining with individual companies, workers then, unintentionally, became workplace unionists who were not so aware of what other members had gained or not gained at their respective workplaces in their negotiations.<sup>131</sup> Shearer acknowledged:

Enterprise bargaining did deliver for the Australian economy and the strong, but the weak, without bargaining power, were the losers, with no mechanism to have a flow-on of what strong unions had achieved. Our effort to improve the workers' comp act had been weakened by the fact that unions who had improved their workers comp provisions in their EBA negotiations were then reticent to conduct a campaign or take part in action to pursue what they already had achieved.<sup>132</sup>

## Worker Safety

Worker safety has always been a particular concern to the BT&LC. In 1913 workers' compensation for injury was first discussed and continued as a regular issue.<sup>133</sup> In 1923 the failure of factory inspectors to be rigorous in their roles became a continuing theme and reports of deaths at work were recorded too.<sup>134</sup> Working conditions at Sunshine Biscuit Factory were a continuing concern and Miners' Phthisis (Silicosis) was still reported on in 1942.<sup>135</sup>

David and Wheelwright refer to “management by stress”<sup>136</sup> as being an intensification of Taylorism, which developed in workplaces during the 1960s, that added a new layer of management measures that produced a more elaborate and comprehensive code of control – worker control, time control and personnel control. The changing work environment brought with it changing technology: the electric typewriter, which made the manual one obsolete, also brought with it repetitive strain injury and lower back injuries. However, after WWII, “Workers Comp” became mired in the legal system, and anyone who worked in union, legal or political organisations had anecdotes with Dickensian qualities.<sup>137</sup>

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131. Shearer, interview by author.

132. Ibid.

133. BT&LC Minutes, February 27, 1913, September 21, 1939, February 14, 1946.

134. BT&LC Minutes, May 10, 1923, September 21, 1938, October 16, 1941.

135. BT&LC Minutes, March 19, 1942, May 28, 1942, October 16, 1941.

136. Abe David and Ted Wheelwright, *The Third Wave: Australia and Asian Capitalism* (Sydney: Left Book Club, 1989), 157.

137. Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1853; repr., London: Penguin Classics, 2003). Charles Dickens's famous assault on the injustices of the British legal system.

Workers in Ballarat had been more fortunate than some given their links with the Lazarus then Aronson firm (later to become Saines & Co.), which had long been regarded for its expertise in personal injury. Its offices at BTH also made it easily accessible to workers.

The introduction of legislation to reform the occupational health and safety system by the first Victorian ALP Government in 27 years was widely resisted by employers. Not until 1985, when the government for a short period controlled the Legislative Council, was the Occupational Health and Safety Act passed, the most progressive legislation protecting workers' health and safety that had been introduced in Australia.<sup>138</sup> The 1985 legislation marked a turning point in the strategies that had been adopted by government to allocate responsibility for workplace safety and industrial accidents. On one hand, employers had been made legally responsible for the conduct of a safe workplace, while on the other, employees had been given shared responsibility over the monitoring of working conditions and the reporting of unsafe conditions. A tripartite Occupational Health and Safety Commission was established to be the consultative vehicle from which future regulations would be developed and which would impose duties on employers and employees (including contractors and sub-contractors); provide for the election of health and safety representatives; provide for joint workplace health and safety committees; and gave inspectors the power to issue summary improvement and prohibition notices.<sup>139</sup>

However, after the election of the Kennett Government in 1992, many changes were made and funding was drastically cut, particularly for the training of health and safety representatives. In 1996, the ACTU launched a workplace safety program, which the BT&LC supported actively, with Shearer reporting that five workers had lost their lives in the previous two years in Ballarat and that a farm worker dies every 26 days in Australia.<sup>140</sup> Occupational health and safety had become an integral part of the BT&LC's business since the time it had fought the Kennett Government's changes to Workcover, and it remains so to this day.

Legislation is only part of the solution. For this thesis, the issue of asbestos use in Ballarat is an appropriate place to end the record of the BT&LC. It encapsulates the complexity of the workplace, the community in which it is located, and the strength of the organisations

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138. Edwards, "Historical Trends in Occupational Health and Safety in Victoria."

139. Ibid.

140. *The Courier*, October 14, 1996.

that have played a part in shaping it. In 1968, *The Australian* published a detailed article outlining the types of disease associated with asbestos exposure, gave a history of asbestos research, particularly the work of Selikoff and listed the uses of asbestos. The article ended:

Today's children are almost certainly inhaling more asbestos than their parents did and we now know that if a person inhales significant amounts of asbestos dust, he carries a burden that will provide a latent potential for the development of cancer for the rest of his life.<sup>141</sup>

Between July 1977 and January 1978, the ABC also broadcast Matt Peacock's seven-part series for the Broadband radio program in which he investigated the dangers to workers' health in Australia's asbestos industry.<sup>142</sup>

By 1985 it was well recognised that asbestos had significant health risks for workers although the terrible consequences for the miners and residents of Wittenoom, Australia's only supplier of blue asbestos which closed in 1966 had not been widely reported. Asbestos was not produced in Australia after 1986 but continued to be imported and Australia was one of the highest users of asbestos per capita.<sup>143</sup>

*The Courier* continually featured the dispute under the banner *Battle For Bendix* and provided even-handed coverage. However, localism was well to the fore, and without the leadership of John Coombs, secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) at the time, and the peak bodies (the ACTU, the VTH&LC, and the BT&LC), lives in Ballarat may have continued to be put at risk for much longer. In 2000, Bendix Mintex was Australia's leading manufacturer and supplier of automotive brake linings, employing 810 people and distributing at least \$35 million in wages each year. Established in Ballarat in 1955, the American parent company, Honeywell, owned 51 per cent and the Australian company, Pacifica, owned 49 per cent. Asbestos was used in 70 per cent of the brake linings produced in Ballarat, one of the company's major products.<sup>144</sup>

From the end of the 19th century, the use of asbestos had become widespread in industry, and the first published account of disease attributed to occupational asbestos exposure

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141. "The Journalists," The Australian Asbestos Network, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://www.australianasbestosnetwork.org.au/asbestos-stories/journalists-2/>.

142. Ibid.

143. "Workplace Cancer – Asbestos," Cancer Council of Australia, accessed February 1, 2020, <https://www.cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/workplace-cancer/asbestos.html>.

144. *The Courier*, November 26, 2000.

was of Nellie Kershaw, who died in 1924.<sup>145</sup> By 1985, despite it becoming well recognised that asbestos was posing significant health risks for workers, asbestos continued to be imported and Australia remained one of the highest users of asbestos per capita.<sup>146</sup>

The fact that Bendix had made a pledge to the BT&LC to replace white asbestos in 1990 was repeated in *The Courier*.<sup>147</sup> Towards the end of 2000, the matter had been raised at an ACTU executive meeting attended by John Coombs. He was confident that all asbestos importation had ceased, but Canadian chrysotile was still coming in through the ports, packed so that waterside workers could not identify it. The MUA threatened immediate industrial action. The strength of the threatened industrial action meant that if the ban had proceeded, the industry would have been without asbestos within a matter of weeks.<sup>148</sup>

This was problematic for the AMWU whose members would certainly lose jobs.

However, the MUA brought the matter to a head and banned the handling of asbestos on the wharves. Mick O’Leary, the MUA assistant-secretary at the time, said: “Jobs are the most important issue, but they have to be safe jobs.”<sup>149</sup> Bendix denied white asbestos was harmful to its employees: “The best scientific information in the world tells us that if it is handled correctly and properly and under the conditions it is handled in Ballarat that it is perfectly safe,” the spokesman said.<sup>150</sup> Secretary Shearer called for a compromise

between the union and industry: “I support the removal of asbestos at the soonest possible time without destroying the industry and people unnecessarily losing their jobs.”<sup>151</sup>

However, he said a five-year phase out period was inadequate: “I would sooner see a two to three year period ... we will be doing everything in our power to make sure those jobs are preserved but we also want to ensure people are working in a safe environment.”<sup>152</sup>

Ballarat East MLA Geoff Howard appealed to the MUA to drop the bans: “I urge them to drop the blockade and recognise that it will take time to be able to find alternatives to

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145. Edwards, “Historical Trends in Occupational Health and Safety in Victoria.”

146. “Workplace Cancer – Asbestos.”

147. *The Courier*, November 28, 2000.

148. Lynn Beaton and Andy Blunden, “The Miracle Fiber Exposed as a Deadly Threat: Some Moments in the Battle to Have Asbestos Banned from Use in Australia,” in *Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, ed. Andy Blunden (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014).

149. “Battle for Bendix,” *The Courier*, November 26, 2000.

150. *Ibid.*

151. *Ibid.*

152. *Ibid.*

white asbestos;”<sup>153</sup> Ballarat West MLA Karen Overington said she was concerned to see 500 jobs under threat; and the mayor John Barnes urged the MUA to lift its ban and work with companies like Bendix to phase out the substance in a time frame that did not threaten jobs.<sup>154</sup> Michael Ronaldson, the local Liberal MHR, weighed in, urging the AMWU “to put their money where their mouth was and get on the phone to John Coombs and tell him to wake up to himself,”<sup>155</sup> and the federal workplace relations minister, Peter Reith, joined the chorus to drop the ban immediately. Coombs responded by saying: “We stopped mining asbestos in Australia 25 to 30 years ago and that meant we lost jobs but it was for the good of everyone.”<sup>156</sup> Secretary Shearer and VTHC secretary Leigh Hubbard supported the MUA in the media, calling on people to understand the principle behind these work bans and further “one has to ask themselves if it is not dangerous why are we phasing it out.”<sup>157</sup> The role of the peak bodies was clearly crucial in working towards a solution, taking the pressure off individual union secretaries and protecting the overall wellbeing of workers and their families. This is an obvious example of the different roles played by peak bodies and individual unions. The AMWU denied they were at war with the MUA: “We are not at odds. We support their aims, it is just a matter of doing it in a sensible time frame.”<sup>158</sup> The leaders of the peak bodies could conciliate and mediate across all levels of the dispute, but the leadership of individual unions still had to get their members “over the line”.

The Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Commission had spent six years consulting with all interested groups before formulating the 1992 Asbestos Regulations. The Australian workplace ministers had agreed to the phasing-in of a ban on all asbestos imports by 2005. But on 30 November 2000 as a result of the industrial action, the MUA, Bendix and the ACTU signed an agreement to bring the ban forward two years to 2003, and the workplace relations ministers then accepted and signed the agreement in May 2001 for a phasing-out of asbestos to be completed by the end of 2003.<sup>159</sup>

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153. Ibid.

154. Ibid.

155. *The Courier*, November 28, 2000.

156. Ibid.

157. Ibid.

158. Ibid.

159. *The Courier*, December 2, 2000.

In 2012, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that 642 people had died of mesothelioma by 2010 and as the number of victims was continuing to rise, it was predicted that mortality would not peak before 2020.<sup>160</sup> Despite the increasing incidence of asbestos-related disease, it was the threat of industrial action that eventually persuaded the Australian governments to bring the ban forward. Former employees claim the company was aware of the dangers posed by asbestos before it stopped using the product in 2003.<sup>161</sup> One former employee, who stopped working at Bendix in 2002, said employees were always told asbestos was perfectly safe. He said workers handled both white and blue asbestos, the latter being the most lethal:

Every single day we would be handling asbestos for hours on end, breathing it in, in rooms with sometimes poor ventilation, we even used to roll it in a ball and throw it at each other; that's the level at which it was available. But during family days held annually, the entire factory was opened to families and children, apart from the areas where asbestos was used. If they didn't know it was dangerous, why did they block it off to people who didn't work there?<sup>162</sup>

The AMWU Occupational Health and Safety officer involved in the dispute pointed to the difficult situation for the workers who had to decide who to trust in making these decisions and succinctly sums up the dilemma facing union organisers in these workplaces:

At Bendix Mintex, the union opposed the use of asbestos but the workers were told, which was true, that the substitutes had dangers as well – i.e., a mixture of lead and synthetic mineral fibres that meant they would have had to have regular blood lead levels done ... The workers were rather in an invidious position. I do not wish people to judge workers without any understanding of the lack of choices people felt they had despite the dangers of asbestos. It's easy not being the person having to make a choice between safety, health, and food on the table.<sup>163</sup>

In October 2018, the US Securities and Exchange Commission announced that it was investigating Honeywell International's accounting that related to asbestos. According to a regulatory filing, Honeywell's revised estimate for these liabilities had amounted to \$2.61 billion, a jump of \$1.09 billion. Although Honeywell sold Bendix Friction Materials in 2014, it was still responsible for the liabilities that related to the manufacture

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160. *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 5, 2012.

161. "Former Bendix Workers Sign Up to Register amid Asbestos Fears," *The Courier*, January 14, 2013.

162. *The Courier*, January 14, 2013.

163. Beaton and Blunden, "The Miracle Fiber Exposed as a Deadly Threat." Quoting an interview and email from Deborah Vallance.

of automotive brake linings that contained asbestos.<sup>164</sup> The company's manufacturing plant in Ballarat at that time was still employing around 250 people.

## Conclusion

This era had marked the ups and downs of the labour movement probably more dramatically than any other period in its history. While weariness and age had caught up with the old comrades battling the old causes, new energy and enthusiasm was being demonstrated by their sons and daughters. The Vietnam War, free university education and the Whitlam years had released a generation of Ballarat youth from the yoke of conformity that their parents had worn in the post-war period. The militancy that was occurring in the white collar unions, particularly in the education and health sectors, was being driven by these young people, and their participation in local government and community associations, and the security of working in well-paid jobs, made them a force with which to be reckoned.

However, the challenges that each generation has faced, are still underpinned by the balancing of competing interests for the benefit of the labour movement, and the role of peak bodies in trying to find ways to protect workers during the constant cycles of change is as important as it ever has been. Peak bodies have always had a role in bringing individual unions together to find unity on the broader interests of the labour movement. In every decision made affecting workers some benefit and some lose but the particular role that peak bodies play is mediating those decisions and maintaining the delicate balance between solidarity and unity is an important one.

As Secretary Shearer said:

Yes there was left and right at Trades Hall Ballarat, in the main my observation was that delegates concentrated their time and effort on their union work and their political activity was secondary. But fighting the Kennett government assisted unity as we had a real and common enemy.<sup>165</sup>

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164. "Honeywell Facing Probe for Underestimating Asbestos Liability," Satterley & Kelley PLLC, accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.satterleylaw.com/blog/2018/10/honeywell-facing-probe-for-underestimating-asbestos-liability.shtml>.

165. Shearer, interview with author.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

When the government issued the invitation for the national (pandemic) talks, the Prime Minister asked both sides to put down their weapons. We were happy to agree, but the truth is we haven't been carrying weapons – we have been holding a shield for the last few decades, trying to protect what Australian workers have in our laws and institutions that provide fairness and dignity at work.

—Sally McManus<sup>1</sup>

When researching the history of the Ballarat Trades Hall, the analogy of a tree seemed a fitting correlation for an organisation that had started out full of energy and enthusiasm, and 150 years later was still standing there, battered and pock-marked, but nevertheless tall and proud. However, the period from the 1980s is reminiscent of a coppice – an area of woodland in which the trees or shrubs are periodically cut back to ground level to stimulate growth and provide firewood or timber.

Paul Kelly outlines three phases of Australia's modern history.<sup>2</sup> The first, from white occupation to the late nineteenth century was the foundation period; the second, during most of the twentieth century, was the experiment in nation building, which had been guided by the post-Federation ideals – white Australia, industry protection, wage arbitration, state paternalism and imperial benevolence. Ballarat had been a flag-bearer during these phases and the industrial and political wings had agreed upon the underpinnings. From the 1890s until the early 1950s the blue-collar working class consistently made up two-thirds of the workforce, providing the social anchor for the labour movement's support. The breakdown of this historic constituency was and remains a challenge for Ballarat labour movement leaders.

The third phase from the 1980s embraced the free-market economy and left Ballarat reeling. Since then, Ballarat workers have been faced with redefining structural trends and dealing with repeated change, including recognising women as a major constituency. Lindsay Tanner tackled the issue in 1999 in his book *Open Australia*. At that time, rather than sitting back and applauding politely, his challenge was to redefine Australia's

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1. Sally McManus, "National Press Club Address" (speech, National Press Club, Canberra, December 1, 2020), transcript, accessed January 12, 2021, <https://www.actu.org.au/actu-media/speeches-and-opinion/sally-mcmanus-national-press-club-wednesday-2nd-december-2020>.
  2. Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: Power, Politics and Business in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994).



national identity, which was based on being open, independent and racially tolerant.<sup>3</sup> Progress towards that goal has been slow.

Ballarat's task had been harder than many other cities due to the pressures of localism and a long tradition of depending on powerful friends at the centre of decision-making, which goes back to Deakin, Scullin, Menzies and other formidable figures including Victorian premiers - Hollway, Bolte and Bracks – to protect Ballarat's interests. Union and peak body decision-making has centralised and regional interests have been more difficult to pursue. So this thesis finishes during substantial change.

### **The Pests Continue to Hover**

After the failure of the Howard Government to reshape the waterfront in 1998, other restrictions based on the only strength that had been undeniably the right of workers – the right to withdraw their labour – have continued. The *Workplace Relations (Work Choices) Act 2005* legislated an elaborate and highly technical regime of requirements that had to be followed for strike action to be “protected”: Australia's restrictions on union activity are uniquely severe among OECD countries and include strict limits upon union entry and activity in the workplace and unusual limits on rights to industrial action. The International Labour Organisation has repeatedly found that Australia's anti-union laws breach international legal applications and that the obligation to pass gains in wages and conditions to non-union employees is unique in the world.<sup>4</sup>

In Ballarat (and Australia) a transformation to casualisation and the “gig” economy has become an increasing element in the workforce. While wages have stagnated and transition from full-time secure employment accelerated, one of the consequences was transfer of wealth from employees to organisational benefit. A recent submission to the Senate Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers noted that the gig economy was of political significance given the latest challenge to the traditional model of “labour versus ownership”.<sup>5</sup> No sector has been exempt from this transformation. Even in university employment, once the most secure of occupations, casualisation and short-term

3. Lindsay Tanner, *Open Australia* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1999).

4. “Raise wages, help recovery,” *The Age*, December 31, 2020.

5. “Select Committee on the Future of Work and Workers,” Submission 123, Parliament of Australia, accessed November 20, 2020, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Future\\_of\\_Work\\_and\\_Workers](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Future_of_Work_and_Workers).

contracts now apply to almost half of employees. The decline in wages and the loss of full-time employment in the past 20 years has removed many benefits that had been taken for granted by employees in the past, most recently penalty rates.<sup>6</sup>

In Ballarat, the consequences of these events have contributed, as in most industrialised countries, to a striking decline in union membership. In 2016, membership of unions in Australia was 14.5 per cent of the workforce; however, at this same time in Nordic countries, union membership continued to be above 50 per cent, where unemployment benefits were being administered by union-affiliated institutions. As in Australia, union members in the OECD tend to be predominantly male, middle aged (between 25 and 54 years old), with medium or high skills, and working in medium or large firms on a permanent contract. Young workers and casual and/or part-time employees in short-term work arrangements are much less likely to be union members than older workers, full-time workers and permanent employees.

### **What Remains Unchanged?**

While the proportion of workers in unions has changed dramatically, what has remained unaltered are the employment statistics of a working class as defined by Turner half a century ago. Wage-earners are a large segment of the working population. In June 2018, the percentage of wage-earners had increased to two-fifths of the population (10.6 million wage-earners, of whom 49.9 per cent were male and 50.1 per cent female).<sup>7</sup> Of male employees, 75.1 per cent were working full time, with average weekly total cash earnings \$1810.90; of the female employees, 45.4 per cent were working full time, with average weekly total cash earnings of \$1515.60.<sup>8</sup>

As long as there is a working class, there will be a need for organisations to protect vulnerable workers from exploitation. Most of these workers in lower income brackets probably have the same concerns as their fellow workers had one hundred and fifty years ago but need to be convinced of the benefits of unionism. The shift in industrial relations

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6. “Selected Higher Education Statistics Staff 2010 Full-Time Equivalence,” Department of Education, Skills and Employment, accessed November 20 2020, <https://www.dese.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/resources/selected-higher-education-statistics-staff-2010-full-time-equivalence>.

7. Penny Vandenbroek, “Australian Earnings Data: A Quick Guide,” Department of Parliamentary Services, accessed November 20, 2020, [https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/3773679/upload\\_binary/3773679.pdf](https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/library/prspub/3773679/upload_binary/3773679.pdf).

8. Ibid.

power over the past two decades has affected the lowest paid workers – labourers, machine operators, hospitality and retail workers – who have gone backwards in real terms.<sup>9</sup> This is more accentuated in regional areas. Young workers and women are still worse off in Ballarat continuing the acknowledgement in Ballarat from the early 1990s of that growing problem and underemployment remains a worrying aspect of Ballarat’s employment patterns. In 2019, the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered \$331,386 in wages for 725 underpaid workers after conducting surprise audits in Albury–Wodonga, Ballarat and Wollongong. Overall compliance rates for the regions varied, with 59 percent of businesses in Albury–Wodonga fully compliant with workplace laws; 54 per cent in Ballarat; and 38 per cent in Wollongong.<sup>10</sup>

When the unions met in Ballarat in 1891 and agreed to form a political arm of the labour movement, they acknowledged that the working class needed a stronger voice in the public domain. Over time, how that voice has been exercised has disappointed some at both ends of the political spectrum, but for most of its history, the BT&LC’s key players have not been deterred from engaging with their own community in public debate in a more direct way than their metropolitan counterparts. While powerful unions have come and gone at BTH, the peak body has always played a leadership role in protecting the collective interests of safe workplaces, fighting for secure jobs, and providing support for retirement; it has even been involved in the broader issues of corporal punishment in schools and the need for youth clubs and kindergartens.<sup>11</sup> The role of peak bodies in identifying political issues across industries has been an important role for delegates of the BT&LC, and it has not changed over time. Using the parliamentary process has been an effective tool and working with parliamentarians to reform the *Victorian Workplace Safety Legislation Amendment (Workplace Manslaughter and Other Matters) Bill 2019* has been the most recent achievement of the Ballarat peak body. The circumstances of Robert Daykin’s death took a long time to be redressed – not that his was the first nor, sadly, nor will it be the last.

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9. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), “The Pursuit of Gender Equity: An Uphill Battle – How Does Australia Compare?”, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.oecd.org/australia/Gender2017-AUS-en.pdf>.
  10. “Regional Workers Back-Paid Over \$330,000,” Fair Work Ombudsman, June 13, 2019, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2019-media-releases/june-2019/20190613-regional-education-campaign-report-media-release>.
  11. Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch, File No. A6122.

Progressive causes still see Ballarat Trades Hall as a facilitator and logical resource when building a campaign around community concerns. This is distinct from the movement itself deciding on a course of action and inviting others to join. Many social and political organisations still engage with the labour movement in active campaigning – the BT&LC’s support for the Yes vote in the Same-Sex Marriage Plebiscite was open and enthusiastic and culminated in the gathering on the day of the announcement of the result, which is remembered by many. Other groups such as the Free West Papuan Movement, Eureka Day, Social Housing, Climate, the Ballarat Progressive Alliance and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons have regularly convened at Ballarat Trades Hall.

This regrowth that has developed from that active brand of militancy led by the BT&LC in the 1930s was snuffed out in the struggles of the 1950s, when even Gordon Scott, local Liberal MLA and mayor of Ballarat at the time, was mentioned in ASIO files for moving to rescind a resolution refusing the use of the town hall for a meeting on peace, although the note acknowledged “Scott is a prominent citizen of Ballarat.”<sup>12</sup> The recent Schools Strike 4 Climate Action came to the BT&LC for support, and on that day of action, there was a scene very similar to Secretary Shearer’s description of the Metal Trades meeting when they spilled out from the hall, into the passage and out on to the street blocking it. The support from the BT&LC was regarded by the students as a resource. The use of new social media techniques has allowed local organising to flourish and young activists are building their skills in this area.

The ACTU’s Your Rights at Work campaign became one of the most significant political campaigns mounted by a non-party political group in Australia for its blend of television advertising, mobilisation and grassroots organising, web-based campaigning and televised national days of protest. The campaign contributed to the ALP’s victory in the 2007 federal election and long-standing Ballarat ALP federal representative Catherine King had the largest swing to her in her 20-year representation.<sup>13</sup> It showed that the influence of the trade union movement can still be much wider than its paid-up

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12. Communist Party of Australia – Victoria – Ballarat Branch, File No. A6122.

13. “Vic Division – Ballarat,” 2007 federal election results for the House of Representatives, Australian Electoral Commission, accessed December 3, 2020, <https://results.aec.gov.au/13745/Website/HouseDivisionFirstPrefs-13745-198.htm>.

membership by mobilising and politicising family members, friends, and community members.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of these challenges the BT&LC provided affiliation charts indicate that there had been an increase in growth from 13,071 unionists in 2011 to 16,580 in 2017; although these figures can reflect factional interests, they also indicate the growth in service industries in Ballarat, an advantage that large regional cities have and where unionists such as ANWF members are increasingly concentrated.

## Summary of Findings and Conclusion

BT&LC is a symbol as much as an organisation. As Brigden indicates affiliated unions retained their separation and identity while:

“combining to form another collective union identity to pursue workers’ and unions’ interests, in turn creating a new set of relationships between unions. Deciding to affiliate with these collective peak unions, a choice made by individual unions or union branches, extended the scale of a union’s activity.”<sup>15</sup>

It is important in understanding the role of BT&LC, it has to be remembered that the participants did not act in a vacuum, their workplaces and their neighbourhoods chose them as representatives of the broader labour movement. The key players knew each other well, they were often related and they enjoyed the cut and thrust of ideas. Most served on the BT&LC in a variety of roles. For most of its history BT&LC has only had one or two staff. Its budget has been designed to pay for their employment. The secretaries have had to be frugal, but they have had one advantage- they had earned the respect of their peers before they were employed and they have established substantial authority in the role, remaining trusted and respected over long periods of time. Seven secretaries in 106 years is indicative of very stable environment. The voluntary delegates, especially those who have taken executive positions, have had many responsibilities including running local branches of their own unions and participating in the ALP. Ballarat labour movement politics was determined at Trades Hall until 1980 and they certainly continued to play an active role after that in ALP matters. BT&LC was a

14. Kathie Muir, “‘Your Rights at Work’ Campaign: Australia’s ‘Most Sophisticated Political Campaign’,” *Labour History* 51, no. 1 (2010), accessed December 3, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00236561003654735>.

15. Brigden, “Analysing Internal Power Dynamics in Peak Unions: A Conceptual Framework,” 484.

meeting ground but as well was an informal network who exercised control in a range of labour movement activities.

Until the 1980s Ballarat ALP politics was being determined by the same group of men who were active at BT&LC, except when CPA members were also running their own organisation. The BT&LC Secretary was also often ALP campaign secretary. The delegates have expected BTH to be a meeting place, a central location for all. They have also depended on their officials to provide broader leadership cementing the social connections. Each year at the change of president the same themes emerged. ‘Mr Spielvogel upheld the dignity of the institution and greatly impressed those attending the social functions with his ability and grip of the highly important questions of the day.’<sup>16</sup>

As the public face of unionism, they have also responded to the big community issues of the day from conscription in WWI, Christianity v. Communism from the 1930s to 1950s and privatization of state assets in the 1990s. They have also been seen to be participants in broader community responsibilities within institutions such as the School of Mines, the local TAFE board, the board of Ballarat Regional Industries and the Ballarat Economic Development Board. By being a focal point, they have relieved individual unions of the need to divert resources and have been for most of their history a dependable custodian for the labour movement at large.

The themes—ideological conflict, solidarity and unity, gender and missing history and place and space that have underpinned this study have been examined within that context. BT&LC has been at the centre, shaping these themes not through hierarchical, externally determined authority but by the recognition of the labour movement that their interests could be placed in its hands as their trusted and tested representatives. It is also important to note the outcomes are distinctive in comparison to other regional peak bodies, reflecting the particular environment in which they operated.

### ***Ideological Conflict***

Central and constantly recurring, with a range of protagonists, both close to home and distant, ideological conflict has dictated much of the BT&LC’s agenda. For a brief period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, the internal struggle over ideology consumed and

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16. BT&LC Minutes, July 19, 1923.

almost destroyed the labour movement. Now conflict has returned to where it began, with governments intensifying their attacks on gains made by workers over the past 150 years. Whether the labour movement has the cohesion to regain its share of the wealth that it helped to create is still not clear, but it remains a major ideological struggle that still faces a new generation of Ballarat workers.

The structural changes of the past 40 years have also meant that ideological conflict has been more difficult to define. Both wings of the labour movement have struggled for a replacement philosophy that resonates with their supporters. Neo-liberalism won in the initial period, but the new threats of climate change and worldwide pandemics have repositioned the role of government as central to the nation's well-being. Tanner made a brave start to the debate, but the old enduring themes of solidarity and masculinity have too often interfered in a free and open discussion.

### *Solidarity and Unity*

The tension of maintaining loyalty in the labour movement is ever-present, now more disconnected given that the world had become more complex and pressing. While the 1980s Accord has been the last attempt to build unity around the worldwide issues that had been facing Australia, it, too, appears to have ended in defeat. In return for improved living conditions for an elite working class, low-paid migrant workers, young people and women have been sacrificed. The Accord was successful for the first 10 years. However, following the Howard Government's Workchoices legislation and the Abbott Government's changes, less powerful workers remained on awards while the more powerful and better organised gain from enterprise agreements.

The consequence of more recent centralisation as a hierarchy of peak union bodies has become established in Australia, while providing undoubted advantages, has damaged one of the core principles of unionism – solidarity. The foundation of solidarity is engagement in decision-making at many levels. When the MTHC decided to change its name to the VTHC in 1968, thereby changing a set of arrangements that had been in place for more than 100 years, it created a hierarchy which altered the power balance dramatically, with individual unions then following the VTHC's example and concentrating their resources at the centre. Now, while claiming that unity is a feature of the movement, it is more difficult to be certain that unity will be maintained when

difficult decisions have to be made, as solidarity has not been tested with the same intensity as it has been in the past.

What has been lost is solidarity at the local level, which for so long was a feature – no longer is the local union organiser able to maintain those solid relationships with workplaces, which identified emerging leaders, provided opportunity for feedback, and engaged workers in the broader issues of the movement. Ballarat has been able to withstand this challenge more determinedly in no small part due to the presence of the prominent BTH building in Camp Street. However, while workers know where to seek out support, the decision-makers are no longer on hand. The secretary of the BT&LC is dependent on building relationships with more remote figures in leadership roles. As Doug Cameron has identified: “Modern policy is predominantly determined by professional advisers, costed by bureaucrats and tested by pollsters.”<sup>17</sup> The process is similar in the industrial peak bodies as in the political wing. The VTHC currently has 68 staff who formulate policy<sup>18</sup> and the ACTU has 80 staff according to their current directories.<sup>19</sup> Most of the regional peak bodies have one or two staff.

### ***Gender and Missing History***

While there was an optimistic beginning to the inclusion of Ballarat women in shaping the labour movement, progress on that front has lagged. As I complete this study, a major union, the CFMEU, is being torn apart by an issue which came to public attention around the issue of violence against women.<sup>20</sup> The failure of leading trade union officials to speak publicly in support of the strong stance taken by the secretary of the ACTU against John Setka, the Secretary of the CFMEU (Construction Division) is the most recent example and the denigration of Anthony Albanese for daring to take a stand on it was regarded as fair game by some union leaders. Is this still an example of the labour movement being ‘sex-blind’? Domestic violence impacts many women, including unionists.

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17. Ibid.

18. “Who’s Around the Hall,” Victorian Trades Hall Council, accessed November 11, 2020, [https://www.weareunion.org.au/staff\\_and\\_officials](https://www.weareunion.org.au/staff_and_officials).

19. “ACTU National Union Directory,” Australian Council of Trade Unions, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.actu.org.au/about-the-actu/directory>.

20. David Marin-Guzman, “CFMEU Leaderless as Resignation Fuels Dysfunction,” *Australian Financial Review*, November 6, 2020, accessed November 11, 2020, <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/workplace/cfmeu-leaderless-as-resignation-fuels-dysfunction-20201105-p56byd>.



From the 1920s until the 1960s the records of BT&LC do not indicate that redressing the inequality for women in the workplace was a consideration, in fact there were numerous resolutions indicating women in the workplace were seen as a threat.<sup>21</sup> The culture of masculinity is a continuing issue and Ged Kearney, when she was the ACTU president, put it strongly in 2016, noting that women were reporting that sexism and a “masculinist” culture were alive and well within their union workplaces.<sup>22</sup> Her research showed that the culture had a strong impact on union “business” such as collective bargaining and other industrial agendas. Women reported that issues that had been perceived as “women’s issues” (pay equity, work and care, discrimination) were being marginalised from what were considered to be true “industrial”, and therefore important, union issues.<sup>23</sup>

Women earn less and they are often working in casual and part-time jobs. For Ballarat, data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that in September 2020, the gap in participation rates for women compared with men was wider than in any other area of the state – 51 per cent of women compared with 66.8 per cent of men. Ballarat’s female employment-to-population ratio of 46.9 per cent was also lower than all regions except the Latrobe Valley in the Gippsland region.<sup>24</sup> The World Economic Forum ranks Australia 24th on a global index that measures gender equality, and gender inequality is readily apparent in Australia’s labour market: Australian (and Ballarat) women and men still do not participate in the labour market as equals and employment and economic outcomes remain unequal and highly gendered.<sup>25</sup> Yet some in the industrial and political wings, hankering after the old days of industrial unions based on traditional blue-collar workers has not worn off. Where do politicians of all persuasions still go for their “photo-ops”, where they can be seen in “high viz” vests standing beside young male workers? While those politicians also like to pose with small children in childcare centres, they are rarely seen talking to the mainly female workers standing in the background trying to

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21. Two examples-BT&LC Minutes, October 12, 1933. ‘The effect of the meat-workers’ strike would be the reduction of wages and speeding up of the possibility if introducing female labour into the workforce as has happened in New Zealand’ (cd) BT&LC Minutes October 26, 1946. That this council enter an emphatic protest against the action of Government departments in utilizing female labour for night work and displacing male labour thereby. (cd.)

22. Rae Cooper, “Why Wooing Women Is the Way Forward for Trade Unions,” *The Conversation*, April 27, 2016, accessed January 5, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/why-woosing-women-is-the-way-forward-for-trade-unions-57208>.

23. Ibid.

24. “Job Gap Widens,” *The Courier*, October 23, 2020.

25. Barbara M. Fraumeni, Gang Liu (eds), World Economic Forum, 2020. Global Gender Gap Report 2020, accessed online 11 November 021<http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF>.

keep their unruly charges from causing trouble. Tanner’s argument that we must pursue jobs of the future, not cling to the jobs of the past which are often more dangerous and dirtier than the new jobs, but requiring greater emphasis on education, information technology and creativity is an important one.<sup>26</sup>

Women are now well and truly part of the mainstream – no longer at the margins – of union membership. While the initial reforms to encourage gender equality have improved opportunities for women, cultures of exclusionary masculinity are strongly embedded, especially in traditional unions and where there has been long-established male leadership. The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation is Australia’s largest national union and professional nursing and midwifery organisation. With eight state and territory branches, it represents the professional, industrial and political interests of over 290,000 nurses, midwives and carers across the country.<sup>27</sup> The high-profile CFMEU has 111,000 members in construction, manufacturing, mining and maritime.<sup>28</sup>

However, there is also increasing evidence of changing attitudes among younger and more diverse workers, and those from different cultural and ethnic groups. As men as well as women better understand the patterns long experienced by women of juggling family and part-time insecure work, the challenge for the labour movement, in the context of a significantly gendered reconfiguration of union membership, is to make themselves more relevant to their new heartland.

### ***Place and Space***

The most apparent theme has been spatiality – the geographical location of the Ballarat Trades Hall building at the centre of Ballarat’s cultural and public life being a significant aspect. Important as that is, the early geographical location of workers near their workplaces has determined many aspects of life in Ballarat, just as the wealth of the goldfields created Wendouree Parade, the most prestigious address. Having always had a presence, Trades Hall has been repurposed and adapted numerous times, but it has never been ignored and has never fallen into disrepair and destruction as befell the original

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26. Tanner, *Open Australia*.

27. “About the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation,” Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, accessed November 11, 2020, <http://anmf.org.au/pages/about-the-anmf>.

28. “CFMEU, Maritime Union of Australia merger approved by Fair Work Commission”, ABC March 6, 2018, accessed 8 Sept 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-03-06/cfmeu-maritime-union-to-merge-fair-work-decision/9517618>.

AWU building. The building has been a major responsibility for its custodians, BT&LC, which they have rarely shirked but have certainly been daunted by. During my study the rumour that one floor had been used as a brothel has not been substantiated and remains a rumour, although it did come from the redoubtable Secretary Williams. The challenge of maintaining the viability of the building is ever-present and restoration of its original ceiling and appropriate modernisation remains an active goal of the current leadership. The Galloway Monument in the main Ballarat thoroughfare, Sturt Street, has also been the site of mass gatherings and remains so. The physical presence of the labour movement in the heart of Ballarat, again, sets it apart from many contemporary cities and towns. Public monuments are usually determined by civic dignitaries who do not place a high value on the contribution of workers to the creation of that community. Fortunately for the labour movement in Ballarat, their forebears were not so reticent.

## **Finally**

Adapting to change keeps an organisation alive after 150 years, and that is why the BT&LC is still at the centre of Ballarat public life. Just as many young Australians in the 1890s were beginning to see themselves as Australians, not only as British colonial subjects, this generation is engaged in taking the next step towards acknowledging that they are part of a different world. That world includes transitioning over time to feeling at home with Asia, while understanding previous generations' part in the colonisation of Australia and the gendered nature of Australian society. When our forebears stood up to face the state at the Eureka uprising, they took an unprecedented step in establishing a new identity for citizens. They were from many different origins and backgrounds, but they promised to stand truly by each other and fight to defend their rights and liberties. The BT&LC still takes pride in that Eureka tradition and it has rejected the role of innocent bystander continuing to assert the rights of workers to have influence on how their world is to be shaped.

That indomitable figure in Ballarat history, William Guthrie Spence, summed this up in a way that rings true to the spirit of E. P. Thompson's social history of the working class, and indeed to the spirit of this thesis:

Workers – men and women – are the true heroes and heroines of the world. Their names are unrecorded in history, but their work lives after them and has given colour and force to a movement which cannot die. After all, names matter not; it is deeds that count.<sup>29</sup>

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29. Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, 11.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: BT&LC Presidents and Secretaries

	President	Union	Secretary	Union
1884			James Graham	Foreman Ararat- Ballarat Railway
1885	Gabriel Hunter		J.I.Anderson	Typographical Association
1886	Thomas Dyer		J.I.Anderson	Typographical Association
1887	G.Williams	Amalgamated Miners Association	y	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1888	G.Williams	Amalgamated Miners Association	T. Bailey	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1889	J.I. Anderson	Typographical Association	John Wilson	Operative Bootmakers Union
1890	Thomas Porter	Amalgamated Engineering Union	John Wilson	Operative Bootmakers Union
1891	Thomas Porter	Amalgamated Engineering Union	John Wilson	Operative Bootmakers Union
1892	W. Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union	John Wilson	Operative Bootmakers Union
1893	W. Harrison	Woollen Mills Union	John Wilson	Operative Bootmakers Union
1894	T. McAllan	Carpenters Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1895	I. McLachlan	Carpenters Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1896	C. Dorter	Operative Bakers Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1897	T. McAllan	Carpenters Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1898	T.H. Dunstan	Tinsmiths Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1899	F.R. Williams	Carpenters Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1900	T. Campbell		William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1901	A.N. McKissock	Typographical Society	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1902	A.N. McKissock	Typographical Society	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1903	W. Brooks	Operative Bakers Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1904	W. McKenzie	Carpenters Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1905	W. Brooks	Bootmakers Union ?	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1906	W. Harrison	Woollen Mills Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1907	J. Martin	Ironmongers Society	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1908	J. Harison	Operative Bakers Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1909	A.McKissock H. McAuley	Australian Workers Union	William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1910	W. Stephens		William Hurdsfield	Bricklayers Union
1911	A. Stewart	Australian Workers Union	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1912	W. Harrison	Woollen Mills Union	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1913	J. Harrison	Gas Employees Union	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1914	T. Richards	Bootmakers Union	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1915	J.H. Hocking	Federated Mining Employees Assoc.	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1916	A.S. Thomson	Carters & Drivers Union	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1917	J. McNeill	Australian Workers Union	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1918	A.J. Rowe	Fed Implement makers	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1919	McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union

1920	E. Hall	Plumbers & Gasfitters Employees	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1921	R. Whitrick	Grocers Employees Union	John. Kean	Australian Workers Union
1922	R. Merlin	Federated Carters & Drivers	John Kean	Australian Workers Union
1923	Fred Spielvogel	Operative Painters & Decorators	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1924	J. James	Federated Carters & Drivers	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1925	W.J. Dalton	Clerical Union	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1926	J. Lonsdale	Amalgamated Engineering Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1927	R. Hill		Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1928	J. Le Cras		Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1929	Henry Merlin	Australian Railways Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1930	W. Lloyd	Theatrical Employees Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1931	F. Sheehan	Breadcarters Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1932	W. Whitworth	Locomotive Engine Drivers Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1933	Cecil Merlin	Wool & Basil Workers Federation	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1934	M. O'Donnell	Textile Workers Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1935	E. Allen		Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1936	W. Tonkin	Municipal Employees Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1937	J. Wright		Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1938	A. Loft	Textile Workers Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1939	Bert Black	Boilermakers Society	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1940	S. Roberts	Theatrical Employees Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1941	Ken Miller	Operative Painters & Decorators	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1942	Ted Rowe	Amalgamated Engineering Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1943	Ted Rowe	Amalgamated Engineering Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1944	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1945	A.Brown		Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1946	Griff. Beanland	Rail Engineers Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1947	'Tony' Restarick	Amalgamated Engineering Union	Stewart Miller	Tramway Employees Association
1948	L. McNieice	Carpenters Union	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1949	H.W. Bradford	Tinsmiths Union	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1950	W. McMahan	Carpenters Union	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1951	J. Henry	Locomotive Employees	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1952	J. Henry	Locomotive Employees	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1953	J. Henry	Locomotive Employees	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1954	J. Wade		Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1955	H. McGrath	Carpenters Union	Bill McAdam	Federated Carters & Drivers Industrial Union
1956	H. McGrath	Carpenters Union	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1957	G.R. Winberg		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1958	G.R. Winberg		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1959	R.G. Sandall		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1960	R.G. Sandall		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union

1961	M.Miller		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1962	M.Miller		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1963	E.I. Morris	Typographical Association	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1964	H. Townsend		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1965	Len Chung	Textiles Union	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1966	J.A. Inglis	Typographical Association	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1967	H.F. Keown		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1968	Lou. Bird	Amalgamated Engineering Union	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1969	R.A. Kilgour		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1970	R. J. Templar		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1971	G. Mc. Sandlant		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1972	C.R. Rogers		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1973	N.R. Kerr		Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1974	Jim Burns	Operative Painters & Decorators	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1975	Harold Foo	Typographical Association	Beau Williams	Amalgamated Engineering Union
1976	Don Henderson	Building Workers Industrial Union	Jim Burns	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1977	A. Craig		Jim Burns	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1978	T. Borchers	Carpenters Union	Jim Burns	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1979	Lou. Bird		Jim Burns	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1980	Jim. Caddy	Amalgamated Metal Workers Union	Jim Burns	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1981	Dave Dawson	Amalgamated Metal Workers Union	Jim Burns	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1982	Dave Dawson	Amalgamated Metal Workers Union	Frank Knight	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1983	B. Ward		Frank Knight	Operative Painters & Decorators Union
1984	B. Ward T.Borchers	Carpenters Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1985	Brian Murray	Australian Railways Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1986	Brian Murray	Australian Railways Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1987	L. Burton	HEF Number 2	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1988	David Hoffman	HEF Number 2	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1989	David Hoffman	HEF Number 2	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1990	Dulcie Corbett	Federated Liquor & Allied Industries	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1991	Dennis Noonan	Amalgamated Metal Workers Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1992	Arlene Martin	HEF Number 1	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1993	Peter Reid	Council of Academic Staff Associations -	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1994	G.J. O'Keefe	Locomotive Employees	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1995	Dave Dawson	Amalgamated Metal Workers Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1996	Peter Hanley	Community & Public Sector Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1997	Helen McKnight	Australian Education Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1998	Helen .McKnight	Australian Education Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
1999	Dan Harris	Municipal Employees Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union
2000	Dan Harris	Municipal Employees Union	Graeme Shearer	Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union



<b>Appendix 2: Kathryn Steel Table Adapted to BT&amp;LC</b>			
<b>1989</b>	<b>Mobilization</b>	<b>Exchange</b>	<b>Regulation</b>
Industrial	<p>Organised Workcare Rally (July)</p> <p>Support for HEF Strike at Base Hospital (May)</p> <p>Meeting with Building Industry organisers about demarcation issues. (October)</p>	<p>Participation in VPT&amp;LC conference on range of industrial issues (Sept)</p> <p>Issue raised with President ACTU (August)</p> <p>President MTH addressed Council (June)</p> <p>Meeting with Secretary MTH (November)</p>	<p>Conducted seminar on Award Restructuring (July)</p> <p>Conducted first -ever seminar for Women In Employment (March)</p>
Political	<p>Sub-committee elected to assist candidates in Federal election (June) Meeting with local MLA Frank Sheehan to discuss extension of group apprenticeship.(Sept)</p>	<p>Joint Dinner with Dept. of Labour for Health and Safety Officers.</p>	<p>Issues raised with Minister for Police and Emergency Services (Sept)</p> <p>State Minister for Health, (July)</p>
Social	<p>Donation to Ballarat Children's Home (May)</p> <p>Support given to Base Hospital (July)</p>	<p>Attendance at regional launch of State Literacy Strategy (June)</p> <p>Junction Theatre Group performance</p> <p>Joined joint taskforce with BCC on Intractable Waste (March)</p>	

<b>Appendix 3: Affiliated Unions 1884-1990</b>					
<b>Union</b>	<b>1884</b>	<b>1918</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>1926</b>	<b>1990</b>
Affiliated Teachers Union					X
Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) then amalgamated with Amalgamated Metals , Foundry & Ship wrights union	X	X	X	X	X
Amalgamated Miners Association (AMA)	X				
Australian Workers Union (AWU)	X	X	X	X	X
Australian Railways Union (ARU)			X	X	
Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Firemen					X
Machine and Implement Makers		X	X		
Bakers/biscuit makers &pastry (Bakery Employees &Salesmen’s Federation)		X	X	X	X
Blacksmiths Union		X			
Boilermakers Union	X		X		
Bootmakers (Boot Trade Employees Federation)		X			X
Builders Labourers Union	X	X	X		
Bricklayers (Victorian Operative Bricklayers Association)	X	X	X		X
Brick, Tile and Pottery Union			X		X
Butchers Union		X	X		
Carpenters (Amalgamated Society of Carpenters & Joiners)	X	X	X		X
Carters and Drivers Union		X	X		
Clerks (Federated Clerks Union)		X	X		X
Clothing trades (Clothing & Allied Trades Union)	X	X	X		X
Coach makers(Coachbuilders)	X	X	X		
Cold Storage Union					X
Collectors Union		X			
Chauffeurs Union		X			
Electrical Workers (Electrical Trade Union)		X		X	X
Engine Drivers & Firemens Association	X			X	X
Federated Confectioners Association					X
Food Preservers Union				X	X
Furnishing Trades Union			X		
Gas Workers Union		X	X		
Gas Employees Federated Union					X
Grocery and Shop Assistants Union		X	X		
Hairdressers Union		X			
Ham and Bacon Curers Union		X			
Hospital Employees Federation			X		

Hospital Employees Federation No.1 Branch					X
Hospital Employees Federation No.2 Branch					X
Hotel and Caterers Union		X			
Ironmoulders (Federated Ironworkers Association)	X	X	X		X
Letter Carriers Union			X		
Liquor Trades Federation		X	X		X
Livery Stables employees Union		X			
Locomotive Engineers Union			X		
Manufacturing Grocers			X		
Mental Hospital Employees Union			X		
Metal trades Union		X			
Miscellaneous Workers Union					X
Municipal Employees Union			X		
Musicians Union		X	X		
Operative Stonemasons Society	X		X		
Painters Union		X	X		
Plasterers Union	X	X	X		
Plumbers & Gasfitters Union	X	X	X		
Postal Workers Union			X		
Saddlers Union			X		
Storemen and Packers Union			X		
Tanners & Curriers Union	X				
Textile workers(Woolen Mills) Union		X	X		
Theatrical Employees Union		X	X		
Tramways Employees Association		X			
Typographers Association		X	X		
Timberworkers Union			X		
United Firefighters Union					X
United Tinsmiths, Ironworkers and Japanners Society of Victoria	X				
<p>This list cannot be assumed to be completely accurate as union names changed and unrecorded amalgamations occurred, as well as the major restructure during the 1980s. (Source: Saffin Papers and BT&amp;LC Records)</p>					

## Appendix 4: Approval from Federation University Australia Human Research Ethics Committee

### Approval

Human Research Ethics Committee



<b>Principal Researcher:</b>	Associate Professor Jeremy Smith
<b>Other/Student Researcher/s:</b>	Jennifer Beacham
<b>School/Section:</b>	<b>Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</b>
<b>Project Number:</b>	<b>B18-098</b>
<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>History of the Ballarat Regional Trades &amp; Labour Council.</b>
<b>For the period:</b>	29/08/2018 to 31/03/2020

*Quote the Project No: B18-098 in all correspondence regarding this application.*

Approval has been granted to undertake this project in accordance with the proposal submitted for the period listed above.

Please note: It is the responsibility of the Principal Researcher to ensure the Ethics Officer is contacted immediately regarding any proposed change or any serious or unexpected adverse effect on participants during the life of this project.

In Addition: Maintaining Ethics Approval is contingent upon adherence to all Standard Conditions of Approval as listed on the final page of this notification

#### **COMPLIANCE REPORTING DATES TO HREC:**

Annual project report:

**29 August 2019**

Final project report:

**30 April 2020**

The combined annual/final report template is available at:

<http://federation.edu.au/research/support-for-current-students-and-staff/ethics/human-ethics/human-ethics3>

Fiona Koop

**Coordinator Research Ethics**

**29 August 2018**

**Please note the standard conditions of approval on Page 2:**

# Approval

Human Research Ethics Committee



## STANDARD CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

1. Conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC.
2. Advise (email: [research.ethics@federation.edu.au](mailto:research.ethics@federation.edu.au)) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project.
3. Where approval has been given subject to the submission of copies of documents such as letters of support or approvals from third parties, these are to be provided to the Ethics Officer prior to research commencing at each relevant location.
4. Submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes. A combined amendment template covering the following is available on the HRE website: <http://federation.edu.au/research/research-support/ethics/human-ethics/human-ethics3>
  - Request for Amendments
  - Request for Extension. Note: Extensions cannot be granted retrospectively.
  - Changes to Personnel
5. Annual Progress reports on the anniversary of the approval date and a Final report within a month of completion of the project are to be submitted by the due date each year for the project to have continuing approval.
6. If, for any reason, the project does not proceed or is discontinued, advise the committee by completing the Final report form.
7. Notify the Ethics Officer of any changes in contact details including address, phone number and email address for any member of the research team.
8. The HREC may conduct random audits and / or require additional reports concerning the research project as part of the requirements for monitoring, as set out in the National statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

**Failure to comply with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and with the conditions of approval will result in suspension or withdrawal of approval.**