A TRANS-TASMAN COMMUNITY:

ORGANISATIONAL LINKS BETWEEN

THE ACTU AND NZFOL/NZCTU,

1970-1990

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of Master of Arts in History

in the University of Canterbury

by S. K. Harford

University of Canterbury

2006

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Contents

List of Tables, Figures and Plates

Abstract

This thesis explores the ties between the Australian and New Zealand peak trade union organisations, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the New Zealand Federation of Labour (NZFOL) and its successor, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) from 1970 to 1990. The parameters for this study define a period in which unions faced an increasingly unstable industrial relations climate and an integrating world economy as globalisation shifted priorities for government and business from the worker to the consumer. This set of circumstances challenged the leaders of the union organisations to develop and evolve their links, confirming a 'trans-Tasman union community'. Underpinned by a common labour market and models of state development the organisations sought to understand the globalising world from a joint perspective acknowledging their shared economic and industrial circumstances. This led to the development of united leadership over international issues, civil rights and trans-Tasman relations. The Australasian industrial relations models diverged in the 1980s and the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU reacted by transferring policy across the Tasman in an attempt to develop innovative responses to manage the rise of the New Right.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANU	Australian National University
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library
AUP	Auckland University Press
CUP	Cambridge University Press
MBL	Macmillan Brown Library
NBAC	Noel Butlin Archive Centre
NSW	New South Wales
NZCTU	New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
NZFOL	New Zealand Federation of Labour
NZLP	New Zealand Labour Party
OUP	Oxford University Press
UOP	University Otago Press
VUP	Victoria University Press

Introduction

This thesis studies the links between the Australian and New Zealand peak trade union organisations, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the New Zealand Federation of Labour (NZFOL) and its successor, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU) from 1970 to 1990. A core aspect of the project's rationale is the need to improve understanding of labour relations from a trans-Tasman perspective. This need arises from the continuing integration of the New Zealand and Australian economies, the increasing Australian ownership and management of New Zealand companies,[1] and the desirability of maintaining an open trans-Tasman labour market, which has existed for 200 years and consequently is accepted as a given by New Zealanders. This study is particularly pertinent given the recent introduction in Australia of industrial relations legislation which largely replicates New Zealand labour market reforms of the early 1990s.

The parameters for this research define a period in which unions faced an increasingly unstable industrial relations climate and an integrating world economy as globalisation shifted priorities for governments and business from the worker to the consumer.[2] My thesis asks why interaction between the two union movements took place and if, and how, this interaction constituted an Australasian 'community of interests'.[3] Following from these central research questions, I

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[1] New Zealand's largest union and key NZCTU affiliate the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU) highlights these factors as reasons to increase contacts and develop relationships with Australian colleagues. See EPMU website, http://www.nzepmu.org.nz/SITE Default/international/default.asp, retrieved 31 March 2005.

[2] P. Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand* (Cambridge & Melbourne, 2005), ch. 9

[3] This term was used in 1890 by Sir John Hall the New Zealand representative at the Australasian Federation Conference to describe trans-Tasman relations and oceanic connections. See Record of the Proceedings and Debates of

explore the key issues shaping the relationships between the peak union bodies, the factors which constrained and facilitated links, the significant drivers of connections, and how trans-Tasman labour relations changed over time. At a closer level of scrutiny, I examine the dynamics that shaped trans-Tasman connections. Specifically, my thesis investigates the responses of the Australian and New Zealand union leaders to the social, political and economic conditions that surrounded them, particularly with reference to race and gender dynamics, and to the general influence of the union movements to influence each other and Australasian society as a whole. The study seeks to understand union responses to globalisation and how this process affected workers in Australia and New Zealand during a period of dramatic social and economic change.

My thesis is divided into six chapters, the first of which explores the overarching methodologies employed and the literature informing this study. I then proceed to examine the development of the two peak union bodies, assessing their joint decision to formalise the Australasian union community and the historical background of the trans-Tasman labour market. The beginnings of the latest phase of globalisation and international economic integration can be traced to developments in the 1970s and 1980s, which are outlined in the third chapter. This section interprets the upheavals taking place in Australian and New Zealand communities and workplaces and how these experiences shaped the ACTU and NZFOL. I then examine the personal dimensions of the leaders' relationships and the extent to which the organisations provided Australasian direction within movements against apartheid and nuclear testing. Chapter four questions the degree to which gender and ethnic identities were moulded by trans-Tasman unionism and explores the moves on the part of the Australasian unionists to co-ordinate with workers' organisations in the South Pacific. The penultimate chapter analyses a period in which a free-trade deal between the two countries was signed and extensive migration of New Zealanders

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the Australasian Federation Conference, 1890, 175 cited in P. Mein Smith 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia – One Past, Two Historiographies', *Australian Historical Studies*,122:4 (October 2003), p. 318 and Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.115. It forms the last (less frequently quoted) part of Hall's remarks: "Nature has made 1,200 impediments to the inclusion of New Zealand in any such federation in the 1,200 miles of stormy ocean which lies between us and our brethren in Australia. That does not prevent the existence of a community of interests between us." See M. McCaskill, 'The Tasman connection: aspects of Australian-New Zealand relations', *Australian Geographical Studies,* 20 (April 1982), p.10

to Australia took place. Trans-Tasman emigration flows during the 1980s placed profound pressure on the Australasian union community and the associated freedom of movement between the two nations, as did the new Closer Economic Relations (CER) agreement. Finally, in response to increasing demands on the New Zealand union movement to retain political and economic relevance, extensive policy transfer occurred between the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU during the later 1980s resulting in each organisation providing the other with a potent counter-example of differing responses to the globalising world.
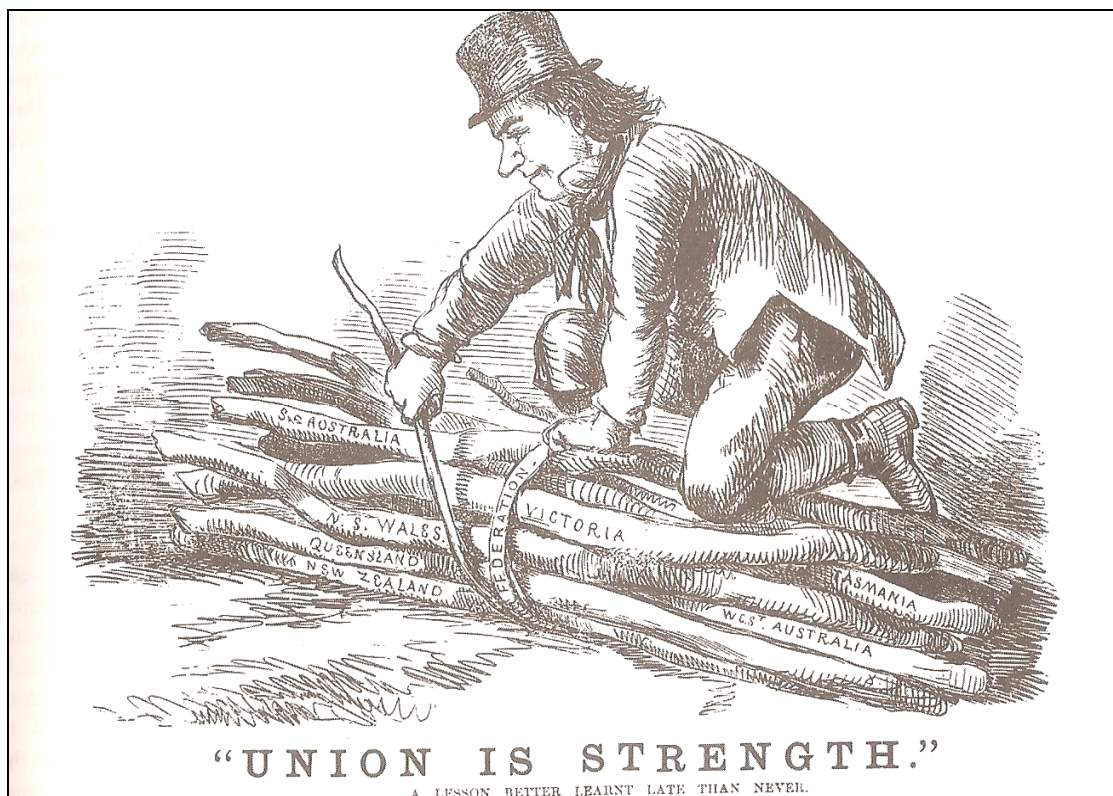
Plate 1: Anonymous, 'Union is Strength: A Lesson Better Learnt Late Than Never', *Melbourne Punch*, 26 January 1860. Source: I. Grant, *The Other Side of the Ditch: A cartoon century in the New Zealand-Australia relationship* (Wellington, 2001), p.15

Possibly the earliest cartoon on the subject of Australasian federation, it illustrates the advantages of union between the seven trans-Tasman colonies. It also, unwittingly, captures the principle of transnational unionism.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

The primary framework for my investigation into the links between the peak union organisations of Australia and New Zealand is transnational labour history. In this chapter I explore the nature of transnational history and its implications, evaluating the historiography in this new field. I then examine the dialogue surrounding the historical representation of the trans-Tasman world. The chapter concludes with an overview of the growth of labour history, with an Australian-New Zealand emphasis, and contiguous debates.

▪ **Transnational history**

Transnational history is a response to the changing dynamics of the world in which we live. In an attempt to capture the past more accurately, and explain the present, transnational and interactive approaches go beyond national borders and reflect an increasingly interconnected world. As institutions and social movements spread across national boundaries, as a global economy emerges and as migration increases internationally, historiography has responded by challenging nationally derived historical representations to present histories embedded within the web of globalisation.

In the past few years a range of historians have discussed the complicity of history in the creation and building of nation states. Central in this conversation is the 'imagined community' that

makes up the nation and is recognised as a construct sustained by professional history.[1]
Historians are now questioning the possible limitations or misrepresentations nation-centred accounts have produced and are looking beyond the blinkered representations of national narratives to place the past in a broader transnational context.

So, what is transnational history? Ann Cuthoys and Marilyn Lake define it as "the study of the ways in which past lives and events have been shaped by processes and relationships that transcended the borders of nation states."[2] In other words, transnational history seeks to explore more fully the traffic and transfers between nations and the "interactions"[3] and relationships of people across national borders. Yet this method examines more than just the movement of individuals or groups but also the translation of ideas, social movements, institutions and economic activity across and through national boundaries.[4]

Transnational history is not the only field of history that looks across national borders; global, regional, and comparative histories all go beyond the nation. Global history is generally concerned with explaining international phenomena, looking at the common history of the world as a whole. There are a growing number of influential modes of writing world history including the history of contacts or encounters between peoples and global economic exchanges. This latter style explores the creation of expanding 'worlds' or 'the world system' that enables international trade, production and consumption to develop which in turn translates into global power structures and dominant cultural practices.[5] Importantly, global history is an area of attention

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[1] See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991) and I. Tyrrell, 'Making Nations/Making States: American Historians in the Context of Empire', Special Issue, *Journal of American History*, 86:3 (1999), p.1015

[2] A. Curthoys and M. Lake, 'Defining transnational history' in A. Curthoys and M. Lake (eds.), *Connecting Worlds*: history in trans-national perspective (Canberra, ANU E Press), retrieved from http://epress.anu.edu.au/cw/mobile_devices/pr01.html, 10 July 2006, p.1. See also A. Curthoys, 'Does Australian History Have a Future?', Special Issue, Challenging Histories, Reflections on Australian History, *Australian Historical Studies,* 33:118 (2002), pp.145-146

[3] See P. Mein Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia – One Past, Two Historiographies', pp. 307-308. Mein Smith highlights and discusses 'interactive history' concerning Australia and New Zealand.

[4] I. Tyrrell, 'Conference Commentary: New Comparisons, International Worlds: Transnational and Comparative Perspectives', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 16:36 (2001), p.356

[5] See R.I. Moore, 'Series Editor's Preface' to D. Denoon and P. Mein Smith, with M. Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Oxford & Malden, 2000), p.xiii, P. Gibbons, 'The Far Side of the Search for

rather than a theory, as is regional history which also concentrates upon large networks of connection, often organised around oceanic linkages.[6]

For this study I employ a transnational approach which concentrates on cross-national analysis, rather than broader global or macro-regional frames of reference. This viewpoint is what David Pearson terms a 'meso-regional perspective'. It is an outlook concerned with mid-range levels of influence, exemplified by relations between Australia and New Zealand. As Pearson observes:

> the national and state relations with proximate others forms an important site of intermediary between constructions of settler-nation-states and the metropolis from which they originated. In this perspective both intimate and more remote relations are important, given their role as likely reinforcing or change agents in shaping the material and symbolic character of national imaginings through various forms of interaction and possible exchange between the local and the global. Within this orbit, the settler and post-settler state relations between Australia and New Zealand amply demonstrate the impact of mid-range levels of influence.[7]

Comparative history also looks across borders yet in contrast to transnational history it largely rests upon national stories presented in parallel. Comparative approaches normally emphasize divergences and differences.[8] As Ian Tyrrell observes, "purely national comparisons often legitimate existing assumptions within particular national historiographies."[9] That said, Tyrrell also points out that transnational history still requires national history as the nation remains a crucial site for the development and activities of nationally constructed movements.[10]

The use of transnational approaches, in conjunction with comparative methodology, can more effectively illuminate the nature, workings and relations of the ACTU and NZFOL, the trans-Tasman union community and labour market. This marriage of methods allows the transfer and

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Identity', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 37:1 (April 2003), pp. 40-41 and P. D'Arcy, 'Torn Apart by Proximity: The Problems and Benefits of Comparative History for Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific', *World History Bulletin*, 17:2 (2001), p.22

[6] For further discussion of global and regional history, see Curthoys and Lake, 'Defining transnational history', pp.1-2 and M. van der Linden, 'Address: Labour History: an International Movement', *Labour History*, 89 (November 2005), pp. 226-227

[7] D. Pearson, 'Reconnecting the Antipodes: A Reflective Note', *Thesis Eleven*, 82 (August 2005), p.83

[8] Mein Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia – One Past, Two Historiographies', p.307, Curthoys, 'Does Australian History Have a Future?', pp.144-146 and M. Lake, 'White Man's Country – The Trans-national History of a National Project', *Australian Historical Studies*, 34:22 (October 2003), pp.348-349

[9] Tyrrell, 'Conference Commentary: New Comparisons, International Worlds: Transnational and Comparative Perspectives', p.356

[10] Ibid.

interdependence of ideas, policy and people to be uncovered and explained while ensuring that the intricacies of the underpinning national stories are not lost. Using comparative and transnational history encourages patterns of similarity and difference to emerge within the history of Australasian[11] union organisations.

The development of history that extends beyond national borders can be traced to a number of sources. Tyrrell highlights the approach of the French *Annales* tradition which focused attention on local and sub-national groups and transnational regions such as the Mediterranean, along with the long tradition of internationalism in women's and African American history.[12] In 1999 scholars of American history named the style of history unbound by the nation 'transnational' in a special issue of *The Journal of American History.*[13]

Curthoys and Lake give another explanation for the increasing focus on transnational history; the rekindled attention on British imperial history.[14] The histories of colonies were initially located within the wider context of the British Empire or Commonwealth yet as they moved towards independent nationhood in the latter half of the twentieth century, the emphasis shifted from British histories to national histories. Post-colonial identities contingent upon separate nationalist narratives developed with the emergence of narrowly focused, insular and isolated national stories.[15] As AG Hopkins observes, "the peripheries became detached, not only from former centres of influence, but also from one another".[16] Thus national narratives, which served to reinforce post-colonial independence, identity and nation-building, also continued to be

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[11] Throughout this thesis the terms Australasian, Antipodean, trans-Tasman and Anzac all refer to Australia *and* New Zealand. A more detailed discussion of the parameters of the shared 'Australian-New Zealand world' is on p. 15

[12] Tyrrell, 'Making Nations/Making States: American Historians in the Context of Empire', pp.1015-1018

[13] See D. Thelen, 'The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History' Special Issue, *Journal of American History*, 86:3 (1999), pp.967. Thelen points to Randolph Bourne's 1916 essay *Trans-National America* as an important inspiration for the choice 'transnational', see pp.967-968

[14] Curthoys and Lake, 'Transnational historiography' in Curthoys and Lake (eds.), *Connecting Worlds* (Canberra, 2006), http://epress.anu.edu.au/cw/mobile_devices/pr01.html, retrieved 10 July 2006, pp.2-3

[15] A.G. Hopkins, 'Viewpoint: Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History', *Past and Present*, 164 (August 1999), pp.198-243, Curthoys, 'Does Australian History Have a Future?', pp.140-142, Mein Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia – One Past, Two Historiographies', pp. 306-307, S. Macintyre, 'Australia and the Empire' in R. W. Winks (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire Vol 5 Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), pp.163-181, J. Belich, 'Colonization and History in New Zealand' in Winks (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire Vol 5 Historiography*, pp.182-193

[16] Hopkins, p.198

constrained by these 'imagined communities' or constructions of identity.[17]   In a call to reintegrate post-colonial histories not only with one another but also the former colonial centre, Hopkins sought a revitalized interconnected imperial framework.

A transnational perspective enables new and different questions to be examined about the past. Recognising that the global community has a multitude of links such as migration, trade, the environment and war allows investigation of both micro- and macro- narratives.   Forces both smaller and larger than the nation, from the individual to the supra-national, can be explored as potential influences on historical developments.   This re-conceptualisation presents historians with opportunities to develop an innovative set of interdependent sites of analysis from which historical events can be interpreted and systems analysed.[18]

Communities and themes relegated to the sidelines of history can be followed across borders. As David Thelen indicates, nation-centred approaches often leave a number of citizens out of the historical narrative; generally those less able to participate fully as citizens of the state.[19] The transnational reinterpretation of history allows themes such as gender and ethnicity to be more acutely observed and analysed.[20] Further, as connections around the globe increase, particularly through political and social movements and economic integration, the impact of the 'global' is increasingly felt at a local or regional level.[21] The implications for the writing of history are to encourage the use of micro-histories.   This style of history usually concentrates upon the 'ordinary' people and their experiences as an indicator of broader attitudes and values of groups of people, communities, classes or organisations. Focussing on the micro allows the individual or

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[17] See Lake, 'White Man's Country – The Trans-national History of a National Project', pp.346-347 and Thelen, pp.965-967

[18] M. Hanagan and M. van der Linden, 'New Approaches to Global Labor History', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 66 (Fall 2004), p.1 and van der Linden, 'Address: Labour History: an International Movement', p.229. See also, M. van der Linden, 'Transnationalizing American Labor History', Special Issue, *Journal of American History*, 86:3 (December 1999), pp.1078-1092

[19] Thelen, p.970

[20] See for example, Curthoys, 'Does Australian History Have a Future?', p.147, Lake, 'White Man's Country – The Trans-national History of a National Project', pp.346-363 and Tyrrell, 'Conference Commentary: New Comparisons, International Worlds: Transnational and Comparative Perspectives', p.356

[21] Curthoys, 'Does Australian History Have a Future?', p.146 and Lake, 'White Man's Country – The Trans-national History of a National Project', p.348

smaller group to emerge as a metaphor for the whole allowing more intimate understandings of our past.[22]

Transnational approaches therefore allow a clearer vision of history to emerge; one that goes beyond the confines of the nation and permits investigation into the kaleidoscope of relations that develop across national borders. It has the potential to bring to the forefront of historical examination those people, ideas and movements that are often relegated to the peripheries of societies while linking together both micro- and macro-histories. This reinterpretation enables a deeper understanding of identities and events created in one locale yet shaped and influenced by another. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, transnational history provides the historian with useful analytical tools from which a more holistic picture of the past can emerge, assisting understandings of the present.

Key to this thesis is the premise that identities are "created and transformed locally although often shaped by ideas generated elsewhere."[23] A study of the links between the ACTU and NZFOL invites a transnational approach since both organisations are members of the international labour movement and thus have an innate disposition to look outside their national borders. To study the two union bodies only from a national perspective neglects their international roots and ties. The transnational method reflects more accurately the interconnected world which the institutions, and the people within them, lived and thought. It allows the union organisations, their leaders, and their membership to be placed in a wider context of understanding, while exploring broader themes that connect Australia and New Zealand.

Importantly this study is not an examination of the international aspects of the labour movements in Australasia; that is the ACTU or NZFOL/NZCTU's membership of, and activity within, global labour organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Further, it is not a

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[22] Gibbons, pp.45-46
[23] Denoon and Mein Smith, with Wyndham, p.2. See also Mein Smith and Hempenstall, 'Australia and New Zealand: Turning Shared Pasts into A Shared History', p.3

study of international labour activity within the trans-Tasman region. Primarily it is an enquiry into the trans-Tasman connections and interactions between two nationally organised peak union bodies.

▪ The Trans-Tasman World: Reconnecting Australia and New Zealand

People outside Australia and New Zealand often confuse one nation with the other, unable to decipher differences in the two cultures 'down-under'. In contrast, Australians, and more particularly New Zealanders, are quick to assert their differences, demarcating their separate identities. Distinctions are reinforced by sporting rivalries, contrasting geographies, national icons and competition in commerce. Yet the impact of their shared colonial legacy and development has led to a raft of common institutions and similarities in what can be seen as the pursuit of an Australasian based "alternative modernity".[24]

Historically, Australian and New Zealand scholars have produced histories that largely ignore one another and neglect to explain historical parallels.[25] The "amnesia"[26] about a shared Australasian past has led to the creation and development of two separate, generally nationalist, narratives. This separate evolution has taken place despite the historical presence of many 'communities of interest' and several shared institutional developments and experiments.

The historic lack of intellectual knowledge and enquiry into trans-Tasman connections does not match the reality of multiple ties and parallels. The two nations share an extraordinary number of similarities. Both were British agrarian-based settler societies founded on principles of the superiority of the white race and an assumption that indigenous peoples would die out. State

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[24] P. Beilharz, 'The Antipodes: Another Civilization, Between Manhattan and the Rhine?', *New Zealand Sociology,* 17:2 (2002), pp.164-178

[25] See P. Hempenstall, P. Mein Smith and S. Goldfinch, 'Anzac Neighbours: a hundred years of multiple ties', *New Zealand International Review*, 18:1 (Jan./Feb. 2003), pp.26-29, P. Mein Smith and P. Hempenstall 'Australia and New Zealand: Turning Shared Pasts into A Shared History', *History Compass,* 1 (2003), pp.1-8 and P. Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes: Culture, Theory and the Visual Work in the Work of Bernard Smith* (Cambridge, 1997), p.164

[26] E. Olssen, 'Lands of Sheep and Gold: the Australian Dimension to the New Zealand Past 1840-1900' in K. Sinclair (ed.), *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia 1788-1988* (Auckland, 1987), p.35

experiments of arbitration and conciliation were established on both sides of the Tasman, along with a paternalistic state which favoured male wage earners. Early democracy, the vote for women and widespread mythical egalitarian aspirations for land and home ownership typify state development in New Zealand and Australia. Both countries have British-based state institutions, union organisations and imperialist Commonwealth cultures such as cricket.[27] Yet despite these shared developments and communities of mutual interest, the histories of the two countries are largely isolated from each other.

Prior to the Federation of Australia in 1901 the Australasian world was "real",[28] even if it was an imagined community with "elastic boundaries".[29] Scholars of the period examined the two dominant countries within the region as one largely homogeneous site of experiment, taking the linkages for granted.[30] Individuals living in Australia and New Zealand, and crossing the Tasman, did not see themselves as migrating but simply shifting within the 'Tasman world' consisting of the seven neo-British colonies.[31] Yet Australian and New Zealand stories of development after 1901 were told separately and in isolation as nationalist narratives found favour in each country. Separate histories developed despite the apparent continuity of the Australasian or trans-Tasman

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[27] Mein Smith and Hempenstall, 'Australia and New Zealand: Turning Shared Pasts into A Shared History', pp.3-4, F. Castles, *The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand* (Wellington, 1985), with particular reference to the "wage-earners' welfare state", pp.85-86 and pp.102-104, Denoon and Mein Smith, with Wyndham, ch. 11, esp., p.233, P. Beilharz and L. Cox, 'Nations and Nationalism: Australia and New Zealand' in G. Delanty and K. Kumar (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (London, 2006), pp.555-564 and S. Goldfinch and P. Mein Smith, 'Compulsory Arbitration and the Australasian Model of State Development: Policy Transfer, Learning and Innovation', *Journal of Policy History,* 18:4 (Autumn 2006), pp.419-445

[28] J. Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of New Zealanders From the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland, 2001) in which Belich refers to Australasia as a "very loose, vague and semi-tangible imagined community. But it was real", p.47

[29] D. Denoon, 'Remembering Australasia; A Repressed Memory', *Australian Historical Studies*, 122:34 (October 2004), pp. 292-295. Mein Smith proposes New Zealand shifts position in an elastic Australasia. Captain William Russell, a member of the 1901 New Zealand Federation Commission, depicted New Zealand as moving to "remoter Australasia" through a sense of isolation and remoteness. A key concept in this fluidity was the idea of a community based upon who were 'the people'. This was shaped by themes of race, whether land or sea defined a community and fears of takeover of New Zealand by Australia. For a full discussion see Mein Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia', pp.311-324. See also D. Denoon, 'The Isolation of Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies*, 22:87 (October 1986), pp.257-258

[30] See for example W. Pember Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*, (London, 1902), A. Métin, *Le Socialisme Sans Doctines*, (1901) translated from French into English, R. Ward, *Socialism Without Doctrine* (Chippendale, 1977) and T. A. Coghlan, *A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia, 1901-1902,* (Sydney, 1902). Although published a little later, it is important to note within this thesis concerned with key institutions within the labour movements of Australia and New Zealand, V. S. Clark, *The Labour Movement in Australasia: A Study in Social Democracy* (London, 1907)

[31] Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, pp.47-48

world.[32] Only recently have these conceptual ideas for (re)ordering the world begun to (re)surface with the rise of globalisation.[33] Re-engagement with this term of reference therefore brings back into focus links between the two nations that have often been neglected in the past, or repressed in the collective memory of the two neighbours.[34]

The reconnecting of the two nationalist histories mirrors developments within imperial and other sub-disciplines of history. 'New' imperial history no longer concentrates on Britain as the stable, controlling central hub in the imperial network. Rather, scholarly interest has shifted to the effects of the peripheries on the centre (and vice-versa) and the circulation of people, movements and ideas within the empire as a whole.[35] The revised imperial context locates the Australasian pair as shaping, and being shaped by, the old imperial centre, nations within the imperial grouping, and the rest of the world.

Peter Beilharz highlights the relevance of investigating Australian-New Zealand connections, stating that "what we call the local is never just local."[36] Beilharz views studies of 'the local' as enablers into a wider world view. Wider questions of our transnational society and history can be asked through a study of the links between these mid-level players on the international stage; Australia and New Zealand emerge as a "natural frame"[37] from which to analyse the globalised world.

The dynamics of the Australia-New Zealand relationship have an overriding influence on the ties between the ACTU and the NZFOL. The Australia-New Zealand relationship is typified by

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[32] See Hempenstall, Mein Smith and Goldfinch, 'Anzac Neighbours: a hundred years of multiple ties', pp.26-29, Mein Smith and Hempenstall, 'Australia and New Zealand: Turning Shared Pasts into A Shared History', pp.1-8
[33] See Anzac Neighbours project http://www.canterbury.nzac.ac.nz/
[34] Denoon, 'Remembering Australasia', p.290
[35] Hopkins, pp.198-243, Curthoys, 'Does Australian History Have a Future?', p.146 and N. Kirk, 'Why Compare Labour in Australia and Britain', *Labour History*, 88 (May 2004), p.3
[36] Beilharz, *Imagining the Antipodes,* p.184
[37] T. Hogan, 'Citizenship, Australian and Global', *Thesis Eleven*, 46 (August 1996), p.112

"asymmetry of size [which] translates into asymmetries of interests and perspective."[38]   The

difference in the size of the two countries means that Australia commonly looks to the United

States, while it often overlooks its smaller neighbour to the east in deference to its rapidly

developing Asian neighbours to the north.   In contrast Australia is New Zealand's closet

neighbour and most important and obvious comparator.   Yet Australia begins to look more like

New Zealand when visualised as a "small country connected by large distances".[39]
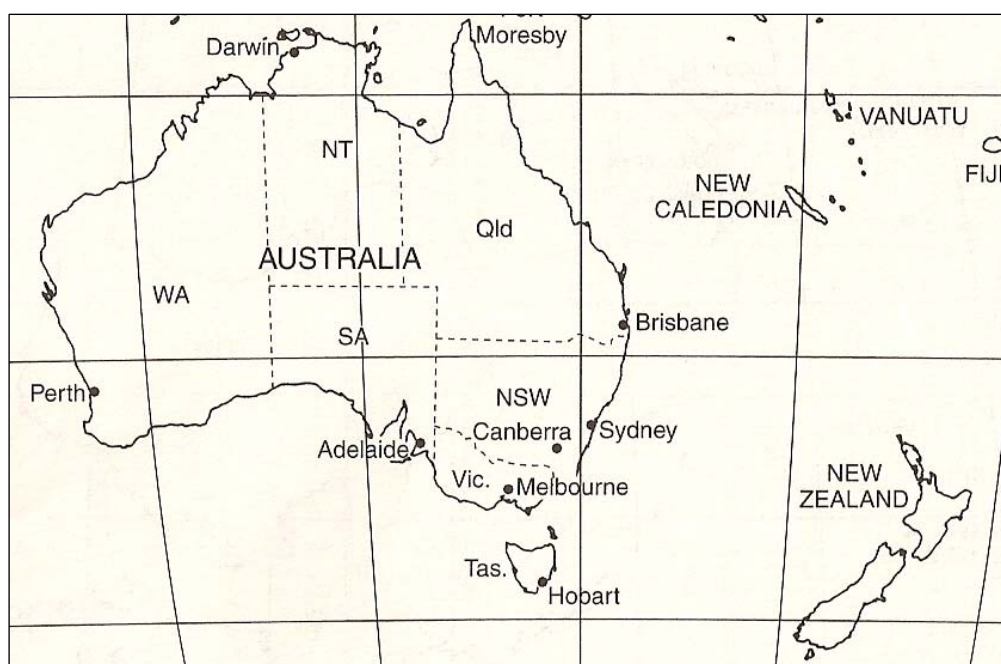
Plate 2: Australia and New Zealand with perspective of the region centred on Sydney and Brisbane. Source: Donald Denoon and Philippa Mein Smith with Marivic Wyndham, *A History of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific* (Oxford & Malden, 2000), Map 1(a), p.xv

Australia can be viewed as a federation of six states and two territories where Canberra represents

'the nation' while the state cities are still largely local and colonial in their makeup and

attitudes;[40] Australian identity is fractured along state and city lines.   This underlying patchwork

of nationhood or 'nodule identity' encourages New Zealand to have multiple ties to its federated

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[38] P. Mein Smith, 'Trans-Tasman Ties: a historian's response', NZIIA Seminar on Major Foreign Policy Issues (Wellington, February 2006), p.1 and P. Mein Smith and P. Hempenstall, 'Changing community attitudes to the New Zealand/Australia relationship', Paper prepared for the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum, April 2005, www.mfat.govt.nz, retrieved 14 September 2005, p.3
[39] Mein Smith and Hempenstall, 'Changing community attitudes to the New Zealand/Australia relationship', p.7
[40] P. Beilharz, 'Australia: The Unhappy Country, Or, A Tale of Two Nations', *Thesis Eleven*, 82 (August 2005), p.82

neighbour; links at national, state and city levels, although connections appear strongest with the eastern seaboard of Australia. The dense lattice of connections translates through into the union community where the ACTU and NZFOL represent 'the nation' while regionally based unions and industry groups have independent ties across the Tasman.[41]

This discussion draws attention to the "fuzziness"[42] or fluidity of the Australian-New Zealand world. Multiple notions and manifestations of this shared world exist. These include Australasia,[43] which at times expands beyond Australia and New Zealand to include the islands of the Pacific,[44] and the Antipodes,[45] which can be viewed as a relationship Australia and New Zealand have with other regions (historically with Britain).[46] Significantly, both terms represent Australia and New Zealand together. The lack of a generally agreed collective term for the two nations – together – parallels the continuing "looseness"[47] of the region. The flexibility and vagueness of the Australian-New Zealand region is an underpinning theme of this study. Further this viewpoint highlights oceans and seas as vehicles of relationship;[48] watery spaces surrounding Australia and New Zealand are bridges between people rather than isolators of land.

In order to undertake an analysis of the trans-Tasman world sources from both Australia and New Zealand are required. Researching trans-Tasman labour history while resident in New Zealand has presented obstacles. Difficulty in obtaining some primary resources from Australia has meant

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[41] See for example, Executive Minutes, Canterbury and Westland Shop Assistants Union, 15 February 1977, 415 MBL, Minutes, Canterbury and Westland Commercial Travellers and Warehouse Employees and Storepersons and Packers Industrial Union, 6 September 1971, 415 MBL and Minutes, Canterbury Food and Textile and Woollen Workers Union, May 1984, 420 MBL

[42] See Mein Smith and Hempenstall, 'Australia and New Zealand: Turning Shared Pasts into A Shared History, p.2 and Mein Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia – One Past, Two Historiographies', p.325

[43] Australasia was coined by French philosopher Charles de Brosses in 1756 and translated into English usage as 'the lands South of Asia', see Denoon, 'Re-Membering Australasia', p.292

[44] See Denoon, 'Re-Membering Australasia', pp.291-304, Mein Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia – One Past, Two Historiographies', pp.311-315 and Mein Smith and Hempenstall, 'Australia and New Zealand: Turning Shared Pasts into A Shared History, p.2

[45] Antipodes are places on diametrically opposite sides of the earth. Australia and New Zealand are generally viewed as Britain's Antipodes.

[46] Peter Beilharz and Bernard Smith view the 'Antipodes' as relationships as well as places, see P. Belharz, *Imagining the Antipodes: Culture, Theory and the Visual in the Work of Bernard Smith* (Cambridge, 1997)

[47] Mein Smith describes Captain Russell's preference for "a 'loose' concept of federation to 'attract atoms' of remoter Australasia and the Pacific". See Mein Smith, 'New Zealand Federation Commissioners in Australia – One Past, Two Historiographies', p.314

[48] Paul D'Arcy explores this concept in *The People of the Sea: environment, identity and history in Oceania* (Honolulu, 2006)

there is a tendency to use more New Zealand sources.[49] This limitation is acknowledged as a constraint of this transnational study.

- **'New-Old' Labour History**

Utilising a transnational perspective in exploring the links between Australian and New Zealand union organisations is particularly pertinent given the inherent internationalism of labour movements. Scholars have noted an increasing interest in looking at labour movements from a transnational perspective, reflecting the wider global context in which these movements have developed.[50] As Thelen notes, "workers and their champions have long insisted that the activities and study of the 'workers of the world', their unions and political parties, must transcend borders."[51] Yet the history of transnational labour movements, and more particularly of transnational union links, is still in its infancy and yet to be fully researched and understood.[52]

The journal *Labour History* plays a vital role in providing a platform for the discussion of research and ideas relating to Australasian labour history. Its recently revised editorial policy points towards engagement with labour scholarship of a global flavour.[53] In this regard I endorse the sentiments of Melanie Nolan in hoping that the new policy will promote transnationalism within *Labour History* circles particularly within the Australasian region. [54]

The May 2005 issue of *Labour History* was devoted to a comparison of Australian and British labour history. Throughout the issue the merits of combining transnational and labour history are

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[49] Although I have attempted to address this issue it was particularly the case regarding contemporary newspapers. For example there is no catalogue available in New Zealand for the *Sydney Morning Herald* between 1970 and 1988.

[50] See M. van der Linden, 'The "Globalization" of Labor and Working-Class History and its consequences', *International Labor and Working Class History*, 65 (Spring 2004), pp.135-156 and 'Address: Labour History: an International Movement', pp.225-233

[51] Thelen, p.970

[52] see I. Hampson, 'Review Article: International Unionism: Recovering History, Reshaping Theory, Recasting Practice', *Labour History,* 87 (November 2004), p.253, van der Linden, 'The "Globalization" of Labor and Working – Class History and its consequences', p.136 and van der Linden, 'Address: Labour History: A Global Movement', pp.227-228

[53] See G. Patmore, 'Editorial', *Labour History*, 86 (May 2004), pp.v-vi

[54] M. Nolan, 'Commentary: Pacific Currents in the Tasman: Comparative and Transnational Perspectives on New Zealand Labour History', *Labour History*, 88 (May 2005), p.233

discussed by a number of authors. Stefan Berger and Greg Patmore outline the potential of studying labour history across national borders and highlight:

> the importance of transnational transfer processes for the development of nationally constituted labour movements. The importance of cultural transfers between nation states breaks up our assumption of homogeneous and internally stable national states, national cultures and even national labour movements. Insofar as there are national labour movements, they are constituted through a dialectical process through which indigenous and foreign elements are selectively appropriated. As labour leaders (and followers) tended to champion an internationalist outlook, they often found it easier to look beyond the nation for potential ideas and models which could be imported and adapted to their own particular national circumstances….We need to recognise that what may be construed as the characteristic of one particular national labour movement is often bound up with what had been conceived of, whether in negative or positive terms, as the national 'other'.[55]

This edition of *Labour History* marries comparative and transnational forms of labour history pointing to the potential in the approach I primarily use, transnational labour history.

Michael Hanagan defines transnational labour history as exploring "border crossings that result from labour market demands, state labor policies, the actions of workers, or the practices of working-class institutions."[56] Using this definition, my study of the links between the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU develops multiple layers of analysis.

Historically, the development of labour history within the Australasian context has generally been described in national terms. There are some obvious exceptions, beginning with studies from around the turn of the nineteenth century including Victor Clark's *The Labour Movement in Australasia: A Study in Social Democracy*[57] first published in 1906 and Pember Reeves' *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand.*[58] What followed could be described as a dearth of transnational explorations into the Australasian labour movements. This coincided with increasing attention to the nation and associated constructions of nationalist narratives until the emergence in the mid-1980s of three cross-nationally focused studies. In 1983 Donald Denoon's

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[55] S. Berger and G. Patmore, 'Comparative Labour History in Britain and Australia', *Labour History,* 88 (May 2005), p.20
[56] M. P. Hanagan, 'An Agenda for Transnational Labor History', *International Review of Social History*, 49 (2004), p. 455
[57] See footnote 30
[58] Ibid.

Settler Capitalism[59] explored six settler societies in the southern hemisphere: Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. Soon after Francis Castles' *The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand, 1890-1980*[60] was published and in 1986 Eric Fry's edited collection of essays, *Common Cause, Essays in Australian and New Zealand Labour History*[61] provided studies of aspects of the two labour movements. This collection of books was followed in the early 1990s by a special issue of *Labour History* exploring women and work, edited by Rae Frances and Bruce Scates, entitled *Women, Work and the Labour Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand*[62] and more recently James Bennett's '*Rats and Revolutionaries'*[63] examines connections between the labour movements of Australia and New Zealand between 1890 and 1940. This group of books reflects broad developments within Australasian labour historiography, with the body of work becoming increasingly transnational in its focus.[64]   Yet trans-Tasman union relations have not been examined after 1940 and there are no studies looking specifically at the ties between the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU.

Discourse on the development of labour historiography follows relatively similar patterns in both Australia and New Zealand. The rise of social history in the 1970s presented a number of challenges to 'old labour' history. This history was criticised for being elitist, nationalist and too narrowly centred on political and union institutions, its focus separated from wider social relations and examining the 'revolutionary' nature of the working class.[65]

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[59] D. Denoon, *Settler Capitalism: The Dynamics of Dependent Development in the Southern Hemisphere* (Oxford, 1983)

[60] F. Castles, *The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand* (Wellington, 1985)

[61] E. Fry, (ed.) *Common Cause, Essays in Australian and New Zealand Labour History* (Sydney, 1986)

[62] R. Frances and B. Scates (eds.), *Women, Work and the Labour Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand* (Sydney, 1991)

[63] J. Bennett, '*Rats and Revolutionaries': The Labour Movement in Australia and New Zealand 1890-1940* (Dunedin, 2004)

[64] See for example, Nolan, 'Pacific Currents in the Tasman: Comparative and Transnational Perspectives on New Zealand Labour History' which highlights the development of Pacific rim labour history, pp.233-241

[65] M. Nolan and P. Walsh, 'Labour's leg iron?: assessing trade unions and arbitration in New Zealand', in P. Walsh (ed.), *Trade unions, work and society: the centenary of the arbitration system* (Palmerston North, 1994), pp.25-26 and R. McKibbin, 'Is it still possible to write labour history?' in T. Irving (ed.), *Challenges to Labour History* (Unley, 1994), pp.43-44

'New labour' historians responded to the challenge of social history. *Labour History* added a new subtitle and became a journal of social and labour history. New labour history increasingly looked at the lives of ordinary working people in their broader community and social contexts.[66] Gender, race and culture analysis was incorporated alongside questions of class.[67] A more rounded version of labour history emerged which included those people often missing from the old labour stories; women, indigenous people, migrants and rank and file workers along with those in non-paid work.[68] Yet in response to the criticisms of old labour history, the revisionist labour history has been viewed as over zealous in its reinterpretation.[69] It has been argued that "unions have been unthinkingly thrown out with the bath water of institutional analysis."[70] Further, Jim McAloon asserts that class has largely disappeared from New Zealand historiography with gender and race themes abounding.[71]

My study is best described as 'new-old labour history' because I am examining the old elitist institutions of labour history: unions. Yet I place these institutions within their wider transnational and social contexts, which represent the new aspects in the new-old fusion. I examine how, and if, the organisations and their leadership reached across national borders and beyond their membership to society as a whole. I analyse the extent to which extra-class links were forged with the new social movements of the time and how this impacted on the union

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[66] See for example, L. Richardson, *Coal, Class and Community: The United Mineworkers of New Zealand, 1880-1960* (Auckland, 1995) and E. Olssen, *Building the New World: Work, Politics and Society in Caversham 1880s-1920s* (Auckland, 1995)

[67] See for example, R. Frances, The politics of work: gender and labour in Victoria (Melbourne, 1993), R. Frances, 'Writing a Gendered Labour History' in J.E. Martin and K. Taylor (eds.), *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand labour history* (Palmerston North, 1991), pp.62-76 and T. Murray, K. Taylor, J. Tepania and N.Rameka, 'Towards a History of Maori and Trade Unions' in Martin and Taylor (eds.), *Culture and the Labour Movement,* pp.50-61, A. McGrath and K. Saunders with J. Higgins (eds.) *Aboriginal Workers*, Special issue 69, Labour History, (Sydney, November 1995), A. Curthoys and A. Markus (eds.), *Who are our enemies? Racism and the Australian working class* (Neutral Bay, 1978) and Frances and Scates (eds.), *Women, Work and the Labour Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand*

[68] See for example, R. Frances and B. Scates, 'Review Article: Is Labour History Dead?', *Australian Historical Studies*, 100 (April 1993), pp.470-481, D. Palmer, M. Shanahan and R. Shanahan (eds.), *Australian Labour History Reconsidered* (Adelaide, 1999), T. Irving (ed.), *Challenges to Labour History* (Sydney, 1994) and P. Moloney and K. Taylor (eds.), *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand* (Dunedin, 2002)

[69] V. Burgmann, 'The Strange Death of Labour History' in B. Carr et al (eds.), *Bede Nairn and Labour History: Labour history essays,* Vol 3 (Leichhardt, Sydney, 1991), pp.69-81

[70] Nolan and Walsh, p.27. British labour historian Jonathan Zeitlin has also argued for a neo-institutional history; that is labour history redefined as the history of industrial relation. Zeitlin defines this style of history as a study of the changing relationships between workers, trade unions, employers and the state, see 'From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations' in *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 40:2 (May 1987), p.178

[71] J. McAloon, 'Class in Colonial New Zealand: towards a historiographical rehabilitation', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 31:1 (2004), p.1

bodies and the societies in which they operated. Therefore a balance of social, economic and political narratives across both Australia and New Zealand is required to give sufficient background to this study. Further it needs to be recognised that union officials, and their membership, had not only class based identities but also familial, gender and ethnicity affiliations.[72] This plurality of identification is a vital ingredient shaping the interplay of class and other identities within a cross-national framework.

Primary source availability has shaped this study. Records of the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU were consulted as were contemporary newspapers. The predisposed bias of these records towards accounts of leadership has meant the interactions of those people heading the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU dominates analysis. The leadership of the trans-Tasman union organisations fundamentally constitute an elite group. This has influenced the tracing of networks of ideas, people and policymakers in the trans-Tasman union world.

- **Conclusion**

This study of cross-national labour interactions provides an example of the ties between people, institutions and movements and the translation of ideas in the trans-Tasman world. It informs understandings of our present while forming a micro-history of our interconnected past. Further, it seeks to understand 'an edge' of the rapidly emerging global economy.

The cross-fertilisation of ideas and people between the two labour movements (of which the ACTU and NZFOL were leaders) is multi-faceted and as such this study acknowledges these different layers of connection. The levels build from border crossings resulting from labour

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[72] Another possible contributing factor to the identities of the leadership and membership of the union movements in Australia and New Zealand is religion. This was not a contributing factor to trans-Tasman links or largely at play in the developing social movements of the period yet it should be noted as a facet in workers' multiple identities.

market demands, government policy, workers' actions and the practices of unions.[73] Overlaying these ties are geo-political considerations that ignore borders such as the environment, culture or international economic booms and recessions. The multiple identities of individuals living and working within and across the two nations and institutions are examined. A thorough understanding of this multi-level influence allows the exchanges and links between the two peak union bodies to be explained.

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[73] This reflects Hanagan's transnational labour history definition. See footnote 56 and Hanagan, 'An Agenda for Transnational Labor History', p.455

Chapter 2

Australian and New Zealand Labour Movements:

Historical Background

As part of the global flow of labour and ideas, particularly across the Tasman, the Australian and New Zealand labour movements have long established links. These ties stem from the movement of workers and political activists across the Tasman, transmitting radical ideals, generally from Australia to New Zealand. In what has been termed a "trans-Tasman world of labour",[1] Erik Olssen and Len Richardson observe that the New Zealand labour movement from 1880 to 1920 followed the broad pattern of its larger and stronger Australian counterpart, from which it drew direct inspiration and support.[2]

The New Zealand labour movement was profoundly affected by the circulation of personnel from Australia and ideas mediated by Australians. Australia contributed New Zealand's first Labour[3] Prime Minister, Michael Joseph Savage, along with four of the Cabinet ministers in the first Labour government.[4] The first two leaders of the Labour Party, AM Hindmarsh and Harry

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[1] Bennett, abstract, back cover

[2] E. Olssen and L. Richardson, 'The New Zealand labour movement, 1880-1920' in Fry (ed.) *Common Cause*, pp.1 and 3. See also Bennett, '*Rats and Revolutionaries*' which examines the shared histories of the two labour movements between 1890 and 1940.

[3] 'Labour' is used as a generic term for Labour Parties or when both the Australian and New Zealand Parties are being discussed. Only when the Australian Labor Party (ALP) is under discussion is the spelling 'Labor' used.

[4] The five Australian members of the 1935 Labour Cabinet were Robert Semple, William Parry, Patrick Webb, Mark Fagan and Prime Minister Savage. They all migrated to New Zealand between 1900 and 1908. See J. Phillips, 'History of immigration', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 25-Aug-2005, URL: http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/NewZealanders/NewZealandPeoples/HistoryOfImmigration/en

Holland, were both Australian.[5] Central leaders of the 'Red' Federation of Labour, the militant union formed by Blackball miners in 1908, were Australian.[6] Strikes in the coalfields of Newcastle and the mines of Broken Hill provided potent examples to stir New Zealand radicals' need for class solidarity and industrial unionism. Indeed, key sections of the 'labouring' class did not consider themselves as distinct from Australians, but rather identified as Australasian.[7] In addition to the mobility of people and ideas within the trans-Tasman labour market, institutions, including compulsory arbitration consolidated understandings of a shared labour community. Against this background, the peak union bodies of the two countries, the ACTU and NZFOL (the NZCTU predecessor), formed nationally representative institutions of industrial labour. These organisations constituted a core component within the overarching labour movements.[8]

This chapter examines the two councils' development and growth into organisations that could legitimately claim to represent unionised workers across the two national jurisdictions. Discussion then centres on the decision to formalise ties between the ACTU and NZFOL, recognising and confirming their shared understanding of a trans-Tasman union community. The historical background of the trans-Tasman labour market, which forms a bridge between workers on either side of the Tasman, concludes the chapter.

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[5] McCaskill, p.11

[6] A number of the 'Red Fed' leaders were the same Australians elected to office in the first Labour Government of 1935. The 'Red' Federation and the New Zealand Federation of Labour (NZFOL), the organisation this thesis is predominantly concerned with, are not the same unions. The Red Feds were radical while the NZFOL was conservative in nature, indeed opposing involvement in the 1951 waterfront dispute.

[7] E. Olssen, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908 -1914* (Auckland, 1988), pp.38-40. This group included miners, seamen, slaughtermen, wharfies and shearers who crossed the Tasman frequently following work opportunities. See also R. Arnold, 'Some Australasian Aspects of New Zealand life, 1890-1913', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 4:1 (April 1970), pp.62-70

[8] Membership of a 'labour movement' consists of two chief groups; industrial labour as represented by unions and political labour represented by, for the purposes of this thesis, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP).

▪   **Two Peak Union Bodies: The ACTU and the NZFOL/NZCTU**

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) was established in 1927 to co-ordinate unions nationwide. The New Zealand Federation of Labour (NZFOL) formed ten years later, in 1937, bringing together major private sector workers' unions under one umbrella organisation. In the 1980s the ACTU represented 58 per cent of Australian workers, covering 90 per cent of those belonging to a union, while the NZFOL successor, the NZCTU, represented 45 per cent of the Kiwi workforce, covering 78 per cent of union affiliated workers.[9] The high level of affiliation makes this study an effective and representative account of trans-Tasman union links.

During the 1970s and 1980s both councils developed and broadened their membership base allowing them legitimately to claim pre-eminent national union status, or in the case of the ACTU, to be the "parliament of the workers".[10] The ACTU, which principally represented blue collar workers' interests, began discussions with the two peak white collar unions, the Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Association (ACSPA) and the Council of Australian Government Employee Organisations (CAGEO), resulting in the majority of ACSPA members agreeing to disband and affiliate to the ACTU in 1979,[11] followed by CAGEO two years later. These mergers brought approximately 480,000 additional unionists into the ACTU fold.[12]

A number of factors culminated in the ultimate decision to merge the three representative unions into one overall co-ordinating body under the ACTU: a perceived threat to living standards posed by the policies and actions of the government;[13] the fact that employers had already established a

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[9] See F. Castles (ed.), *Australia Compared, People, Policies and Politics* (Singapore, 1991), Table 10.1 p.195

[10] G. Griffin, 'The Authority of the ACTU', Department of Management and Industrial Relations, University of Melbourne, Working Paper No.80, 1994, p.12

[11] Included in this grouping was the teachers union which was the third largest affiliate grouping within the ACTU, after the shop workers and the metal workers, see J. Hagan, *The History of the ACTU* (Melbourne, 1981), p.392

[12] For a full discussion of the merger see G. Griffin and V. Giuca, 'One Union Peak Council: the Merger of ACPSA and CAGEO with the ACTU', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 28:4 (December 1986), pp.483-503 and Hagan, *The History of the ACTU*, pp. 392-395

[13] Griffin and Giuca, p.493

peak council;[14] and most importantly from an ACTU perspective, the changing structure of the Australian workforce towards white collar workers.

Between 1969 and 1981 the number of white collar unionists in Australia grew by 89 per cent while the comparable figure for blue collar unions was only 11%.[15] This trend, and the potential it represented for Labor's electoral success, was not missed by political commentators or by the Labor Party itself. *The Australian* newspaper reported:

> The white-collar component has been the most rapidly growing segment of the workforce in the past decade. It is no exaggeration to say that if the ALP could bind a majority of white-collar voters to its blue-collar core, then it would secure the hegemony in Australian politics in late 20th century Australia.[16]

Talks held exploring the links between the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and ACTU resulted in a discussion paper which "recommended closer national links between the ALP and the unions"[17] and established that:

> the party's union connection is basically with the blue collar trade union movement and with a numerically declining section of the Australian workforce. In organisational terms, it is arguable that one of the greatest failings of the ALP had been its inability to attract affiliation in the growth areas of trade unionism, such as the technical, professional and white-collar areas.[18]

Furthermore the paper indicated that the structural relationship between the ALP and the union movement had not significantly changed over the course of the century[19] and "it is a challenge for the Labor Party and the trade union movement to think about the methods in which the relationship can become more contemporary and more positive."[20]

Thus the ACTU was viewed as an important potential ally in Labor's struggle for power, affirming a strong link between the parliamentary and industrial wings of the Australian labour

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[14] ACSPA literature to their members urged them to support affiliation with the ACTU using the argument 'your employers are in the CAI, we should be in the ACTU'. See Griffin and Giuca, 'One Union Peak Council: the Merger of ACPSA and CAGEO with the ACTU', p.494

[15] G. Griffin, 'White-collar unionism 1969 to 1981: some determinants of growth', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 25:1 (March 1983), pp.26-37

[16] B. Muldrew, 'ALP finds 1980 poll hopes slim', *The Australian*, 8 December 1978, p.1

[17] M. Grattan, 'Labour bid for closer union link', *The Age*, 20 December 1978, p.3

[18] Ibid. and G. Atherton, 'ALP sets out to woo white collar unionists', *The Australian*, 20 December 1978, p.2

[19] Grattan, p.3

[20] Atherton, p.2

movement.   The closeness of the two flanks of the labour movement was unashamedly
symbolised through the dual Presidency of both organisations by Bob Hawke from 1973 to 1978
prior to his decision to run for parliament.

The Australian situation was in stark contrast to relations in New Zealand. Although affiliate ties
existed between the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP) and the NZFOL, relations were not close.
In the 1980s, particularly, differences emerged with Labour leaders being increasingly drawn
from middle-class professionals and ideological differences appeared with the rising tide of
'Rogernomics'[21] within the party. Capturing the fraught nature of the relationship are comments
from ex-NZLP-leader Bill Rowling:

> There is no doubt that we [the NZLP] have suffered from being associated, in the public mind,
> with some extreme and increasingly alien elements in the Trade Union movement…The
> Federation of Labour and the Labour Party are completely separate and autonomous
> organisations.[22]

Therefore in the Australian environment consolidating ties between the two wings of the labour
movement was politically advantageous while in New Zealand Labour politicians wanted to
distance the party from the NZFOL.[23]

Mirroring the ACTU situation, shifting workforce demographics affected the NZFOL's
membership base and representativeness. In the ten years to 1981 white-collar employment had
increased by 59 per cent, yet the NZFOL only represented one in five of all white-collar
workers.[24] Therefore to retain relevance and membership numbers, as well as responding to the
changing nature of the global economy, the NZFOL looked outside its traditional sphere of

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[21] 'Rogernomics' is derived from the name of the Minister of Finance in the fourth Labour government, Roger Douglas,
to describe the programme of economic policies this Minister pursued.
[22] 'Report of the Working Party on the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party', New Zealand
Labour Party, Annual Conference, 1982, cited in R. Sandlant, 'The Political Economy of Wage Restraint: The
Australian Accord and Trade Union Strategy in New Zealand', MA Thesis, Political Studies, University of Auckland,
1989, p.89
[23] See, ch. 6, p.110
[24] D.F. Smith, *White-Collar unionism in New Zealand*, Industrial Relations Research Monograph No.1, 1987, p.47 and
Table 6.12, p.98

private sector blue-collar affiliates and joined forces with the Combined State Unions (CSU) in

1987 to establish the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions (NZCTU).[25]

The NZFOL was acutely aware of the union mergers in Australia. New Zealand public service

delegates spoke to the 1981 NZFOL annual conference emphasizing the benefits of such a merger

and the potential lessons that could be taken from the Australian example.[26] Visiting ACTU

officials also highlighted the advantages of attaining an all encompassing union body and urged

their New Zealand counterparts to do the same:

> We have a degree of unity now that's unique, and I want to say that the advantages we have
> found in Australia, because of a united trade union movement we have, will accrue for you and
> be identical when you effect the same unity. The working class in my view…cannot afford the
> luxury of two voices.[27]

The ACTU structure based around electoral colleges and biennial conferences was directly

borrowed by NZFOL adherents of a union merger,[28] but the New Zealand union movement

proved lethargic in its moves to reorganise and unify,[29] compounding issues of irrelevance within

the New Zealand political environment. As Ken Douglas recalled in 1987:

> If only the proposed New Zealand Council of Trade Union had developed four or five years
> ago. Strengthening was needed earlier. Now the sort of pressures put on the trade union
> movement means there may be some question about its effectiveness or its ability to be
> introduced. But that doesn't abrogate the principle that we need such an organisation. I have
> to take some responsibility for the slow development of the NZCTU.[30]

The slow nature of New Zealand union reform was not unique in the Australasian context,[31] but

the NZFOL's inability to influence the political wing of the labour movement proved a major

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[25] P. Herbert, 'The long, hard labour of the Council of Trade Unions', *National Business Review*, 16 October 1987, p.12-13. In 1981, 69% of the CSUs affiliates were white-collar workers.
[26] The PSA Chairperson, D Thorpe attended the 1981 NZFOL Annual Conference and highlighted the merger events in Australia, see NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 5-8 May 1981, pp.58-59, MSX 2405, ATL
[27] NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 4-6 May 1983, p.117, NZFOL 1983, MSX 2407, ATL
[28] NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 1983, pp.53-56
[29] See NZCTU Preliminary Conference, 19 February 1985. A pamphlet at this conference proclaimed, "This ludicrous situation cannot be allowed to continue. Other countries (like Australia) have already acted to achieve one union organisation", CTU Organisation and structure – Biennial Conference CTU/2/1 Vol. 1, 98-327-04/05, ATL
[30] K. Douglas quoted in T. Reid, 'Change daze', *New Zealand Listener*, 14 February 1987, p.12
[31] Initially announced during Bob Hawke's 1969 ACTU Presidential acceptance speech, unity across the blue and white collar workers' movements was not achieved for another 10 years. Negotiations were sluggish as union officials concentrated their attention on immediate political and economic issues while differing wages policies created an extra hurdle for negotiators. See, 'Presidential Address', ACTU Congress 1969, Box 3, S784, NBAC and Hagan, *The History of the ACTU*, p.273 and pp.392-395

divergence in the Australasian pattern of labour relations.[32] The union reorganisation implemented in Australia brought the ACTU important political capital through a perception of worker unity and representative legitimacy. New Zealand unionists attempted to replicate this situation, directly borrowing the ACTU structure, but the unity the NZCTU established was too late for the New Zealand labour movement as the Labour Party lost power in 1990.

Trans-Tasman connections were not simply based around policy borrowing and the provision of counter-examples. Ties were established through a *melange* of connections. These included personal interactions facilitated through attendance at international and regional union conferences, reciprocal invitations to attend and present at NZFOL and ACTU annual and bi-annual conferences, study tours, regular communications and the education and training of New Zealand union officials at the Australian Trade Union Training College based at the Clyde Cameron campus in Wodonga, Victoria.[33] Additionally, joint representation of Australia and New Zealand was established at the International Confederation Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) forums, with the Presidents of the ACTU and NZFOL rotating representative responsibility.[34] There were also long established links between those industries particularly concerned with trans-Tasman affairs, including the shipping, seafaring and associated industries,[35] over which the NZFOL and ACTU had over-riding jurisdiction.[36] Therefore the Australasian union community, for which the ACTU and NZFOL provided overarching co-ordination, was based upon a myriad of connections at multiple levels.

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[32] See ch. 6

[33] Reference to New Zealanders in training at Clyde Cameron is contained in Box 562, Z102, NBAC. See also Australia-New Zealand Foundation, *The ANZAC Connection* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1980), p.15 and author personal communication with C. Eichbaum, 26 January 2006

[34] ANZTUCC Minutes, 13 September 1979, ANZTUCC, N68/132, NBAC, p.8 and NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 18 April -1 May 1979, p.46

[35] During 1972 and 1973 the ACTU and NZFOL, along with the Australian seagoing unions and the New Zealand Seamen's Union, were involved in negotiations with Comalco, a multinational aluminium processor, about the crewing of ships across the Tasman. The dispute, known as the 'Bulknes or Manning of Ships dispute', centred on Comalco's proposed introduction of foreign flagged and crewed vessels which led to the trans-Tasman seamen's agreement that provided for the sharing of trans-Tasman shipping. This arrangement meant alumnium shipped on trans-Tasman vessels would have crews comprising, equally, Australian and New Zealand seafarers. See Letter to ACTU 30 June 1972, Telegram to ACTU 17 August 1973 and Cable to ACTU 31 August 1973 in FOL General Correspondence - ACTU 1969-1972, MS-Papers-4100-21/03/3, ATL and Notes of Discussions of the Conference between the ACTU and the ANZTUCC, 22 April 1974, pp.2-3 in ANZTUCC, N68/130-132, NBAC and Notes of Discussions of ANZTUCC, 6 March 1975 in FOL, 1957-1975, N21/1484, NBAC. See also P. Geraghty, 'Sea Transport: Issues for the 1980s' in R. and A. Burnett (eds.), *Australia-New Zealand Economic Relations – Issues for the 1980s* (Canberra, 1981), pp.104-111

[36] Letter, Souter to Skinner, 23 July 1971, FOL, 1957-1975, N21/1483, NBAC

- **A Trans-Tasman Union World**

In the early 1970s the ACTU and NZFOL sought formally to recognise their joint understanding of the world they shared. This initiative saw links established that gave a distinctive trans-Tasman tilt to the perspectives of the two councils, particularly about issues of international significance. The Australasian relationship, grounded in mateship across the Tasman, confirmed and formalised the two union institutions' common experiences and perspectives. Mutual solidarity provided continuity to their shared understandings of a trans-Tasman world.

A resolution establishing the way for the first formal Australasian peak trade union organisation was passed in October 1971. The motion stated:

> An Australian and New Zealand Trade Union Co-ordinating Council be set up to unite and further the aims and objectives of both organisations in matters of common interest and to afford a means of consultation and collaboration between both organisations in the furtherance of such aims and objectives.[37]

From 1972 the Australia New Zealand Trade Union Co-ordinating Council (ANZTUCC) met annually, alternating between Australia and New Zealand. Importantly, the council linked the two national bodies rather than just particular industry groups, therefore providing the union movements that the ACTU and NZFOL led with a transnational organisation.

The ANZTUCC was primarily established in response to similarities in the two industrial environments. A perception that the governments of both countries were pursuing parallel agendas[38] was combined with a situation in which the two union bodies were "dealing in the main with the same employers and in most cases the same industries."[39] A distinct trans-Tasman

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[37] NZFOL, Executive minutes, 27 October 1971, MS Papers-4100-21/03/3, ATL
[38] NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Presidential address Annual Conference, 2-5 May 1972, pp.38-39 and P. Clancy, ACTU delegate to NZFOL Conference, *Minutes and Proceedings,* Annual Conference, 2-5 May 1972, pp.72-73
[39] T. Skinner, Address to ACTU Congress 1971, Speech notes p.3, N21/1483, NBAC

industrial setting was thus clearly evident and a shared response to those employers and the circumstances deemed the most appropriate answer.

Although the transnational council had its beginnings in recognising a common industrial environment, international pressures and developments rapidly reinforced links. The establishment of the ANZTUCC followed a combined campaign against apartheid practices in South Africa which gave both unions confidence in each other and illustrated their potential as partners in the leadership of international campaigns.[40] The joint council's beginnings also anticipated economic events impacting from the outside region.

The increasing globalisation of the world economy, felt as both nations began to experience the storms of the world recession, the Middle Eastern oil shocks, and Britain's decision to join the EEC, all contributed to feelings of Australasian connection and community. Addressing the ACTU national congress on the international situation the two neighbours faced, W. Clement, an NZFOL executive member, observed:

> The peoples of both countries find themselves in similar circumstances at the present time, in the matter of our two countries' relationship with Europe and Britain, in our economic and financial circumstances that we cannot help importing from overseas, and in the need to streamline and amend our industrial legislation to meet the needs of the times.[41]

Recognising this complex situation, the Secretary of the ACTU, Harold Soutter, commented: "our [the ACTU's and NZFOL's] mutual interests are clearly interwoven, both economically and industrially."[42] Indeed it was acknowledged that Australians and New Zealanders shared a common region. The remark, "we live together",[43] made by the NZFOL President to an ACTU representative in 1973 illustrates this point succinctly.

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[40] See discussion ch. 4, pp.59-61
[41] W. Clement, Executive Member, NZFOL, Address to ACTU Congress 1973, Attachment F, p.1, (box 3), S784-1973, NBAC
[42] 'Report by Secretary Souter to ACTU on attendance at NZFOL Conference May 1971', N21/1483, NBAC
[43] NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 1-4 May 1973, p.81

Yet the connections and rationale in establishing a formal relationship need to be understood against the background of the historical solidarity built between national union movements. Based upon an ideology of international working class unity there is an innate propensity within national union movements to look outside their borders and proclaim international workers' solidarity. In this study it is important to identify to what extent the unity of the trans-Tasman workers' organisations was rhetorical and what was real. In the instance of the formation of the ANZTUCC the connections illustrate a shared, united, understanding of the trans-Tasman and international environment.

The ANZTUCC therefore represents the continuing unity of the trans-Tasman union world. Recognition of shared industrial circumstances facilitated its formal development, while increasing globalisation of the world economy confirmed its establishment, marking a broadening of the two national union organisations' concerns towards issues of international and regional significance. Fundamentally, the transnational union body validated the trans-Tasman union community, providing it with a structured forum for discussion, collaboration and the building of collectivity.

▪ **Trans-Tasman Migration and the Labour Market**

The links between the populations of Australia and New Zealand are based upon a long standing tradition of permanent and cyclical migration. This "perennial interchange"[44] of people has resulted in the equivalent of 10 per cent of New Zealand's population choosing to reside in Australia[45] while Australians account for around 1.5 per cent of New Zealand's population.[46]

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[44] R. Arnold, 'The Dynamics and Quality of Trans-Tasman Migration, 1885-1910', *Australian Economic History Review*, 26:1, (1986), p.1
[45] R. Bedford, E. Ho and J. Lidgard, 'International Migration in New Zealand' in G. Carmichael with A. Dharmalingham (eds.), *Populations of New Zealand and Australia at the Millennium* A joint special issue of *Journal of Population Research* and the *New Zealand Population Review* (Canberra and Wellington, 2002), p.40. See also, www.abs.gov.au/4102_0 - Australian Social Trends, 2002.htm
[46] See www.stats.govt.nz

Demographic dynamics have led to the development of strong ties based on familial connections and an underlying familiarity with the neighbouring cultural and working worlds.

The labour markets of Australia and New Zealand and migration between the two countries are inextricably intertwined. Each nation's citizens enjoy unrestricted travel and access to each other's job markets. Citizens of New Zealand and Australia require no visa to travel across the Tasman and up until 1981 no passports were needed. Importantly, no work permits are required for citizens of the Australasian world allowing the unrestricted right to work in each other's country. Essentially, trans-Tasman migration is viewed as interregional labour market adjustment (internal migration) because of the freedom of movement achieved across the Tasman.[47] As Rollo Arnold observes, "the dynamics of the human flow had much that was more akin to domestic movement within a body politic and economic than to emigrating".[48]

The trans-Tasman labour market has been operational for over 200 years. In 1793 two high-born Maori men, Tuki-tahua and Huru-kokoti, were taken to New South Wales and subsequently Norfolk Island in order to teach convicts the art of flax dressing. Although the venture was unsuccessful, the two men met the future New South Wales Governor and returned to their New Zealand homes with gifts including carpenter's tools, hoes, wheat and pigs. This series of events marks the beginning of trans-Tasman commodity trade and labour migration.[49]

Prior to 1840 New Zealand acquired most of its European settlers from the colonies of Australia. These migrants, often former British convicts, travelled across the Tasman principally to exploit

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[47] M. Bell, 'Population Mobility in Australia and New Zealand' in Carmichael with Dharmalingam, pp.189-190, Bedford, Ho and Lidgard, p.48 and G. McNicoll 'The economics of Australian immigration, with reference to trans-Tasman flows' in G. Carmichael (ed.), *Trans-Tasman Migration: Trends, causes and consequences* (Canberra, 1993), p.321
[48] Arnold, 'The Dynamics and Quality of Trans-Tasman Migration, 1885-1910', p.20
[49] J. Binney, 'Tuki's Universe' in K. Sinclair (ed.) *Tasman Relations: New Zealand and Australia, 1788-1988* (Auckland, 1987), pp.15-31 and A. Salmond, *Between Worlds: Early Exchanges between Maori and Europeans 1772-1815* (Auckland, 1997), pp.207-233

the natural resources on offer in New Zealand. This included seals, whales, timber, flax and later, agricultural products, obtained to feed and secure the budding New South Wales colony.[50]

Table 1: New Zealand's Net Migration with Australia, 1858-1965

Period	Net Numbers (in 000's) Gain	Net Numbers (in 000's) Loss
1858-60	0.4	
1861-65	45.5	
1866-70	5.5	
1871-75	3.1	
1876-80	4.0	
1881-86		0.2
1886-90		19.3
1891-95	10.2	
1896-1900	7.3	
1901-05	35.1	
1906-10	7.3	
1911-15		2.8
1916-20		1.4
1921-25	2.3	
1926-30	0.2	
1931-35		3.1
1936-40	1.3	
1941-45		0.3
1946-50		3.0
1951-55	8.0	
1956-60	3.8	
1961-65	20.0	
Total Net Gain	123.9	

Source: W.D. Borrie, 'The Peopling of Australasia, 1788-1988 The Common Heritage', in K. Sinclair (ed.), *Tasman Relations*, Table 1, p.206

The positive flow of migrants to New Zealand continued, largely uninterrupted, until the mid-1960s. As evidenced in table 1, between 1858 and 1965, New Zealand experienced a net gain of 123,900 people from Australia. Three periods of particularly heavy migration in New Zealand's favour are highlighted in this table; the first half of the 1860s, the first five years of the twentieth century and the early 1960s, with the only significant reversal of this trend seen in the late 1880s when people were attracted by the buoyancy of the Victorian and New South Wales economies.

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[50] J. McAloon, 'New Zealand on the Pacific Frontier: Environment, Economy and Culture', *History Compass,* 4:1 (2006), pp.37-39

Gold discoveries in Otago during 1861 attracted large numbers of speculators from the gold fields of Victoria. This led to significant traffic between the Antipodean neighbours with particularly strong ties established between the South Island's West Coast and Victoria, as PR May observed:

> Melbourne, Dunedin, and Hokitika, the points of the goldfields triangle, were joined not only by the roving diggers familiar with all three, but also by the manifold bonds of trade. In the mid sixties the [South Island] West Coast was an economic dependency of Victoria, Hokitika a trans-tasman [sic] suburb of Melbourne.[51]

This highlights the historical intensity of connection established through oceanic bonds, links established due to the primacy of maritime travel and trade, revealing the underlying transnational nature of the Australasian settlements.

Following the gold rush, trans-Tasman migration flows to New Zealand stabilised. Following the turn of the century (apart from the aforementioned late 1880s blip), net migration transferred back into New Zealand's favour as that economy recovered more quickly from depression than its drought-ravaged Australian counterpart.[52] Overall, until the mid-1960s an east-west flow dominated trans-Tasman migration, a situation contrasting with that experienced in the 1970s and 1980s.[53]

In addition to the exchange of miners, a range of industries and associated occupations are historically prevalent in the flow of people across the Tasman. These include occupations in banking and insurance which were organised on an Australasian basis, professionals including teachers, journalists and clergy, and seasonally-influenced occupations including shearing and agricultural work. The transfer of personnel often reflected institutions with Australasian career structures and patterns, notable in the case of banking, insurance and the clergy. In addition, there was a trans-Tasman entrepreneurial spirit amongst business people, evangelists, entertainers and travelling salespeople. Aspirant professionals and farmers looked beyond their immediate working situations to those environments offering advancement and opportunity, often found

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[51] P. R. May, *The West Coast Gold Rushes* (Pegasus, Christchurch, 1962) quoted in McCaskill, p.8
[52] See G. Carmichael, 'History of trans-Tasman population movement' in Carmichael (ed.), pp.29-62
[53] See ch.5, pp.79-80

across the Tasman.[54] The variety of industries and backgrounds of trans-Tasman migrants, as outlined, contributes to the density and diversity of the Australasian community.

Trans-Tasman migration therefore comprises considerable traffic and transfer between the two neighbours and their associated labour markets. The long standing freedom of travel and association has conferred upon the trans-Tasman labour market a compelling transnational identity, in which both Australians and New Zealanders participate, able to alternate freely their country of residence and work. This continuous interchange has built an 'Australasian world of work' across a range of industries in which the circulation of people and ideas is deeply interconnected and reciprocal. Further, the trans-Tasman labour market is a critical ingredient feeding into the broader Australian-New Zealand world.

▪   **Conclusion**

The long standing relatively unrestricted movement of people between Australia and New Zealand, which fundamentally constitutes internal migration and a shared labour market, has led to substantial, widespread and continuous interchanges of populations across the Tasman. The transactions have contributed to the development of an Australasian community of work in which the labour forces of the two countries are intertwined through shared experiences, the transfer of people and exchange of ideas. This underpinning fabric of connection is therefore an important moulder of the trans-Tasman relationship and those working within this ambit, whether as employers, employees or representatives of these groups.

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[54] See R. Arnold, 'The Dynamics and Quality of Trans-Tasman Migration, 1885-1910, pp.1-20 and R Arnold 'Yeomen and Nomads: New Zealand and the Australasian Shearing Scene 1886-1896', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 18:2 (October 1984), pp.117-142 and P. Hempenstall, 'Following the Stars: Trans Tasman religious Migrations and the creation of an Australasian Religious Settlement', Paper presented at Australian Historical Association Conference, University of New South Wales, July 2005, pp.1-10

The decision by the ACTU and NZFOL to establish a joint union body recognised a shared understanding of the trans-Tasman labour market within which they both operated. The construction of an official Australasian union environment provided continuity to trans-Tasman labour ties, confirmed their common union world and offered the two councils a joint standpoint from which to analyse their region, the outside world and the globalising international economy. Further, their development into organisations which could reasonably claim representation across all Australasia's unionised workers allowed for the development of a truly transnational union body and perspective.

Chapter 3

Turbulent Times: 1970s and 1980s

Developments in the 1970s and 1980s indicate the beginnings of the most recent phase of globalisation or international economic integration. The altering circumstances led Australia and New Zealand to reassess their relationship with each other and their region.[1] Traditional patterns of association and allegiance were becoming obsolete as the world began to divide itself into new regional trading and defence blocks no longer based on old imperial ties. As Singleton and Robertson observe:

> Britain, Australia and New Zealand were driven apart by changing perceptions of national self-interest, and evolving commercial and financial incentives. Australia and New Zealand believed that import substitution industrialization would best serve their interests. The inability of Britain to provide rapidly growing markets and endless supplies of capital impelled the dominions to seek new economic partnerships in Asia and North America. Meanwhile, the pull of continental European markets persuaded the British government to devalue the Commonwealth relationship. Australia and New Zealand were, in Konrad Adenauer's telling phrase, invited to 'swim off'.[2]

It is therefore against a background of the rediscovery and reinterpretation of Australasian ties and regional affiliations that this chapter is set.

In the period under examination, trade unions faced increasing industrial, economic and social instability along with rising unemployment as globalisation altered the priorities of the state and

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[1] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.200, M. Bassett, *The State in New Zealand: Socialism without doctrines?* (Auckland, 1998), p.358 and D. Day, *Claiming a Continent: A history of Australia* (Sydney, 1996), pp.426-427 and pp.434-435

[2] J. Singleton and P. Robertson, *Economic Relations between Britain and Australasia 1945-1970*, A.G. Hopkins, (ed.), Cambridge Imperial and Post Colonial Studies (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, 2002), p.218

business away from the worker and towards the consumer.[3] The changing economic circumstances, combined with shifting social influences, resulted in a transformation of Australian and New Zealand societies. These upheavals changed the environments the ACTU and NZFOL operated within and challenged and unsettled their respective memberships.

Major international economic adjustments are not new phenomena. During the 1890s and again in the 1930s the Australian and New Zealand economies faced global depressions. New patterns of relationship were established in Australasia to manage these circumstances, yet these structures sought greater intervention in the market by the state.[4] As Denoon and Mein Smith observe, "Australasia as a whole switched from embracing globalization to resisting it".[5] This chapter argues that similar processes of international economic crisis and transformation were underway in the 1970s and 1980s but unlike the past, the two countries now embraced the freedom of the market, abandoning historic systems of "domestic defence",[6] workers' protection and full employment.[7] This meant the union organisations needed to craft innovative responses to a new set of circumstances.

▪   **Australasian Models**

The "Australasian exceptionalist experiment"[8] of compulsory arbitration and conciliation formed an important foundation of Australasian state and union development. A lynchpin of the industrial relations framework, compulsory arbitration and conciliation played a vital role in the balance between capital and labour in each country for a century.[9] Both the Australian and New

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[3] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, ch. 9

[4] S. Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy: The Political Economy of Australian Economic Policy* (Melbourne, 1997), ch. 4

[5] Denoon and Mein Smith, with Wyndham, p.232

[6] F. Castles, *Australian Public Policy and Economic Vulnerability (*Sydney, 1988), pp.91-104

[7] S. Bell, 'Economic Restructuring in Australia: Policy Settlements Models of Economic Development and Economic Rationalism' in P. Smyth and B. Cass (eds.), *Contesting the Australian Way: States, Markets and Civil Society* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.157-168 and Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, ch. 9 and Epilogue

[8] Goldfinch and Mein Smith, p.426

[9] The distinctive Australasian system was introduced to the statutes in New Zealand in 1894, Western Australia in 1900, New South Wales in 1901, by the Australian Commonwealth Government in 1904 and South Australia and Queensland in 1912. See R. Mitchell and E. Stern, 'The compulsory arbitration model of industrial dispute settlement: an outline of legal developments' in S. Macintyre and R. Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration: The Origins and Effects of*

Zealand narratives claim this system of "civilising capitalism"[10] as a key national institution reflecting a prized character of each country: egalitarianism. The arbitration experiment became synonymous with Australasian identity, pioneered by middle-class liberal professionals[11] in an attempt to avert strikes and lockouts threatening the export economies. [12]

The protection the arbitration system afforded the union movements decisively shaped their structure along with their character, methods and ultimate purpose.[13] The movements were fragmented along occupational and geographic lines which meant a large number of small, industry based unions were able to operate, their existence guaranteed by the state.[14] Consequently the ACTU and NZFOL led movements often split along regional, industry and political lines.[15] The union movements' attachment to arbitration meant that they developed into bureaucratic, relatively non-participatory institutions of a somewhat docile character. Unions did not need to convince workers to join, or prove their effectiveness, or struggle against employers to secure negotiating rights. As these skills were not required they withered. Workplace involvement became weak as the unions evolved into institutional cogs trading in their rights to militant action as substantial direct industrial activity was a threat to the system that the unions

State Compulsory Arbitration 1890-1914 (Melbourne, 1989), pp.104-131. The New Zealand advocate of compulsory arbitration, William Pember Reeves titled his book looking at the antipodean social laboratory *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand.* Interestingly, Reeves felt this experiment might well fail, see J. Holt, *Compulsory Arbitration in New Zealand: The First Forty Years* (1986, Auckland), p.29

[10] B. Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism: The Labor Movement in New South Wales, 1870-1900* (Canberra, 1973)

[11] Goldfinch and Mein Smith, p.423 and S. Macintyre, 'Neither Capital nor Labour: The Politics of the Establishment of Arbitration' in Macintyre and Mitchell (eds.), pp.178-200

[12] Denoon and Mein Smith, with Wyndham, pp.232-238, Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, pp.106-107, Holt, ch. 1, Macintyre and Mitchell, 'Introduction' in Macintyre and Mitchell (eds.), p.8-12, S. Macintyre 'Holt and the establishment of arbitration: an Australian perspective' *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 12:3 (1987), pp.151-159 and Goldfinch and Mein Smith, pp.419-429

[13] See Nolan and Walsh, pp.9-25, M. Rimmer, 'Unions and Arbitration' in J. Issac and S. Macintyre (eds.), *The New Province for Law and Order: 100 Years of Australian Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration* (Cambridge, 2004), pp.275-315, M. Bray and P. Walsh, 'Unions and Economic Restructuring in Australia and New Zealand' in M. Bray and N. Haworth (eds.), *Economic Restructuring and Industrial Relations in Australia and New Zealand: A Comparative Analysis*, Australia Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training, (ACIRRT), University of Sydney, Monograph No.8, March 1993, pp.122-127 and P. Walsh, 'Trade Unions in New Zealand and Economic Restructuring', Australia Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training, (ACIRRT), University of Sydney, Working Paper 17, August 1991, pp.1-4 and M. Barry and P. Walsh, 'Forward to the Past? State Policies and Trade Unions in New Zealand', Industrial Relations Centre, Victoria University of Wellington, Working Paper 1/02, pp.1-13

[14] Bray and Walsh, 'Unions and Economic Restructuring in Australia and New Zealand', p.125, Nolan and Walsh, p.12 and Barry and Walsh, pp.4, 9 and 10

[15] There were also a number of industry groupings that effectively worked outside the arbitration system. In New Zealand these included seamen, freezing workers and drivers and in earlier years miners and watersiders. In Australia metalworkers, miners, transport workers and builders generally worked outside the system. See Barry and Walsh, pp.11-12, Rimmer, p.315 and Nolan and Walsh, p.16

depended upon for their existence.[16] For many militants and unions working outside the system, arbitration was labour's 'leg-iron,'[17] while for others, predominantly those represented by the ACTU and NZFOL, it was their life blood.

Arbitration evolved to represent a system for protecting male workers' living standards, providing a (white) working man with a "living wage"[18] sufficient to support his dependent wife and children. This is termed the male breadwinner system and is symbolised by the Harvester Judgement enshrined by Justice Higgins in 1907. The male breadwinning system and female domesticity, which Melanie Nolan argues was showing signs of erosion in the 1950s,[19] came under severe pressure in the 1970s. It was supported by Keynesian demand management which operated in New Zealand from the 1930s following the first Labour government and in Australia from post-war reconstruction. The male breadwinner model was institutionalised through a system of social protection based on doctrines protecting the national economies, workers' wages and immigration; a system Francis Castles defines as the "wage earners' welfare state".[20] Fundamentally, this model protected high wage labour for white male workers and sustained a largely white, male constituency within the Australasian union movements.

Resting upon the male breadwinner model and Keynesian economics was Australasia's commitment to full employment. This principle is found in the 1944 Australian-New Zealand agreement and included a policy to cooperate in pursuing and achieving full employment in Australia and New Zealand.[21] As Singleton and Robertson note, "other countries emphasised stability and full employment after the Second World War, but not to the same degree as either

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[16] Barry and Walsh, p.4 and Rimmer, p.276

[17] Nolan and Walsh, p.10-11 and Walsh, 'Trade Unions in New Zealand and Economic Restructuring', p.2

[18] Holt, p.105

[19] M. Nolan, 'The High Tide of a Labour Market System: The Australasian Male Breadwinner Model', *Labour & Industry,* 13:3, (April 2003), pp.73-92. Nolan argues that the tide was beginning to turn on the male breadwinning model by the 1950s, in defiance of the rhetoric of the Australian and New Zealand governments. Decreases in the real value of the family benefit, rising numbers of married women in paid employment (particularly in the state sector) and campaigns for equal pay all indicate the male breadwinner system was not necessarily at its zenith in the 1950s.

[20] Castles, *The Working Class and Welfare*, especially pp.58-59 and pp.102-109

[21] R. Kay (ed.), *The Australia-New Zealand Agreement 1944: Documents of New Zealand External Relations Volume I* (Wellington, 1972), p.234. Full employment was also a key plank in Australian post-war reconstruction as evidenced by the 1945 governmental 'White Paper' on this principle.

Australia or New Zealand."[22]   The two countries declared their joint support for propagating this policy internationally and their advocacy has been seen as a factor in the inclusion of full (male) employment objectives within the United Nations (UN) Charter, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Charter and the Monetary and Financial Conference (Bretton Woods) Agreement 1944.[23]

The inter-dependent models of Australasian development promoted and allowed for highly interventionist "entrepreneurial states"[24] to grow and develop, in tandem with apparently strong unions. In a reasonably benign environment the union organisations enjoyed institutional support which encouraged comparatively high union membership.   This aided the view of robust Australasian union movements.

The perceived strength of the union movements was not of their own making but relied upon the arbitration system, the protection of the economies[25] and full employment.   Through the arbitration system the Australasian union movements generally concentrated on wage struggles rather than broader, strategic macroeconomic or production concerns which led to the development of a narrow range of bargaining issues between capital and industrial labour. Further, the export driven protected economies allowed for an easy transfer of increased labour costs to consumers and therefore business, somewhat reluctantly, went along with the basic tenets of the domestically defensive, arbitration systems.[26]   Thus the perceived strength of the union movements in Australia and New Zealand was somewhat illusory and did little to equip them for the radical changes and turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s. From this viewpoint the Australasian models were not so much a protection for unions as they were unprepared for and exposed to the new experiments of deregulation and decentralisation.

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[22] Singleton and Robertson, pp.20-21. See also pp.30-31
[23] Nolan, 'The High Tide of a Labour Market System: The Australasian Male Breadwinner Model', p.74
[24] Denoon and Mein Smith, with Wyndham, p.192 and Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, pp.84-85
[25] Bray and Walsh, 'Unions and Economic Restructuring in Australia and New Zealand', p.123
[26] Bray and Neilson, pp.68-69 and Bray and Walsh, 'Unions and Economic Restructuring in Australia and New Zealand', pp.122-124

▪ **Models Under Pressure**

The post-war long boom, characterised by sustained economic growth, full employment, low inflation, rising real wages, profitable investment and favourable terms of trade were 'golden years' for the Australasian economies.[27] Following a "transition"[28] this comparatively comfortable and affluent era came to an end in 1973/4 as international events impacted upon the export economies.[29] Thus during the 1970s and 1980s the Australian and New Zealand economies began to experience falling national incomes and living standards along with spiralling unemployment and inflation.

The changes battering the two economies brought into sharp focus fundamental questions about the goal of full employment and Keynesian economic management principles. The new economic problems mystified policy makers, analysts and politicians on both sides of the Tasman. Traditional interventionist-protectionist economic management models were inappropriate in the changed global circumstances.[30] It was becoming increasingly clear that both countries had "the wrong mix of industries and the wrong type of economy for the world trading conditions of the

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[27] See B. Roper, 'The End of the Golden Weather: New Zealand's Economic Crisis' in B. Roper and C. Rudd (eds.), *State and Economy in New Zealand* (Auckland 1993), pp.1-25, J. Gould, *The Rakes Progress? The New Zealand Economy since 1945* (Auckland, 1982), p.113 and S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia* (Melbourne, 2004), pp.199-241

[28] See J. McAloon, 'State Development in Australia and New Zealand 1945-1984', paper presented to International Economic History Association Session: Settler Economies in World History, 20th International Congress of Historical Sciences, Sydney, 3-9 July 2005, pp.14-17. McAloon highlights a period of volatility from 1966. In New Zealand the low wool prices in late 1966 signalled the end of the long boom; see B. Easton, *In Stormy Seas: The Post-War New Zealand Economy* (Dunedin, 1997), p.73

[29] See Clement, Address to ACTU Congress 1973, p.1. Three events signify the international economic crisis: the dismantling of the system of managing international currency relationships, known as the Bretton Woods agreement, led to the New Zealand dollar being fixed to a group of currencies while the Australian dollar was revalued and devalued periodically in an attempt to arrest inflationary pressures; the decision by the oil producing nations of the Middle East to raise the price of oil sharply in 1973; Britain's entry into the European common market which impacted heavily on primary producing economies of Australasia, as the Australian and New Zealand farmers lost their preferred position supplying food to British dinner tables. See Denoon and Mein Smith, with Wyndham, p.410, Roper, 'The End of the Golden Weather', p.4-5, Easton, *In Stormy Seas*, pp.103-104, Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy*, pp.85-89 and p.91, Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.202, D. Meredith and B. Dyster, *Australia in the Global Economy: Continuity and Change* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.243-277 and R. Maddock and F. Stilwell, 'Boom and Recession' in A. Curthoys, A. Martin and T. Rowse (eds.), *Australians, a historical library: Australians from 1939* (Netley, South Australia, 1987) p.262

[30] B. Catley, *Globalising Australian Capitalism* (Melbourne, 1996), p.61 and p.63, Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.239, Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.202, Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy,* p.94

late twentieth century."[31]   Agricultural and manufacturing sectors no longer dominated the world economy. Instead the emphasis in advanced capitalist economies moved to post-industrialism which saw the service sector taking an increasingly prominent role.

Exposure to the international economy placed enormous pressures on the concept of full employment and the protective system of the wage-earners' welfare system, leading to their demise and eventual abandonment. The subsequent changes brought instability, turmoil and the ultimate transformation of the Australian and New Zealand economic systems as they adjusted to international integration and shifting geo-political dynamics. Further they undermined the solid bases the Australasian union movements had been built upon.

The altered economic circumstances led to major changes in the Australasian workplace[32] which affected the potential pool of workers for the union movements. New skills were required in the new economy. Traditional jobs held by working-class men in agricultural and the highly unionised manufacturing industries were rapidly becoming obsolete while employment in white collar, service industries expanded.[33] Influenced by the women's liberation movement, more women took up fulltime employment in an increasingly diverse range of occupations, challenging the male breadwinning model. Further, the new economic situation meant the family wage was no longer sustainable.[34] The introduction of labour-saving technologies further contributed to the erosion of the 'workingman's paradise' - prophesized in the 1890s by then utopian socialist William Lane[35]- as full employment was relegated to the memories of workers.[36] Thus the

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[31] Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy,* p.80. See also G.F.R. Spenceley, 'Work' in Curthoys, Martin and Rowse (eds.), pp.277-278 and Gould, pp.149-164

[32] G. Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand: An Economic History* (Cambridge, 1985), pp.322-323, Spenceley, pp.279-280, Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, pp.201-202, Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy*, p.110, Maddock and Stillwell, p.269

[33] G. Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', in G. W. Rice (ed.), *Oxford History of New Zealand*, (Auckland, 1992) p.460

[34] Nolan, 'The High Tide of a Labour Market System: The Australasian Male Breadwinner Model', p.76 and E. Ryan and A. Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women and Work 1788-1974* (Sydney, 1975) pp.145-175

[35] Denoon and Mein Smith, with Wyndham, p.444

[36] T. Sheridan, 'Bosses and Workers' in Curthoys, Martin and Rowse (eds.)*,* p.302 and Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand: An Economic History,* pp.322-323

makeup of the workforce was changing away from traditionally unionised blue collar work to white collar occupations[37] and jobs increasingly undertaken by women.

In such a context, both Australia and New Zealand experienced an upswing in worker militancy and strikes in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[38] During this period Australasia faced, as did most Western capitalist economies, the classic Kaleckian labour problem, which the Polish economist first predicted in 1943:

> The maintenance of full employment would cause social and political changes which would give new impetus to the opposition of business leaders. Under a regime of permanent full employment, the 'sack' would cease to play its role as a disciplinary measure. The social position of the boss would be undermined and the self-assurance and class confidence of the working class would grow. Strikes for wage increases and improvements in conditions would create political tension.[39]

Illustrating this situation in 1969-70 approximately 12 per cent of New Zealand's workforce was involved in some kind of industrial action, with this figure rising to 19 per cent by 1976.[40] In Australia, during 1974, industrial activity reached an all time high with 6,292,000 working days lost.[41] This show of labour and union strength and accompanying rising wage levels (which helped fan inflation) confounded Keynesian analysis which held that "a recession involving less demand for labour, should in theory produce a falling price for labour, but in the mid-70s, this was not occurring."[42] Indeed an ACTU delegate to the 1975 NZFOL Annual Conference commented: "With rising prices, unions must campaign and take industrial action to prevent the lessening of living standards."[43] Whereas past recessions had muted the capacity of workers to

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[37] See ch. 2, pp.25-27
[38] T. Bramble and S. Heal, 'Trade Unions' in C. Rudd and B. Roper (eds.) *The Political Economy of New Zealand* (Auckland, 1997), pp.130-131, P. Walsh, 'The State and Industrial Relations in New Zealand' in B. Roper and C. Rudd (eds.), *The State and Economy in New Zealand* (Auckland, 1993), pp.182-184, B. Roper, 'Contested Terrain', *New Zealand Monthly Review,* 325 (June/July1990), pp.7-8, B. d'Alpuget, *Robert J Hawke, A Biography* (Melbourne, 1982), pp.172, J. Hagan 'Australian Council of Trade Unions' in E. Fry (ed.), *Common Cause: essays in Australian and New Zealand labour history*, p.52 and Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy,* p.90
[39] M. Kalecki, 'Political Aspects of Full Employment' in *Selected Essays on the Dynamics of the Capitalist Economy* (Cambridge, 1971) pp.140-141. First published in *Political Quarterly*, 14 (1943)
[40] Roper, 'Contested Terrain', pp.7-8. This level of strike activity was unprecedented since the Waterfront dispute of 1951.
[41] L.J. Perry, 'Trends in Australian Strike Activity 1913-1978', *Australian Bulletin of Labour* 6:1 (December 1979), pp.31-51 and Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy*, p.90
[42] Bell, *Ungoverning the Economy,* p.94
[43] J.F. Devereux, 'Address', NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 6-9 May 1975, p.99

fight for wages during episodes of economic depression, in the early-to-mid-1970s assertive trade unions sought wage increases even during times of economic downturn.[44]

This set of circumstances did not last throughout the 1970s. The power of the labour movements, founded on the full employment principle and institutional and state support, was eroded and undermined as unemployment began to soar[45] and historic arrangements were remodelled.

Australasian unemployment rates accelerated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, leaving around 10 per cent of the Antipodean population out of a job. The levels of unemployment served to alienate large numbers of mainly young people, particularly in New Zealand where the younger generation felt oppressed by the controls and conservatism of the ruling Muldoon government and sought opportunities 'over the ditch'.[46] Yet Australia was no longer the bountiful land as evoked by Donald Horne's book *The Lucky Country* as unemployment caused widespread dismay and dislocation. In this situation tensions developed between some sections of the Australasian workforce over the continuing freedom of movement between the two labour markets.[47]

Workers bore the costs of the economic crisis. In Australia, wages fell behind the rate of price increases while taxation was made less progressive, placing more of the tax burden on low and middle income earners.[48] In New Zealand there was rising social disharmony as competing groups sought to secure for themselves a larger slice of an ever shrinking economic pie. Taxation fell on individuals at increasingly higher levels and away from the business sector while in July

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[44] Bell, 'Economic Restructuring in Australia: Policy Settlement Models of Economic Development and Economic Rationalism', p.169

[45] The ACTU and NZFOL made joint calls to the Australian and New Zealand governments to restore full employment. See for example, 'Resolutions', Minutes ANZTUCC, 6 March 1975, General Correspondence – ACTU 1974-1978, MS-Papers-4100-21/03/5, ATL and 'Resolutions', Minutes ANZTUCC, 18 and 19 April 1978, MS-Papers-4100-21/03/5, ATL

[46] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.205 and Hawke, *The Making of New Zealand: An Economic History,* p.328

[47] See Chapter 5

[48] See R. Gregory, ACTU Delegate, 'Address', *Minutes and Proceedings*, NZFOL Annual Conference, 1-4 May 1978, pp. 93-95 and Maddock and Stillwell, pp.267-268

1979 a new measure, the Remuneration Act, was introduced allowing for direct government intervention in industrial relations and the fixing of wages.[49]

The Muldoon government's interference in the labour market further estranged the leadership of the NZFOL from the arbitration system while in Australia the ACTU looked to build an alternative.[50] The system, which formed the basis of the male breadwinner model, came under pressure from the late 1960s and through the 1970s. In New Zealand the 1968 'nil wage order'[51] was the first expression of a loss of confidence in the system while the ACTU also began questioning the effectiveness of arbitration. An ACTU delegate expressed Australian "dissatisfaction with the operation of our arbitration system which has moved the emphasis from conciliation to enforcement of arbitration"[52] at the 1970 NZFOL Annual Conference.

The rise of three important social movements further transformed society and challenged the Australasian union movements; the rise of a 'New Left', second wave feminism and the assertion of indigenous rights. These social movements shook the foundations of the two settler societies, as white male dominance was confronted. The "male and pale"[53] union structures were confronted as worker demographics changed and the women's and indigenous movements gained strength. The overall situation was compounded by shifts away from the traditional labour market mechanisms of social protection which served to uphold the economic and implicitly the social value of white male workers.

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[49] Gould, pp.147-149

[50] See ch. 6, pp. 104-105

[51] The nil wage order saw pressures on the New Zealand Arbitration Court climax in the winter of 1968. The Court issued a nil wage order and subsequently the NZFOL and New Zealand Employers Federation made a joint application to the Court for a 5 per cent general wage increase. The application, although opposed by the judge was backed by the workers' and employers' representatives leading to a general wage order being issued. The nil wage order is seen as a 'watershed' moment in New Zealand's industrial relations history, signalling the start of the slow walk away from the historic mechanism for wage fixing and managing industrial relations. For a full discussion of events see; P. Walsh, 'An 'unholy alliance': The 1968 Nil Wage Order', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 28:2 (October 1994), pp.178-193; also Skinner, pp.106-109.

[52] J. Devereaux, ACTU delegate, *Minutes and Proceedings*, NZFOL Annual Meeting, 28 April -1 May 1970, p.51. Discontent centred on the imposition of penalties and climaxed when Clarrie O'Shea, Secretary of the Victorian Tramways Union, was jailed over unpaid fines. The ACTU then called upon its affiliates not to pay any outstanding fines. The government 'lost its nerve' and O'Shea's fine was paid anonymously. See Rimmer, pp.300-302 and *Minutes and Proceedings*, NZFOL Annual Meeting, 28 April -1 May 1970, p.56

[53] Nolan and Walsh, p.27

During the 1970s it was expected, particularly in leftist circles, that the new social movements, which were relatively fluid in their identity, would partner with the union movement to challenge and ultimately transform society. As sociologist Kevin McDonald stated, "the importance of the labour movement to the new social movements was regarded as self-evident: they were engaged in similar social struggles."[54] The stage was therefore set for a revolutionary 'grand alliance' between the groups.

So the trans-Tasman world of the 1970s and early 1980s was severely buffeted by the stormy winds of the international economic crisis placing pressure on the Australasian models of full employment and domestic defence, based upon demand management and associated international financial regulations. Arbitration and the highly interventionist practices of the state were called into question. Rising unemployment and a restructuring international economy helped undermine the industrial strength of the union movements and served to alienate large numbers of people. The shades of revolution, evident in the events unfolding in the 1970s and early 1980s, came into vivid technicolour later in the decade. The perseverance of the world economic recession provoked an ideological shift from Keynesian to pro-market neo-classical economic policies, as favoured in the United Kingdom by Margaret Thatcher and in the United States of America by Ronald Reagan. In Australasia this change was pursued, ironically, by the traditionally worker and union aligned Labour Parties.

- **New Experiments Present New Challenges**

The Australasian Labour ascendancy began with the election of the Hawke-led Labor government in March 1983 followed just 16 months later by the victory, in New Zealand, of the Lange-led Labour government. These election wins mark the beginning of what transpired to be a radical shift in the economic, political and industrial landscapes of both nations, although the changes

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[54] K. McDonald, 'The unmaking of the labour movement', *Social Alternatives,* 6:4 (1987), p.12

were to be more abrupt and far reaching in New Zealand. The new experiments the Labour administrations pursued were from a neo-liberal mould, or what was called economic rationalism in Australia[55] and 'Rogernomics' in New Zealand.

Labour in both countries disassembled the Australasian model of state development, or the "Australasian settlement",[56] represented through the arbitration and conciliation systems, full employment and a paternalistic protective interventionist state, and took the countries on a somewhat hair-raising, evangelical ride towards the 'New Right' of Anglo-American neo-liberal orthodoxy.[57] In Australia arbitration was remodelled through the Accord on prices and incomes negotiated between the ACTU and the government which represented a gradual transition to decentralised bargaining, while in New Zealand the historic compromise was abandoned completely.[58] Unemployment became an irritating 'norm' and state intervention viewed as an archaic shelter of inefficiency. The shift in policy direction shaped the two economies into a new pattern of relationships; one no longer based upon paternal egalitarian principles but rather one which saw winners and losers emerging, as each society dealt with the unrestrained, unprotected, forces of the international market and an increasingly deregulated labour market.

The ascendant policy paradigm sought redress for the economic ills of the previous models, targeting inflation and promoting greater market freedom while little attention was paid to social policy innovation, a traditional sphere of Labour's reformist agenda.[59] The political scales were rebalanced away from the supposed empowerment of industrial labour and state growth towards

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[55] See P. Smyth and B. Cass (eds.), *Contesting the Australian Way: States, Markets and Civil Society* (Cambridge, 1988), p.2 and Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.246

[56] See Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand,* ch. 5, especially p.95. Mein Smith argues that the 'Australian Settlement' – a term coined by Paul Kelly in *The End of Certainty: the story of the 1980s* (North Sydney, 1992) – was in reality Australasian.

[57] Castles et al*,* pp.211-223, Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.209 and Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, pp.248-249

[58] See ch. 6

[59] Castles, et al (eds.), p.212 and Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.250

business and finance, through profit restoration, cost reduction and freely moving international capital.[60] Highlighting the realignment are comments from the Secretary of the NZFOL in 1987:

> Yes, says Ken Douglas, he remembers sitting at another desk, talking to me and making the comment: "There is no power greater than that of organised labour". Less than four years ago it seemed to be true.
> "Now? No … I would have to say there is no power greater than that of speculative investment."[61]

Jobs began to disappear as the public sector was remodelled and made more 'efficient' and the economy restructured away from the previous productive sectors, such as forestry and manufacturing. Mechanisation of manufacturing continued cutting into the number of traditional jobs for working class men. Bill Richardson, ACTU delegate at the 1984 NZFOL Annual conference, highlighted the raft of issues emerging in Australia which were of concern to the Australian union movement, a situation which can equally be applied to New Zealand:

> high levels of unemployment, the effect of trans-national corporations, changing industry structure, the effects of CER, technological change, collective interests versus self interest, a significant degree of community apathy towards unionism, apathy amongst union members.[62]

As institutional structures were remade and workforce characteristics shifted in response to the conscious globalisation of the economies, industrial labour's significance diminished as the workforce became increasingly de-unionised. High levels of unemployment intensified this situation. As table 2 illustrates there was a general decline in the proportion of the population that belonged to a union from the mid-1970s.

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[60] See Castles et al (eds.), pp.22-67, Bell, 'Economic Restructuring in Australia: Policy Settlements Models of Economic Development and Economic Rationalism', pp.162-168, Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, pp.208-213, Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, pp.242-250, J. Quiggin, 'Social Democracy and Market Reform in Australia and New Zealand' in A. Glyn (ed.), *Social Democracy in Neoliberal Times: The Left and Economic Policy since 1980* (Oxford, 2001), pp.80-110
[61] T. Reid, 'Change Daze', *New Zealand Listener*, 14 February 1987, p.11
[62] B. Richardson, 'Address', *Minutes and Proceedings*, NZFOL Annual Conference, May 1984, p.64, MSX 2408, ATL

Table 2: Trade Union Membership as a Proportion of the Population, 1970-1990 (selected years)

Year	Australia (%)	New Zealand (%)
1970	49	50.6
1975	56	55.6
1982	48	
1985		43.5
1986	46.6	
1988	41.6	
1989		44.7
1990	40.5	

Sources: Australian figures, 1970 and 1975, Rimmer, p.297 and figures 1982-1990, *Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership,* Australian Bureau of Statistics catalogue 6310.0, www.abs.gov.au. New Zealand figures, Bramble and Heal, p.128

The social protection provided through labour market institutions, which had been based upon labour scarcity and state intervention, were gone or in the process of going. Although the Accord was a successful employment strategy, arresting unemployment from above 10 per cent in 1983 to just over 6 per cent in 1989, the gap between the rich and poor increased. While workers' wages were constrained, business profits bloomed.[63] In New Zealand, employment levels continued to deteriorate during the Labour years. Unemployment rose from just over 4 per cent in 1986 to over 7 per cent in 1990.[64] Further the gap between low wage and high wage earners grew.[65] Equity was a major victim of 'Rogernomics' and the new economic rationalist framework. Fundamentally the Labour-led experiments hijacked the politics of class and challenged the underlying collective basis of union politics.

Relations between the Labour Parties and unions were remade. Historically, both countries developed union movements closely tied to the Labour Parties yet during the 1970s and 1980s these relationships were altered in contrasting ways. The NZFOL had, when compared to the Australian situation, surprisingly little influence in the economic policy community. As Michael

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[63] Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, p.247 and pp.252-254, Bolton, pp.276-277
[64] Household Labour Force Survey (HLFS), Statistics New Zealand. This series began in 1986 so accurate figures for the unemployment rates are not readily obtainable prior to this period.
[65] See F.G Castles and I.F. Shirley, 'Labour and Social Policy: Gravediggers or Refurbishes of the Welfare State' in Castles, et al (eds.), *The Great Experiment*, pp.100-102

Cullen recalls, "the Labour Party's old trade union base was largely ignored".[66] The NZFOL's virtual exclusion from policy formation allowed more extreme economic measures to be undertaken by the fourth Labour government while the ACTU was able to negotiate, influence and temper (to a degree) the ALP during the 1980s.[67] These developments left allegiances between the NZFOL and Labour Party in tatters as the economic experiments took their toll, particularly affecting those workers traditionally forming the Labour constituency, which as plate three illustrates, were increasingly disenfranchised.
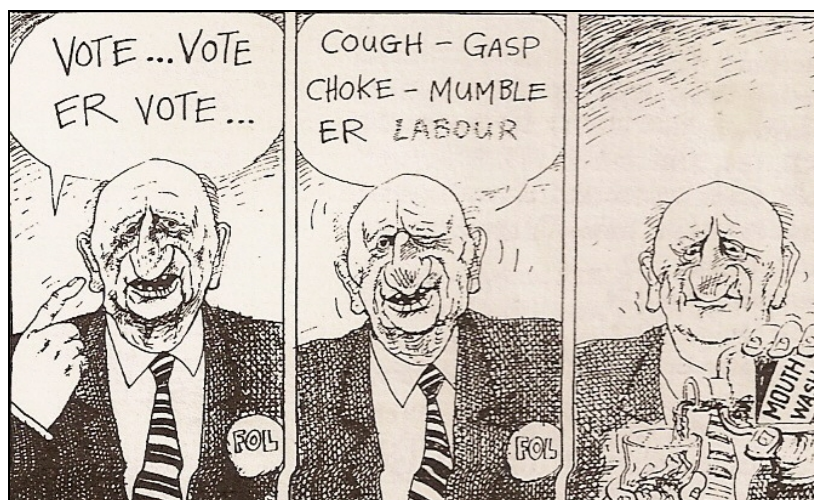
Plate 3: B. Paynter, 'Vote…Vote', *National Business Review*, 1987. Source: I.F. Grant, *The Unauthorized Version: A cartoon history of New Zealand 1840-1987* (Auckland, 1987), p.247

NZFOL President, Jim Knox, gives reluctant support to the Labour Party during the 1987 election campaign.

Economic rationalism remodelled and reshaped Australasia into 'modern' economies able to interact freely with global markets and increasingly unrestrained by a perceivably overprotective state and unruly, empowered union movement. The traditional working class was shrinking in both countries thus affecting the union movements' influence. As the new policies took hold workplace relationships were remade and the Australasian egalitarian principle was undermined. The institutions which upheld and protected the two trading nations were dismantled challenging the ACTU and NZFOL to redevelop new relationships with business and the Labour Parties while restructuring their own modus operandi in response to the radically new environments. The union

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[66] M. Cullen, 'Opening Remarks', in M. Clark (ed.), *For the Record: Lange and the fourth Labour Government* (Wellington, 2005), p.11

[67] See ch. 6. Further, the sometimes complex federal system acted as a brake on Australia's deregulation programme ensuring a more selective and gradual reform agenda emerged, see Goldfinch, p.203 and Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.215

organisations reassessed their traditional structures, their tactics and perspectives.[68]   As highlighted earlier in this chapter the arbitration system, 'domestic defence' and full employment did little to prepare the union movements for the neo-liberal circumstances and in the 1980s they had to develop novel, more strategic and pro-active approaches than in the past. As the leadership of the NZCTU declared in 1988: "Our principles as a movement remain unchanged, but we must fundamentally reassess our organisation and methods of work if we are to remain relevant and effective in the future."[69]   Ultimately the ACTU was more successful in their engagement with the state and business than the NZFOL/NZCTU, although the attempted paths the Australasian peak organisations followed were remarkably similar.[70]

▪   **Conclusion**

The scales of politics and economics are constantly in flux as differing interests seek to balance and rebalance them, moving from one set of policy experiments and agendas to another. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a period of transformation as the accommodations of an older model of development were challenged by the implementation of another model; post-war Keynesian full employment and the protective system of the wage-earners' welfare system were challenged by pro-market neo-liberal models of development. The new model embraced globalisation in contrast to the old models which sought to manage global forces through protection and isolation.

Yet just as the new models sought to remedy the perceived ills inherent in the earlier Australasian capitalist experiments - namely domestically protected economies, powerful trade unions, an interventionist and large state sector and welfare state - they brought with them new problems and issues. Growing unemployment queues disturbingly signalled the changing circumstances. The spirit of egalitarianism, innate in the historic models, was a major casualty of the reforms. This

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[68] ACTU/Australian Development Council, *Australia Reconstructed* (Canberra, 1987), NZCTU, *Towards A Compact* (Wellington, 1988), NZCTU, *The Need for Change: Challenges for the Trade Union Movement of Today* (Wellington, November 1988), NZCTU, *Strategies for Change* (Wellington, 1989). See also ch. 6
[69] NZCTU, *The Need for Change*, p.21
[70] See ch. 6

brought into sharp relief the divergence between the old and new circumstances; the new form of capitalism saw the emergence of winners and losers as the scales tipped in favour of business and away from workers.

The Australian Council of Trade Unions and the New Zealand Federation of Labour consequently worked within a rapidly changing atmosphere. This confronted the historic strength of trade unionism, the politics of collectivism, the equitable redistribution of wealth as well as the traditional dominance of white males in society and in the workplace. Therefore, if the Australasian world was transformed, the trans-Tasman union world was disrupted and uprooted, requiring metamorphosis to remain relevant in the new environment. Severe strains were placed on union membership, on Australasian workers in general and on the politics of class, resulting in a complex set of responses by the ACTU and NZFOL. This collection of responses is explored in the following chapters.

Chapter 4

Global Visions:

Australasian Unionists Engage Internationally

The ACTU and NZFOL developed an Australasian partnership, signalled through the establishment of the joint trade union council, the ANZTUCC. This development sprang from a shared understanding of the increasingly integrated international economy, a common labour market and widespread established ties between the two union movements. Frequently the ANZTUCC examined the situations both union movements faced within their own national jurisdictions, often concluding that they faced similar circumstances. This recognised a shared environment but significantly it did not generally lead to joint activity. Rather, international concerns prompted mutual, co-ordinated campaigns, evolving the partnership into a relationship facilitated through international and regional leadership. This supported the transmission of knowledge between the union councils and consolidated perceptions of a trans-Tasman world; a community that had "elastic boundaries",[1] as this chapter will illustrate.

Overall, this chapter seeks to explain the development of joint ACTU-NZFOL leadership on the global stage in the 1970s and early 1980s. It concentrates on the people and international issues that fostered the development of a globally focused trans-Tasman union community which reflected and embraced the new internationalism. I explore two issues against which trans-

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[1] Denoon, 'Re-Membering Australasia', p.293. Se ch. 1, p.12

Tasman unionists spearheaded international opposition: the apartheid regime in South Africa and French nuclear testing in the Pacific. Union 'silences' are also discussed, primarily concerning the exclusion of women and indigenous issues from Australasian union agendas. Building upon the joint leadership developed around international concerns, trans-Tasman interest solidified in the Pacific, particularly around the anti-nuclear issue.

- **Leadership Dimensions of the Trans-Tasman Union World**

The personal attributes, cultural worlds and relationships built between individuals are important aspects in understanding human interchange. As the erstwhile Australian High Commissioner to New Zealand, Dr Allan Hawke, has observed:

> no one should underplay the power and importance of personal relationships, whether at a family level or among political leaders. We completely underestimate the nature of political leaders' personal relationships in influencing outcomes, and approaches and what actually happens.[2]

With this perspective in mind, it is useful to consider the familial connections, cultural ties and personal relationships established between the Australasian union leaders when unravelling the interactive dimensions of this strand of the trans-Tasman world.

Three unionists emerge as the foremost leaders of the Australasian union movement's voice on international affairs. From the ACTU the President, Robert (Bob) Hawke, and from the NZFOL the Presidents Thomas (Tom) Skinner and James (Jim) Knox, were all advocates of a shared Australia-New Zealand presence on the international political and union stage. All three were active members of the international union community where they promoted Australasian views. In addition to their union presence, these leaders had high domestic profiles and were vocal in the trans-Tasman, and later Pacific political environments. The internationalism of their outlooks, the

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[2] Quoted in J. Black, 'The Last Post', *New Zealand Listener*, Jan 28-Feb 3 2006, Vol 202, Number 3429, URL: http://www.listener.co.nz/issue/3429/features/, retrieved 21 May 2006

trust and goodwill in their relationships, along with their personal attributes and passions influenced the development of the trans-Tasman union world.

The union leaders of the period had cultural worlds with a trans-Tasman dimension, in part influenced by their family backgrounds. For example, Tom Skinner, although born in New Zealand, was the product of the British empire as the son of a South African father and an Australian mother,[3] while Bob Hawke's family, prior to his birth, spent a number of years resident in New Zealand during which time his father gained ordination as a Congregational minister.[4] These kinship elements provide an underlying 'blood' aspect to the leaders' personal understandings of each other's societies and the region as a whole. [5]

Bob Hawke was the President of the ACTU from 1969 until 1979, during which time he became the most prominent member of the Australian trade union movement, developing a reputation as a hard negotiator and effective settler of disputes.[6] He was also President of the ALP from 1973 to 1978 and entered Federal Parliament in 1980 after resigning from the ACTU, becoming Australian Prime Minister from 1983 to 1991. A charismatic leader, he brought to the ACTU Presidency a modernising, international and consensual outlook. He blended global perspectives with domestic concerns, as in his 1971 Presidential address:

> it is no use, no use at all, trying to fashion a better life within this country, if we do not do our utmost, however small that may be, to help secure, if not a world in which people love one another, at least a world in which they are prepared to live in peace with one another.[7]

Hawke, a Rhodes Scholar, captured the mood of the globally focused baby boomer generation. He was a leading force behind the formal development of trade union relations with the NZFOL[8]

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[3] P. Franks, 'Skinner, Thomas Edward 1909-1991', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005, URL:http//:www.dbnz.govt.nz/
[4] d'Alpuget, p.5-6
[5] Ngai Tahu Kaumatua, Sir Tipene O'Regan highlights the importance of trans-Tasman kinship connections in an address to a conference on Australia-New Zealand relations. See T. O'Regan, 'The Dimension of Kinship' in *States of Mind: Australia and New Zealand 1901-2001* (eds.), A. Grimes, L. Wevers and G. Sullivan (Wellington, 2002) pp.35-38
[6] B. Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs* (Port Melbourne, 1994), p.100
[7] B. Hawke, Presidential Address, *Minutes of Congress*, ACTU 1971 Congress Papers, p.7, S784, NBAC
[8] NZFOL, Executive Minutes, 27 October 1971, MS-Papers-4100-10/20, ATL and ACTU, Decisions of the Australian Congress of Trade Unions, 30 August – 3 September 1971, p.11, S784, NBAC

as well as an active member of the international union community. In 1972 he was appointed to the governing body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).[9]

Tom Skinner and Jim Knox were the chief leaders of the Federation of Labour until the NZFOL was superseded by the NZCTU in 1987. Tom Skinner held the NZFOL Presidency from 1963 until his retirement in 1979. Like Bob Hawke, Skinner was a conciliatory leader with a wide network of connections, including a close working relationship with Prime Minister Robert Muldoon. Skinner was regarded as a generally conservative man and criticism of him grew within union ranks due to his moderation, particularly in the face of Muldoon's anti-union platform and oppressive industrial legislation.[10]

Jim Knox became the NZFOL's Secretary-Treasurer in 1969 and President in 1979, retiring when the NZFOL evolved into the NZCTU. Knox, in contrast to Skinner, was generally uncompromising and militant, having played an active part in the 1951 waterfront lockout. Described as a tough blunt and honest negotiator, Knox was the archetypal 'working class battler'.[11]

Although contrasting in their negotiating and political styles, both Skinner and Knox represent the last generation of New Zealand union leaders to operate during the period of compulsory unionism and arbitration. In 1991 when both men died, the then Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, noted the generational change, remarking that with their passing an era of trade unionism was virtually over.[12] Skinner and Knox were more aligned with authoritarian, socially conservative unionism while the NZCTU's leaders of the later 1980s were more pragmatic in their approaches to politics.

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[9] d'Alpuget, p.222 See also pp. 220-221, 279-282, and 345-346

[10] See P. Franks, 'Skinner, Thomas Edward 1909-1991'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005 URL:http//:www.dbnz.govt.nz/

[11] 'Jim Knox Obituary', *Evening Post*, 2 December 1991, p.3 and P. Franks, 'Knox, Walter, James 1919-1991', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005 URL: http//www.dnzb.govt.nz/ and B. Gustafson, *His Way: A Biography of Robert Muldoon* (Auckland, 2000), p.344

[12] See 'Knox Obituary', *Evening Post*, 2 December 1991, p.3

While Skinner and Knox were the last of 'the old guard', like Hawke they were internationally engaged union leaders. Skinner was the first New Zealander to serve a term on the governing body of the ILO and was also a member of the Asian committee of the ICFTU.[13] Knox was actively involved with the ILO and ICFTU, holding the position of President of the Asia-Pacific branch of the ICFTU.[14]

The trans-Tasman leaders' relationships also affected the sharing of information and international commitments. Collegial relations developed between Hawke and the ACTU on the one hand and their New Zealand counterparts on the other. Skinner's relationship with Hawke was friendly and they worked together well.[15] The leaders split their international labour responsibilities, rotating duties within the Australasian community. Further, when one representative was unable to attend an international gathering his trans-Tasman counterpart was generally asked to attend in his place.[16] The goodwill, trust and open collaboration at international union gatherings affirmed the Australasian union world and the leaders' global engagement. This partnership gained further impetus when the union leaders engaged in combined opposition to South Africa's apartheid regime and French nuclear testing in the Pacific region.

- **Thinking Globally, Leading Globally**

The upswing in 1970s counter-culture-inspired protest, which challenged the overwhelming conservatism of the post-war generation, saw Australasia's union leaders emerge as agitators on the international and domestic political stages. The union leaders captured the attention and

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[13] T. Skinner with J. Berry, *Man to Man* (Christchurch, 1980), pp.165 -166

[14] See NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 7-10 May 1985

[15] Skinner, p.167

[16] Examples include: Letter, Souter to Skinner, 18 June 1971, N21/1483, NBAC, requesting the ACTU represent the NZFOL and ACTU at an ICFTU meeting as Skinner was no longer able to attend; NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 2-5 May 1972, p.54, where Hawke attended ICFTU Congress for both NZFOL and ACTU; ACTU, Executive minutes, 3 September 1973, N68/786, NBAC, Hawke represented both organisations at an Apartheid Conference; Co-ordination over attendance at ICFTU; Minutes of the Meeting of the ANZTUCC, 13 September 1979, p.8, N68/132, NBAC, highlights the "previously agreed arrangement of rotation between New Zealand and Australia with respect to the ICFTU and ILO" and the ACTU and NZFOL's commitment to continue this policy.

protest mood of the new generation of activists through their activity concerning prominent international grievances in the 1970s. Additionally, the union campaigns solidified trans-Tasman institutional ties.

Bob Hawke, along with left-leaning members of the Executive, gave leadership and lent support to 'political strikes', that is, strikes concerned with issues beyond the traditional scope of the union business concerning industrial relations. As Hawke stated:

> I believe that the responsibilities of the trade union movement run to every area of affairs where the welfare of our members and their dependants is involved. I acknowledge no dividing line which says that on this side of the line – for instance with wages and hours – we are concerned, but not on the other.[17]

Further highlighting this point, Hawke remarked on another occasion, "anything that constitutes discrimination or hardship against our people – then in we go."[18] As ACTU historian James Hagan noted, "there was nothing new about political strikes in Australia: what was new was the ACTU's willingness to initiate them."[19] In New Zealand the NZFOL undertook a similar role concerning international moral issues. This led to the Australian and New Zealand union councils organising and co-ordinating transnational campaigns highlighting international political concerns.

The union organisations' joint political strikes included opposition to Australian and New Zealand involvement in the Vietnam War, the repression of trade unions in Poland and the Indonesian presence in East Timor; trade bans against the military junta in Chile; and calls for an independent Kanaky in New Caledonia. Yet the ACTU and NZFOL primarily joined forces in opposition to sporting contacts with the apartheid regime in South Africa and the French government's atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons in the Pacific.

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[17] R.J. Hawke, President Elect, Acceptance Address ACTU Congress, *Congress Minutes*, 8-12 September 1969, p.2, S784, NBAC
[18] J Hagan, *The ACTU: a short history on the occasion of the 50th anniversary 1927-1977* (Terry Hills, 1977), p.86
[19] Ibid., p.87

Combined Australian-New Zealand union action against apartheid began in 1971 when a racially selected South African rugby team was scheduled to tour Australia. The ACTU, after much discussion, took a stand against the proposed tour and sent protests to the Governments of South Africa and Australia.[20] The ACTU Executive resolved that:

> should these representations prove to be unsuccessful we advise our affiliated unions to take whatever action is necessary as an act of conscience on their part to withhold services from any activities directly associated with these proposed tours.[21]

The Secretary of the NZFOL wrote to his ACTU counterpart expressing support for their anti-apartheid position:

> At a meeting of National Executive held 4 May 1971 discussion took place regarding statements made by the ACTU against racial discrimination and the stand being taken by trade unions in Australia against rugby teams touring Australia from South Africa, being selected on an apartheid policy.
> The National Executive resolved: "National Executive re-iterates the policy of the FOL of opposition to all forms of racial discrimination as an affront to human dignity and of abrogation of human freedom as annunciated by the charter of human rights. We congratulate the ACTU on its stand against teams from South Africa selected on an apartheid policy of colour, irrespective of ability. The National Exec on behalf of the New Zealand Trade Union movement offers full support and co-operation in any action the ACTU decides to take."
> The FOL has had a policy against racial discrimination since 1960 and we would be very happy to give any assistance that is required by the ACTU and their affiliated unions in this very important matter against apartheid.[22]

The apartheid issue created a bond between the Australian and New Zealand union leaders, especially as they faced criticism and antagonism from non-Labour governments and dissent from members within their own organisations.[23] Those opposing the union leaders' stand felt that politics should not be mixed with sport. The apartheid issue divided Australian and New Zealand societies and their respective union movements. Yet the union leaders took an emphatic anti-apartheid, anti-tour stance, despite being openly challenged by several affiliate unions. As Bob Hawke recalled of this period, and the apartheid issue in particular,

> I believed, as did others in the ACTU that there were certain issues where, if we were ahead of public opinion and totally convinced of our position, we had an obligation to act

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[20] ACTU policy against apartheid was first outlined in 1963

[21] ACTU, Executive Minutes, 13 May 1971, pp.15-17, N68/785, NBAC

[22] Letter, Knox to Souter, 10 May 1971, MS-Papers-4100-21/03/3, ATL

[23] d'Alpuget, p.178 and pp.190-192 and W. A. McKegg, *The Thin End of the Wedge: The 1970 South African Tour Controversy*, thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for post-graduate diploma in History, University of Otago, 1990, pp.70-72. For an overview of New Zealand protests against sporting contact with South Africa see T. Richards, *Dancing on our Bones: New Zealand, South Africa, Rugby and Racism* (Wellington, 1999)

ahead of public opinion, to act as leaders, in the hope that the public would come to understand.[24]

Therefore the Australasian union leaders took up progressive roles opposing apartheid, sharing a commitment to international social justice.

This perspective aligned union leadership with the emergent 'protest' generation. The unions, classified as traditional Old Left institutions, provided strong international and domestic voices to the anti-apartheid concerns of the younger, often student-based protest movements of the 1970s. Further, the anti-apartheid cause created a bridge between two seemingly opposed groups: the New Left was anti-establishment, individualist and radical while the Old Left was hierarchical, socially conservative and an established part of state development through their participation in arbitration and conciliation processes over seventy years.

The most enduring international issue to which Leftist factions developed co-ordinated responses was opposition against French nuclear testing in the Pacific. This matter also cemented trans-Tasman union leadership most clearly in the global arena with the ACTU and NZFOL standing "shoulder-to-shoulder"[25] against the old imperial world. As Tom Skinner relates in his autobiography, the Australia-New Zealand joint union council's voice was "particularly effective on the issue of French nuclear testing in the Pacific."[26]

France began atmospheric nuclear tests in the Pacific in 1966, contrary to the spirit of both the Partial Test Ban Treaty and Non-Proliferation Treaty. This left many countries in the Pacific region exasperated and with a resumption of testing in 1972 Australasian anti-nuclear protests escalated. New Zealand and Australia led international protest against the French tests[27] with union institutions at the forefront of actions.

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[24] d'Alpuget, p.191
[25] R.J. Hawke and J. Knox, Joint Press Statement, 17 September 1979, p.1, N68/132, NBAC
[26] Skinner, p.168
[27] K. Clements, *Back from the Brink: the creation of a nuclear-free New Zealand* (Wellington, 1988), pp.62-84

The ACTU and NZFOL withdrew services to French aircraft or shipping for the duration of the tests.[28] Numerous letters and telegrams between the organisations ensured the joint protest was maintained and synchronized, creating an Australasian trade blockade.[29] The ACTU indicated that co-ordination between Australian and New Zealand activity was "imperative".[30] Further, the leaders of the two union organisations urged the ICFTU and its 300,000 affiliates to join the Australasian-led protest activity.[31]

Tom Skinner argued that the NZFOL and ACTU were central actors in the cessation of French atmospheric nuclear testing in the Pacific.[32] The transnational union campaign preceded the decision by the Australian and New Zealand Labour governments to take the French to the International Court of Justice. Additionally, an NZFOL Executive member highlighted the bearing the unionists' position had upon international opinion:

> In the recent past Australian and New Zealand unionists have co-operated to bring their interest to bear on some international problems which have disturbed trade unionists all over the world. …the rest of the world has taken up our point of view in relation to the testing of atomic weapons in the atmosphere and given international support.[33]

The NZFOL and ACTU's actions signify the leadership capacity of the institutions and their leaders within a wider international environment. Yet it is important to recognise that they were part of an extensive protest community. To neglect the significance of other non-governmental organisations from the peace and anti-nuclear movements[34] overlooks the multifaceted and widespread opposition that the tests generated amongst members of the public and from within the Australasian New Left.

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[28] NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 1-4 May 1973, p.46, ACTU, 'Decision ACTU Executive to the Proposed French Nuclear Tests', 15 May 1973, pp.1-2, N21/1484, NBAC
[29] Letters dated 26 May 1972, June 1972, June 1972, 3 August 1972, Telegrams 1, 2, 3 August, MS-Papers-4100-21/03/3, ATL
[30] Letter, Souter to Knox, 25 February 1975, N21/1484, NBAC
[31] See NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceeding*, Annual Conference, 1-4 May 1973, pp.46-47
[32] Skinner, p.202
[33] Clement, Address to ACTU Congress 1973, p.4
[34] See Clements, p.70, footnote 83

A significant factor concerning the union councils' leadership of both opposition to apartheid and French nuclear testing was not so much the actual issues they addressed but rather the connections that were created between the traditionally authoritarian, hierarchical unions and the radical, anti-authority, individualistic, emergent New Left. As Bruce Jesson observed protest politics were about foreign policy, moral issues and individual rights. The slogan of the time, 'Doing your own thing' summed up the strong individualism in the movement.[35] The union leadership was able to expose mainly middle-class young protesters to the politics of class and solidarity, creating a platform for a merger of the two leftist groups. In addition, the union leaders were able to portray unionism as progressive, globally connected and change oriented.

The election of Labour Parties on either side of the Tasman in 1972 saw many of the demands of the New Left delivered; troops were withdrawn from Vietnam, military conscription was ended in Australia and compulsory military training curtailed in New Zealand, diplomatic relations with China were established, conventions on nuclear weapons ratified, French nuclear testing in the Pacific was challenged and sporting ties with South Africa terminated.[36] This resulted in the decline of the protest movement as the liberal wing of the group was largely appeased by Labour's policies.[37] Yet two major social movements continued through the 1970s and 1980s – the women's movement and indigenous rights movement – for which the trans-Tasman union elites did not provide effective Australasian leadership. Rather the union organisations found themselves defiantly challenged by women, Maori, Aboriginals and migrant workers.

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[35] B. Jesson, *Fragments of Labour: The Story behind the Labour Government* (Auckland, 1989), p.29
[36] Jesson, p.30 and Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia,* p.236
[37] T. Boraman, 'The New Left in New Zealand' in Moloney and Taylor (eds.), p.129 and Jesson*,* pp.30-31

▪ **Trans-Tasman Union 'Blind Spots'**

The union movements in Australia and New Zealand, represented at their peaks by the ACTU and NZFOL national councils, were historically white male domains, acting mainly for skilled workers. As Verity Burgmann and Stuart Macintyre observe:

> Organized labour has usually paid most attention to the interests of those who carry the most clout. It has not adequately represented workers at the bottom of the pile – the unskilled workers of the nineteenth century, women workers since, or 'ethnic' and Aboriginal workers at any time.[38]

Further illustrating this point, Bert Roth writing in 1973 noted: "At annual conferences of the Federation of Labour, Maori delegates are as rare as women delegates."[39] The union model of solidarity has, historically, been particularist and exclusionary in its operation. Australasian union leadership in the 1970s and 1980s did not overcome this criticism although, as separate national councils, the ACTU and NZFOL did attempt to address the grievances of emerging social movements.

Trade unionism was created as a white men's movement, concerned primarily with white men's paid employment and conditions. Historically, women and women's rights along with indigenous and migrant workers and their rights have been overlooked, or inadequately represented, by the union establishment. The majority of women, whose work was often performed in isolated settings and of an unpaid, casual, or part-time nature, made women workers inherently difficult to organise. The male dominance of unions created an atmosphere in which unionism was considered 'unladylike' and therefore not aligned with ideas of acceptable femininity.[40] Maori and Aboriginal workers were historically located in rural areas and their work was often seasonal in nature, casual and/or part-time. Like women, the attributes of their work created barriers in

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[38] V. Burgmann and S. Macintyre 'Divided We Fell' in V. Burgmann and J. Lee (eds.), *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia since 1788* (Fitzroy, 1988), p.124. This quote can be applied to the New Zealand situation, with Maori being inserted in place of Aboriginal workers.

[39] H. Roth, *Trade Unions in New Zealand* (Auckland, 1973), p.133

[40] See R. Frances, 'Gender, History and Industrial Relations' in G. Patmore, *History and Industrial Relations*, Australia Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT), University of Sydney, Monograph No.1 (1991), p.49 and Frances, 'Writing A Gendered Labour History', p.70

effective worker organisation and unionism. Unionism, particularly in Australia, also sanctioned

blatant racism and sought to exclude non-European workers from mainstream unions.[41]

In the 1970s and 1980s changes in the structure of women's employment and the emergence of

the women's movement[42] challenged the union 'boys' club'. An increase in female labour force

participation, the restructuring of the economy towards female dominated industries and growing

unionisation of public sector and white collar industries, in conjunction with the merger and

growth of power of unions representing these industries in the ACTU and NZFOL, all helped

bring women's issues into the mainstream of Australian and New Zealand unionism.[43]

Additionally, women began to attain positions on the Executives of both the ACTU and NZFOL

(and NZCTU).[44] These developments coincided with the rise of the women's movement, which

combined to focus attention on the rights of women workers and union initiatives to promote

these rights. Key in the promotion of women's issues was the establishment of separate female

structures within unions,[45] although feminists felt disenfranchised from the union movement and

sought their own independent organisations.

Feminists questioned not so much the class aspect of women's oppression but rather challenged

their oppression by 'patriarchy'. Unions were viewed as a failure by socialist feminists, who

confronted the male dominated union structures.[46] Although women were progressing up the

union hierarchy, indifference, intolerance and apathy typified their experience of male unionists'

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[41] See Curthoys and Markus (eds.), esp. pp. 129-137

[42] Interviews with New Zealand woman unionists indicate that the importance of the women's movement for the gender revolution within unions was controversial. Notably, Angela Foulkes, who was elected vice-President of the NZCTU in 1987, declared the women's movement had no major influence on her unionism and was a 'middle class' movement. See M. Nolan and S. Ryan, 'Transforming Unionism by Organising? Gender Revolution in New Zealand Trade Unionism Since 1975, *Labour History*, 84 (May 2003), pp.101-102

[43] A. Booth and L. Rubenstein, 'Women in Trade Unions in Australia' in S. Watson (ed.), *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions* (London, 1990) pp.123-124 and p.134, M. Nolan *Breadwinning: New Zealand Women and the State* (Christchurch, 2000) p.246 and Nolan and Ryan, p.93

[44] Booth and Rubenstein, p.134 and Nolan and Ryan, p.89

[45] See Nolan and Ryan, pp.101-105

[46] See A. Curthoys, 'Doing it for Themselves: The Women's Movement since 1970' in K Saunders and R Evans (eds.), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Marrickville, 1992) p.442

engagement with gender issues.[47] Tom Skinner was remembered as "chauvinistic"[48] and in an

interview about his autobiography *Man to Man* he remarked, "I don't think women should go out

to work if they have a young family and a husband to look after."[49] Yet male apathy and narrow-

mindedness should not be read as universal opposition; many women noted the collaborative

support several leading male unionists provided.[50]   However, as economic and industrial

conditions worsened for unions, women's concerns were sidelined.   Commenting on the

Australian situation,

> Our [women's] policies were marginalized and ignored when major decisions were made
> about the direction of the trade union movement. Women activists were not included in key
> decision-making forums and nobody seriously raised women's concerns when matters like
> wages policy, employment policy, education and so on were debated.[51]

This observation can be equally applied to trans-Tasman union forums. Women's issues and the

Working Women's Charter[52] were not discussed at joint union meetings. The silence surrounding

women's concerns at ACTU-NZFOL discussions indicates on-going indifference in the

promotion of women's issues. The development of separate women's structures, crucial for the

promotion of women unionists and their concerns,[53] were unable to break through this silence as

ACTU-NZFOL interchange was overwhelmingly a (male) leadership forum.

NZFOL Research Officer, Wendy Davis remarked women's policies did not find easy favour in

the union arena.   Although broad international concerns were considered union business,

women's issues struggled to get an equivalent hearing:

> Unions can no longer afford the luxury of being male-only clubs. But if unions are to benefit
> from having active women members, then they have to take up issues of concern to working
> women. That's not just a matter of domestic leave, equal pay and maternity leave. Its [sic]
> also a question of encouraging male unionists to help with housework and child care and

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[47] Booth and Rubenstein, pp.128-129, S. Davies, *Bread and Roses* (Auckland, 1993), pp.300-301 and Nolan and Ryan, p.94

[48] Nellie Bell, interviewed by Sarah Dalton, ATL cited in Nolan and Ryan, p.93

[49] *The Press*, 'Labour Could Win – Sir Thomas', 4 September 1980, p.1

[50] Nolan and Ryan, pp.102-103 and Davies, p.302

[51] Booth and Rubenstein, p.129

[52] Women unionists independently, sought trans-Tasman co-operation. Australian and New Zealand women trade unionists held discussions regarding the inclusion of abortion, contraception and sterilization clauses in the Working Women's Charter. See Davies, p.299

[53] Nolan and Ryan, p.106

taking up issues like domestic violence against women, women's unemployment and family planning. For those people who say that those issues aren't union issues I'd point out that the FOL has policies on nuclear power, CORSO, East Timor, Ireland, the Middle East and world peace. The position of women in New Zealand society is at least as important as those policies.[54]

This observation reinforces the view that Australasian union leadership was unbalanced in the support it provided to social movements. International causes gained considerable support from union elites yet social movements of increasing significance within New Zealand and Australian societies, namely the women's movement and indigenous rights movements, were largely overlooked by the trans-Tasman union community.

The lack of trans-Tasman leadership in reference to women's concerns can partly be explained by the separate structures that were established to empower union women. Yet the inability of these feminised structures to infiltrate the trans-Tasman union community point towards the union movement's failure to adequately translate the concerns of women workers and feminism. This led to the increasing breakdown of bonds formed across left politics between the union and women's movements as the politics of diversity and difference challenged the older quest for ordered solidarity.

Just as women were not adequately represented by trans-Tasman union leaders, Maori, Aboriginal and migrant workers' issues were absent from trans-Tasman discussions. Ironically, given the Australasian union stance against apartheid in South Africa, no such anti-discrimination rhetoric about the respective domestic situations was heard at trans-Tasman meetings. Each union council independently examined the circumstances and issues facing indigenous and migrant populations. This led to the establishment of specific national structures within the ACTU and NZFOL but their effectiveness was overridden by wider union concerns. Maori and Aboriginal rights

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[54] W. Davis, 'Women not being taken seriously by unions', *The Press,* 6 September 1982, p.16

activists, along with migrants, found stronger advocacy for their concerns within other organisations.[55]

In the 1980s the union movement declined as an effective social movement or movement of reform[56] as it faced increasingly challenging and new industrial and economic circumstances. Its inability to translate the wide manifestation of social concerns into a coherent broad strategy led to the fragmentation of the Left as the politics of difference and identity became pre-eminent. The rise of identity politics in the 1980s reflected the maturing of the generation of New Left radicals from the 1970s who, as products of middle class affluence, were less concerned with economics or workers' solidarity and more comfortable in the pursuit of individual freedoms and empowerment.[57] The disintegration of Leftist politics and the union organisations' inability to incorporate the increasingly isolated concerns within their advocacy and policy frameworks created a situation which partly explains the weakness of the left-wing of the labour movement and the NZFOL and ACTU's failure to challenge effectively the rise of neo-liberal policies in the 1980s.

The structure and character of the union establishment also helps explain their failure to contest the shift towards the right in economic and industrial relations policies and their inability to realise the goals of the emerging clusters of disadvantaged workers. Both union organisations were grounded in the arbitration system which had "created unions of moderate resources, modest

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[55] Very limited research has been undertaken exploring the role of indigenous and migrant populations in unions in New Zealand and Australia. An exception is, T. Murray, K. Taylor, J. Tepania and N.Rameka, 'Towards a History of Maori and Trade Unions' in Martin and Taylor (eds.), *Culture and the Labour Movement*. This chapter concludes that, "Historians are excessively concerned with national institutions and their leaderships, with great events, and more often than not with the urban experience. This leaves Maori experience and contribution to unions unacknowledged, even up to recent times. For most of the century Maori have been active at the regional level and at the lower levels within the union hierarchies. Until historians reorientate their perspective way from union elites and national institutions and events, and temper their urban bias, Maori will remain mere footnotes to our labour history", p.59. In the article 'Black and Red: The Pilbara Pastoral Workers' Strike, 1946', *Aboriginal History*, 18:1 (1994), pp.65-83, Michel Hess explores one of the first efforts by Aboriginal workers at collective organisation although this was not unionised. Migrant workers' experience of unions has largely been written from a perspective of exclusion; see for example, Curthoys and Markus (eds.)

[56] Beilharz, *Transforming Labor,* p.48 and Burgmann and Macintyre, p.129

[57] See Jesson, pp.28-33 and Boraman, p.132

ambitions and docile habits".[58] This made it unlikely that the unions would "become the vehicle for remedying the labour market disadvantage suffered by these [women, Maori, Pacific Island and low-income] workers."[59]

Further, the bureaucratisation of the union movement in the 1970s and 1980s created a situation where the leadership was increasingly regarded as 'out of touch' with rank and file workers.[60] Full-time union officials "represent a distinct layer within the trade unions which develops its own interests which are often counterposed to those of the membership that they represent."[61] Highlighting this point is the New Zealand Service Workers' Unions' discussion paper on union strategy:

> The co-option of the CTU to a 'managerial' approach is partly, we believe, an outcome of the evolution of full-time apparatus of the CTU…The upper echelons of the CTU full-time personnel are occupying a more managerial position in the social division of labour and are consequently identifying more with managers in industry and government.[62]

The dis-connect between union leadership and those they represent can be seen as an additional impediment to effective representation of workers across all sectors of society.

▪   Stretching into the Pacific

As a transnational collective leadership elite, the Australasian trade union organisations in the 1970s and early-to-mid 1980s principally gave guidance and leadership on international moral issues. Their concentration on global concerns, particularly the anti-nuclear issue, led to an active expansion of the trans-Tasman alliance into the Pacific. The extension of joint New Zealand and Australian union activity ultimately challenged competing American union interests in a jostle for influence and power in a region of increasing strategic importance. Although eventually anti-

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[58] Nolan and Walsh, p.22

[59] Ibid.

[60] See B. Roper, 'Leading from the Rear? A Theoretical Analysis of the Contingent Bureaucratic Conservatism of the NZCTU' *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 21:3 pp.257-275 and Burgmann and Macintyre, p.125

[61] T. Bramble, 'The Contingent Conservatism of Full-Time Trade Union Officials: A Review of the Literature', Discussion paper 11/91, Department of Economics, La Trobe University, September 1991, p.1

[62] Service Workers Federation of Aotearoa, 'The Way Ahead, an alternative perspective on the strategies for change proposal - a discussion paper', September 1989, p.3, NZCTU Preliminary Conference – Delegate papers, 1985, MS-Papers-4100-14/2/2, ATL

nuclear activity was displaced by more fundamental issues of trade union training and solidarity across the Pacific this reveals an on-going Australasian engagement with the region.

Jacqueline Leckie observes that the development of workers' groups in the South Pacific cannot be accorded solely to foreign forces or individuals; rather internal societal dynamics including cultural, kinship, political and class relationships need to be examined to understand the links between, in this case, Australasian institutions and their Pacific equivalents.[63] Acknowledging Leckie's point, this study is restricted by the availability of one-sided evidence. The limits of the study have not allowed a thorough examination of connections from a Pacific perspective.[64] The Australasian based institutions' interactions with Pacific organisations are investigated from a trans-Tasman perspective which gives only a partial picture.

Transnational labour representation was later arriving in the South Pacific region than Australasia. As Leckie observes, "the relatively slow pace of decolonization in the South Pacific along with the fragmentary development of labour organisations, accounts partly for the comparatively late emergence of regional labour organisations."[65] Although unions were established in Papua New Guinea,[66] Fiji, the Cook Islands, Western Samoa and New Caledonia[67] an extremely narrow range of unions participated in so-called regional conferences in the 1960s and 1970s.[68] Extensive South Pacific regional union organisations were not established until the 1980s.

During the 1970s the Australasian union organisations were aware of the need to strengthen regional ties with workers outside their nation borders particularly as the two countries faced

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[63] J. Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour? New Zealand and Trade Union Internationalism in the South Pacific Islands' in P. Walsh (ed.) *Pioneering New Zealand Labour History: Essays in Honour of Bert Roth* (Palmerston North, 1993), pp.83 and 91and J. Leckie, 'Labour, Regionalism and Internationalism: A Case Study in Fiji in D. Rubeinstein (ed.) *Pacific History Papers from the Eighth Pacific History Conference* (Guam, 1992), p.333
[64] That said, speeches by Pacific delegates to NZFOL conferences were researched
[65] Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour', p.93 and Leckie, 'Labour Regionalism and Internationalism', p.337
[66] A.M. Kiki, 'Development of trade unions in the territory', in M.W. Ward (ed.), *The Politics of Melanesia,* Papers delivered at the Fourth Waigani Seminar, Port Moresby, 9-15 May 1970, pp.615-620 and J.D. Waiko, *A Short History of Papua New Guinea* (South Melbourne, 1993), pp.163-164
[67] Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour', pp.80-94
[68] Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour', p.93 and Leckie, 'Labour Regionalism and Internationalism', p.337

increasingly globalised economic conditions. As NZFOL Executive member, W Clement highlighted in 1973, the Pacific and Asia were of particular interest;

> We are continually moving towards closer relationships with the people of Asia and in particular the people of the Pacific Basin, because in the present state of world affairs it is more and more obvious as times goes on that our future lies here. The trade unions of our two countries carry a responsibility to set the pattern of economic and industrial justice to workers in our countries and to assist other countries in this area to achieve the same ends.[69]

The Australasian organisations' engagement with the Pacific indicates a growing regionalism in their thinking which reflects the changing patterns of alliance and association that were developing globally in the 1970s.

The desire to strengthen regional bonds built on ties the ACTU was successfully establishing with Papua New Guinean unionists during their transition to independence[70] and broader moves to strengthen worker solidarity in the region. It was accepted that the ACTU and NZFOL shared duties to strengthen trade unions in the Pacific region, as the following resolution details: "The joint FOL-ACTU Co-ordinating Committee accept the responsibility of assistance in organising the developing of Trade Union Movements of the various South Pacific Island nations."[71] Further, the building of unity in the Pacific was viewed as the responsibility of an extended trans-Tasman alliance:

> We through the FOL and ACTU have developed a commendable degree of co-operation and understanding, and I suggest that we should give further attention to the development of unity amongst the working people and their organisations in the South-east Pacific area.[72]

Assistance during the 1970s included the establishment of training and education programmes yet little tangible progress was made towards this goal.[73] Apart from Papua New Guinea, connections generally centred on Fijian unions concerning solidarity over industrial disputes, although this

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[69] Clement, Address to ACTU Congress 1973, p.4

[70] Kiki, 'Development of trade unions in the territory', in Ward *The Politics of Melanesia,* pp.615-620 and 'ACTU International Report', p.7.13, ACTU*, Minutes and Proceedings,* 1989 Congress, Box 6, S784, NBAC

[71] NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings,* Annual Conference, 6-9 May 1974, p.67

[72] J.F. Deveruex, 'ACTU Address to NZFOL Annual Conference', NZFOL *Minutes and Proceedings,* 6-9 May 1975, p.99. See also, Clement, Address to ACTU Congress 1973, p.3

[73] Devereux, 'ACTU Address to NZFOL Annual Conference', p.100 and ACTU, Executive Minutes, 'Proposals regarding ACTU 50th Anniversary', 20 August 1976, N68/835, NBAC

relationship was 'stop-start' and not always harmonious.[74] Therefore although both the ACTU and NZFOL looked to work with unionists in the South Pacific actual progress was slow until the 1980s when the anti-nuclear issue spurred on regional developments, which the NZFOL in tandem with the ACTU largely drove.

The first substantial move towards a pan-Pacific union organisation was made when the initial conference of the Pacific Trade Union Forum[75] (PTUF) was held at Port Vila, Vanuatu in 1981. The PTUF being a non-aligned organisation of informal structure enjoyed relatively wide representation from across the Pacific.[76]

Although broad in its representation the forum conferences from 1981 to 1986 were dominated by one chief concern: a nuclear free Pacific.[77] Some island delegates at the inaugural conference felt frustrated at the prominence given to the New Zealand backed nuclear issue because it diverted attention away from more fundamental issues of Pacific economic development.[78] This tension reveals the competing and contradictory prioritisation of interests within the regional forum; the failure to adequately address underlying economic and political issues of individual island states limited the forum's ability to achieve the regional goal of a nuclear free Pacific. Recognising the inter-relationship between the two issues the following declaration was passed at the second conference:

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[74] Support for disputes arising in Fiji were expressed by the ACTU and NZFOL on the following occasions: ANZTUCC Meeting Minutes, 1973, MS-Papers-4100-21/03/3 ATL, NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 1-4 May 1978, p.48. However in 1977 the Fiji Trade Union Council requested the NZFOL not to interfere in events in Fiji when the NZFOL protested at the arrest, detention and six months suspended sentence of 17 New Zealand seamen from the *Ngahere*, after a confrontation between them and the Fijian police. The crew of the *Ngahere* refused to move their ship from the Lautoka wharf to prevent the loading of sugar in support of striking Fijian dockworkers. See Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour', p.92 and *The Press*, 18 July 1977, p.5

[75] This forum evolved into the 'Pacific Trade Union Community' in 1986. See, 'Declaration No.10', 4th Pacific Trade Union Conference, 18-20 May 1986, p.9, Pacific Trade Union Declarations, Australia and Oceanic Trade Union Co-ordination Committee and Pacific Trade Union Forum, 95-050-33, ATL. In April 1989 the 'South Pacific and Oceanic Council of Trade Unions' (SPOCTU) largely superseded the PTUC. See, ACTU International Report to 1989 Congress, pp.7.10-7.11, Box 6, S784, NBAC

[76] See 'Declaration', Third Pacific Trade Union Conference, 2-4 October 1984, Nadi, Fiji, and 'Declarations 'Fourth Pacific Trade Union Conference, 18-20 May 1986, Auckland, New Zealand, Declaration no.12, p.9, 95-050-33, ATL

[77] The only declaration to emerge at the 1981 conference referred to a nuclear free Pacific. 'Declaration' *Pacific Trade Union Conference,* 28-31 May 1981, 95-050-33, ATL. See also, 'Declarations' 2nd, 3rd and 4th Pacific Trade Union Conferences, 95-050-33, ATL and 'Nuclear freedom dominates Pacific Trade Union Conference', *FOL Bulletin*, November 1984, p.3

[78] Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour', p.94 and see, 'Declarations' 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Pacific Trade Union Conference, 95-050-33, ATL

> The right to self-determination and independence for all colonised and exploited Pacific Island people, together with a strong and independent trade union movement, provides the best opportunity for achieving the objective of a Nuclear Free Pacific.[79]

That said, nuclear freedom continued to be the primary aim of the Forum and an important cornerstone upon which unions from across the Pacific developed common interests.

The continuing dominance of the nuclear issue in the Pacific reflected the Cold War politics of the period. Unions from across the globe attempted to develop relations within the region in a "scramble for the Pacific".[80] The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and International Confederation Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) along with national trade union bodies from Japan, Israel, Russia, the United States, and Australia and New Zealand, all looked to the Pacific as a potential base for extending their interests.

Growing American attention to labour issues in the Pacific particularly concerned New Zealand and Australian unionists. They believed the United States' interests threatened their influence in the region. Jim Knox suggested that an American-backed trade union organisation "wanted to destroy the Pacific Trade Union Forum"[81] because of its anti-nuclear stance.[82] Further, ACTU representatives detected de-stabilisation in the region due to United States influences and repeated the need for strong New Zealand/Australian led union activity to counter American pressures.[83]

Tensions between the competing union organisations mirrored developments between New Zealand and the United States over the 'ANZUS crisis'[84] reflecting the strains of the Cold War,

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[79] 'Declaration' 2nd Pacific Trade Union Conference, 26-28 September 1982, Noumea, New Caledonia, p.2, 95-050-33, ATL

[80] See, Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour?' pp.94-95

[81] *The Dominion,* 3 August 1983, cited in Leckie 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour?', p.95

[82] See R. Crocombe, *The South Pacific: An Introduction*, 5th edition (Christchurch, 1989), p.191 and Leckie, 'Nurturers or Watchdogs of Labour?', p.95

[83] Address by Assistant Secretary ACTU, Bill Richardson to NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 1984 p.64, MSX-2408, ATL

[84] The ANZUS crisis resulted from New Zealand's election of the Lange led Labour government who were committed to prohibiting the entry of nuclear-armed and nuclear-powered ships into New Zealand ports. This represented a direct challenge to the United States who would neither confirm nor deny whether any United States vessels carried nuclear arms. In 1985 the situation intensified when the United States request for entry for the guided missile destroyer, USS Buchanan was declined. The United States then cut intelligence links with New Zealand and withdrew from joint naval exercises making the ANZUS pact effectively redundant. The ACTU and the Australian government positions differed

shifting allegiances and evolving foreign policy. Jim Knox, like most Labour Party members, was staunchly behind the Labour administration's nuclear-free stance symbolizing New Zealand's independent "moral"[85] foreign policy "appropriate for a small nation in the South Pacific."[86] Knox used the 1984 Pacific Trade Union Conference as a staging post to attack French and United States policy in the Pacific and reiterated the need to oppose both nations' influences. Concluding his speech against nuclear weapons and testing, which he aligned with French and United States foreign policy, Knox declared, "I'm afraid they [the French] will just take over and do as they like. The United States is the same."[87] This rhetoric echoed an Australian unionist's response to the French presence in the Pacific during the 1970s when he stated: "It must be made clear to that country [France] the Pacific is not a French ocean or an area of French influence."[88]

The decision by the ACTU and NZFOL to expand their activities, unity and interests into the South Pacific in the 1980s reveals broader political considerations. Knox's antagonism towards United States and French nuclear and foreign policy paralleled New Zealand public sentiment against the 'bullying' United States and anticipated public outrage at the French bombing of the Greenpeace ship, the *Rainbow Warrior* in July 1985. Further, the continuing co-operation between the ACTU and NZFOL over Pacific union activities[89] directly reflected the decision by both nations to strengthen their defence relationship enabling the "two neighbours to act alone and in tandem in the South Pacific."[90]

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somewhat. The ACTU expressed anti-US sentiment with reference to the nuclear issue while the Australian Labour government managed the crisis keeping its alliance with both partners in tact. For a full discussion of this 'balancing act' see S. McMillan, *Neither Confirm nor Deny: The nuclear ships dispute between New Zealand and the United States* (Wellington, 1987), ch. 13

[85] See Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, pp.216-222, see also King, pp.492-493

[86] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.218

[87] 'Nuclear freedom dominates Pacific Trade Union Conference', *FOL Bulletin*, November 1984, p.3, fMS-papers-4100-53/6/10, ATL

[88] J. Shannon, ACTU representative to NZFOL Conference, NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings,* Annual Conference, 1-4 May 1973, p.80

[89] Although the NZFOL took a lead in Pacific developments, these actions were backed by the ACTU. See Address by Assistant Secretary ACTU, Bill Richardson to NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 1984 p.64, MSX-2408, ATL

[90] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.223

Although concern for training, democracy and solidarity across unions in the South Pacific gained increasing prominence at regional union forums in the later 1980s[91] (largely superseding the nuclear issue) Australasian union organisations remained connected to the region. The ICFTU led mission to Fiji in 1988 included a high-level ACTU-NZCTU delegation which made direct representations to the Fijian Minister of Employment and Industrial Relations concerning the "restoration of full trade union rights"[92] following the 1987 Fijian coup. The establishment of the South Pacific and Oceanic Council of Trade Unions (SPOCTU) with extensive ACTU and NZCTU patronage[93] and the prominence of Pacific affairs on ANZTUCC agenda[94] further symbolize the continuity of trans-Tasman engagement with the South Pacific region.

The trans-Tasman union world, although centred on Australia and New Zealand, stretched into the South Pacific during the 1970s and 1980s. This was prompted initially by the increasing internationalism of both economies and a desire to strengthen union activity and solidarity across the South Pacific. The ACTU and FOL's joint concerns in the region later focussed on attempts to assert anti-nuclear sentiment, particularly when confronted with competing union interests. The dominance of the nuclear issue overrode more fundamental issues of economic and industrial development in the Pacific revealing the ascendancy of cold war politics in the region during the mid-1980s. Evolving regional union organisations ultimately focused increasingly on educational and solidarity issues across the Pacific supplanting the Australasian backed nuclear issue. Importantly, the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU continued to work in tandem in the Pacific supporting regional labour organisations thus revealing the ongoing building of the trans-Tasman union community, its commitment to international solidarity and the fluidity of its 'borders of interest'.

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[91] See, Leckie, 'Labour, Regionalism, and Internationalism', pp.339-340 and 'International Report' 1989 Congress, p.7.8, Box 6, S784, NBAC
[92] 'International Report' 1989 Congress, p.7.11, Box 6, S784, NBAC
[93] See 'International Report' 1989 Congress, p.7.5 and 7.10, Box 6, S784, NBAC and letter from D. Farr, Secretary Auckland District Council FOL, to Ken Douglas, 23 June 1986, 95-050-33, ATL
[94] See letter, K. Douglas to B. Kelty, 20 February 1986 re ANZTUCC held on 3 April 1986 in Sydney, 95-050-33, ATL

▪ **Conclusion**

Australasian union leadership in the 1970s and early-to-mid 1980s reveals strong engagement with international affairs, which resulted in a myriad of consequences. The internationalism of the foremost leaders from the ACTU and NZFOL reflected economic and social developments within Australia and New Zealand. As the antipodean economies became increasingly integrated with the global economy, and the societies looked to the outside world for inspiration, the union leadership, at a trans-Tasman level, was primarily concerned with international issues. This included trade bans against a range of countries, but was most effectively illustrated in campaigns against apartheid and French nuclear testing in the Pacific. Although domestic industrial relations were considered by the Australasian elites they principally looked beyond the borders of Australia and New Zealand, and the traditional sphere of union concerns, to establish and build the profile of the Australasian union community.

The trans-Tasman union leadership, although innovative in its commitment to international moral issues, was still hampered by its historical exclusion of women and non-Europeans from its power structures. This circumstance was challenged during the period by the thriving women's and indigenous rights movements, which sought equity within society and therefore in workers' organisations. Although domestically responsive, the ACTU and NZFOL were negligent about this demand at a trans-Tasman level which reflected the continuing white male dominance of the unions which had a tendency to place the leadership out of touch with grassroots workers and their concerns.

As indicated previously, the leadership consolidated the concept of a trans-Tasman union community. This community, although anchored in Australia and New Zealand, had a flexibility to stretch into the Pacific when confronted with competing union interests in the region, and the broader politics of the Cold War. The elasticity of the Australasian world represented a

continuance of the "loose Tasman world"[95] which responded to altering geo-political and economic circumstances, in this instance expanding when threatened, but equally, the Australasian world contracted when faced with different conditions and events.

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[95] Belich, *Paradise Reforged,* p.47

Chapter 5

Trans-Tasman Tensions,

Compromise and Continuance

By the 1980s Australia and New Zealand operated in circumstances different from that experienced in the previous decade. The global economy was impacting upon Australasia resulting in an intensification of trans-Tasman relations. This led to the development of the groundbreaking free trade agreement between the two Antipodean countries, the Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement 1983 (CER), and consolidation of the long established labour market bridge across the Tasman. The union organisations' responses to these two developments reveal evolving attitudes to globalisation.

This chapter unravels the union responses to the continuity of the trans-Tasman labour market and the development of CER. It examines developments within the common labour market exploring the reaction of unionists to the increasing numbers of New Zealanders arriving in Australia in the early 1980s, focusing particularly attention on tensions within the shearing industry. The second half of the chapter looks at the common responses to the development of CER.

- **The Flight of the Kiwi**

The trans-Tasman labour market of the 1970s and 1980s continued a well established practice which allowed for the freedom of movement of Australian and New Zealand workers both ways across the Tasman. This was accepted as a given by New Zealanders. Yet in the early-to-mid 1980s this practice was called into question by sections of Australian society, particularly the union movement, creating tensions between the Anzac neighbours.

The long established open migration across the Tasman led to several union and professional organisations negotiating arrangements that provided expanded trans-Tasman employment opportunities for their memberships. These formal and informal deals included reciprocal acknowledgement of legal qualifications and a six-month period of joint trans-Tasman union recognition for actors working in both countries. Further, when an over-supply of trained teachers was recognised in South Australia, procedures were put in place to employ these teachers within the New Zealand education system and by 1980 more than 170 Australian teachers had been absorbed by New Zealand primary and secondary schools.[1] These arrangements highlight how the freedom of movement of people between Australia and New Zealand led to the emergence of a common labour market which responded to the overall patterns of employment and unemployment within both jurisdictions.

In the 1970s and 1980s the movement of people flowed from New Zealand to Australia. In broad terms trans-Tasman migration trends mirrored comparative economic conditions in New Zealand with flows abating when economic conditions in Australia were unfavourable. Essentially, Kiwis escaped New Zealand when the economy was in recession and Australia offered better conditions.

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[1] For further details of the reciprocal arrangements made within the legal, acting and teaching professions during the 1970s and 1980s, see P. Fischer, 'Emergence Of A Common Labour Market: One View from New Zealand' in Burnett and Burnett (eds.), *Australia-New Zealand Economic Relations- Issues for the 1980s*, pp.154-155 and p.160

In the 1980s the finer detail of this trend reflected particular government initiatives along with fluctuations and disparities in trans-Tasman housing interest rates.[2]

As figure 1 shows, between 1970 and 1990 three periods of substantial migration from New Zealand to Australia took place. There was a slight upturn in migration during the early 1970s and then a second wave of emigration from New Zealand between 1978-79 and 1980-81. During this period more than 42,000 Kiwis (on average) left each year to take up permanent residence in Australia. This figure declined by two-thirds in the following three years as the Australian economy went into recession and unemployment rates climbed, reducing work prospects in the 'lucky country'. The introduction of a 20-month wage and price freeze from June 1982 in New Zealand may have also influenced the decline in numbers of migrating New Zealanders.[3] The third major peak of over 44,000 departures from New Zealand to Australia took place in 1988-89 as economic conditions worsened in New Zealand and employment prospects in Australia picked up.

Figure 1: Permanent migration from New Zealand to Australia 1970-1990
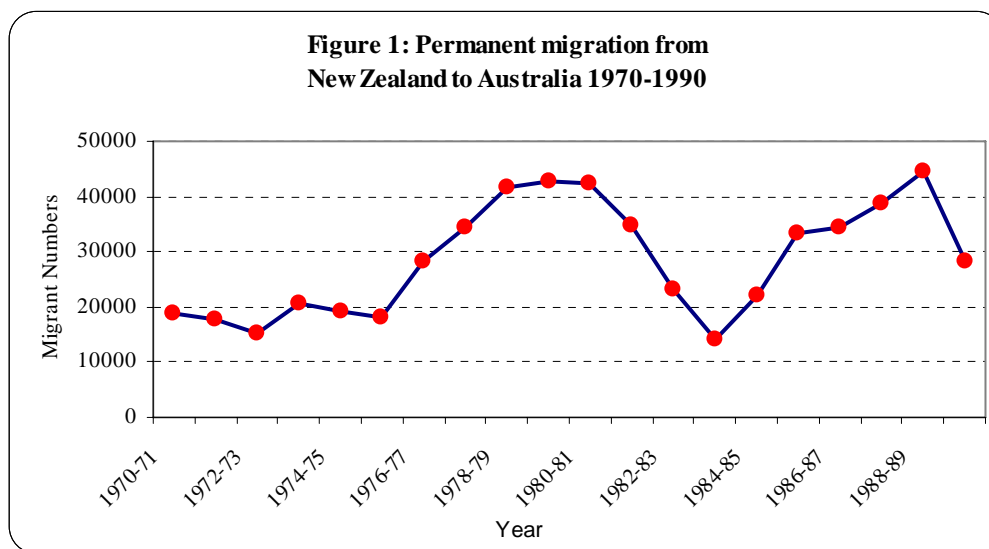
Source: New Zealand Department of Statistics and Australian Bureau of Statistics, annual external migration data, cited in Carmichael (ed.), *Trans-Tasman Migration, Trends, Causes and Consequences*, Table 2:1, 'Column Departures New Zealand to Australia', p.20

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[2] See S-E. Khoo, 'Immigration Issues in Australia', in Carmichael with Dharmalingam (eds.), p.69, Carmichael, 'Executive Summary', in Carmichael (ed.), p.xxii, J. Poot, 'Trans-Tasman migration and economic growth in Australasia', in Carmichael (ed.), pp.288-314 and McNicoll, pp.315-326

[3] Carmichael, 'History of trans-Tasman population movement' in Carmichael (ed.), p.47

In the early 1980s friction over trans-Tasman migration surfaced in the Australian union movement and among the general population. Hostility was expressed about the presence of New Zealand shearers in the eastern states[4] who used 'wide combs' for shearing. 'Kiwi dole bludgers' were bemoaned, particularly in Sydney, as was the general influx of New Zealanders into the Australian job market.

As previously indicated there was a flood of New Zealanders into Australia between 1979 and 1981. In 1982 Australia experienced a sharp jump in unemployment with those out of work accounting for 10 per cent of the workforce.[5] These two factors led Australians to question the desirability of the newly arrived Kiwis and the government's associated policy of unrestricted entry for New Zealanders into Australia's employment market.

Members of the Australian union movement began to experience acute pressures due to rising unemployment. The ACTU decided to arrange a special conference of affiliates to explore options to deal with the economic and labour market difficulties facing workers which resulted in a decision to approach the Government to "scale-down the present program"[6] of immigration. Referring to the entry of New Zealanders into Australia the President of the ACTU, Cliff Dolan, called for a "slowing down in trans-Tasman migration."[7] He indicated that although ACTU policy was against restricting New Zealanders coming to Australia for work, as unemployment mounted he favoured some form of temporary restriction, possibly a temporary work visa. Generally the ACTU policy towards New Zealand prompted closer relations but the prevalent economic circumstances required a scaling down of immigration levels.[8]

The union stance reflected media reports, particularly in Sydney, that New Zealanders were taking Australians' jobs. Compounding this negative perception was the perception that Kiwi's

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[4] In this instance eastern states refer to Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia
[5] Maddock and Stillwell, p.267
[6] Letter C. Dolan to J. Knox, 16 September 1982, ANZTUCC Meeting, CER, Box 392, Z282, NBAC
[7] 'Australian unions call for work curb on Kiwis', *The Press*, 8 September 1982, p.1
[8] Ibid and Dolan to Knox, 16 September 1982

were criminals and 'dole bludgers'. Reports concerning the levels of crime and unemployment amongst New Zealanders fed calls for a review of the free movement of people across the Tasman.[9] An item from the *Sydney Morning Herald* indicated that:

> most experts believed that the free entry of New Zealanders should be halted and that they should be issued with visas to migrate here in the same way as other migrants.[10]

Adding to the resentment towards New Zealanders resident in Australia was the view that New Zealand provided a 'back door' through which Pacific Island migrants could gain entry to Australia.[11] Stimulating this idea was a decision by the Privy Council in 1982 which allowed a large number of Western Samoans to qualify automatically for New Zealand passports.[12] Although the New Zealand government quickly overruled the decision, passing the Citizenship (Western Samoan) Act 1982, thus negating any possible influx of Western Samoans into New Zealand and consequently Australia,[13] the possibility caused concern in Australia.[14]

Views publicized in the Australian media about New Zealand migrants in the 1980s were inaccurate. Contrary to popular opinion, echoed in the often quoted joke that New Zealanders moving to Australia were raising the IQ of both nations,[15] statistics reveal that New Zealanders resident in Australia were generally highly skilled and contributed to a 'brain drain' from New

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[9] See *Sydney Morning Herald* reports cited in *The Press*; 'Assurance to N.Z. migrants', 11 September 1982, p.1, 'Allegations in Sydney against Kiwis denied', 11 December 1982, p.3, 'Free N.Z. entry to Aust. Should stop', 16 December 1982, p.28 and K. Coates, 'Sydney shows one face to tourists , another to the Kiwi migrant', 19 February 1983, p.15

[10] *Sydney Morning Herald* cited in 'Free N.Z. entry to Aust. should stop', *The Press*, 16 December 1982, p.28

[11] This perception is an on-going concern within the Australia-New Zealand relationship. In 2000 the Australian Minister for Immigration again raised concerns that New Zealand was acting as a 'back door' for non-New Zealand born migrants entry into Australia, see 'NZ rejects bid to halt back-door migration', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 2000, p.3

[12] From 1920 until 1962, New Zealand administered Western Samoa and the 1923 British Nationality and 1928 Status of Aliens (in New Zealand) Acts allowed for the naturalisation of residents of Western Samoa in New Zealand. Following Western Samoa's independence in 1962, the status of its citizens living in New Zealand became uncertain. In an important legal case, Falema'i Lesa, a Western Samoan by birth, took her claim to be a New Zealand citizen to the Privy Council. In July 1982 the Council delivered a ruling on the Lesa v. Attorney General case, declaring that all Western Samoans born between 1924 and 1948 were British subjects, and subsequently in 1949 they and their descendants had become New Zealand citizens. New Zealand was reluctant to grant citizenship to almost all Western Samoans, as required by Privy Council ruling, and the New Zealand and Western Samoan governments negotiated a compromise. The Citizenship (Western Samoa) Act 1982 overturned the Privy Council ruling but all Western Samoan citizens who were in New Zealand on 14 September 1982, and those later granted permanent residence, were entitled to New Zealand citizenship.

[13] 'March beaten by act; Samoan issue sealed', *The Press*, 15 September 1982, p.1

[14] 'Assurance to N.Z. migrants', *The Press*, 11 September 1982, p.1

[15] Well known New Zealand journalist Tom Scott made this remark although it is generally associated with the New Zealand Prime Minister Robert Muldoon's attitude to New Zealanders migrating to Australia.

Zealand.[16]   As Melbourne sociologist Dr Bob Birrell commented "they [New Zealanders] now come over here in large numbers and in the areas of skill – nursing, teaching and other professions".[17]

In February 1983 the Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, called a snap election and unemployment and migration were hot election topics.   The Fraser administration qualified government policy around trans-Tasman migration, stating there would be no changes "unless there was a sudden increase in numbers from New Zealand."[18]   The Labor Leader, Bob Hawke, indicated that under increasing union pressure the Labor Party had agreed at its national conference to review the question of New Zealanders' immigration.   In line with this policy he reiterated that "an Australian Labor Government would be derelict in its duty if it did not consider restricting the access of New Zealanders to the job market."[19]   These stances uncover the widespread concern New Zealand immigration was causing in Australia although on Labor's election victory the promised review of immigration policy did not amend trans-Tasman migration arrangements.

Announcing a new immigration package the Australian Minister of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Stewart West, indicated New Zealanders would continue to have visa-free access to Australia although the situation would receive constant monitoring.   He went on to state that the decision to allow the continuing free flow of people between Australia and New Zealand was made in the face of strong union pressure from a number of union organisations, including the ACTU.   Ultimately long term political considerations took precedence over pressure from the Australian union movement, with Minister West stating:

> We examined that policy [freedom of travel across the Tasman] and decided that even though the numbers are quite substantial, in the interests of political, trade, social and historical reasons, it would be very unwise to terminate the trans-Tasman arrangements. I

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[16] See Carmichael, 'Executive Summary' in Carmichael (ed.), pp.xxiv-xv, xxvi, Poot, pp.303-306 and Carmichael, 'Trans-Tasman migration: Historical, contemporary and future perspectives' in Carmichael (ed.), p.333 and p.335
[17] 'Free NZ entry to Aust. should stop', *The Press*, 16 December 1982, p.28
[18] 'Mr Lange opposes any Australian entry restriction', *The Press*, 9 February 1983, p.1
[19] Ibid.

think that was a wise and balanced decision, taken under great pressure, I might add, from some unions. I can see the dis-benefits [sic] at this time, particularly in regard to some areas of work such as shearing. But I think we would be falling into a trap if we allowed the short term benefits to out-weigh the long term benefits.[20]

The New Zealand Minister of Immigration welcomed the Australian decision saying, "both countries would have lost the impetus towards a closer economic future…that cost would have been too high."[21]

This overview of Australian public and political opinion, along with union sentiment towards New Zealand migrants in late 1982 and early 1983, reveals important points concerning trans-Tasman migration. Firstly, antagonism expressed about New Zealanders adversely affecting employment levels and being 'dole bludgers' was unsubstantiated. Kiwis along with other migrants and working women[22] were scapegoats for Australia's high unemployment numbers.[23] Secondly, the Labor Party while in parliamentary opposition and on the campaign trail supported the union and media-promoted perspective that New Zealanders were harming the employment prospects of Australians. Yet once Labor came to power wider trans-Tasman political, economic and trade considerations overcame domestic Australian union demands. This change of orientation indicates Labor's positive engagement with the globalisation of the Australian economy; the open labour market provisions with New Zealand being a key feature. Editorial comment in *The Australian* endorsed the continuing freedom of movement in the trans-Tasman labour market:

> We are helping ourselves. If the pressure of unemployment were to become so great as to cause instability in our close neighbor and ally, our own security could be affected. We live in a world where our association with other democracies should be strengthened, not weakened. The government's decision had upheld this important principle.[24]

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[20] 'New Zealand spared in Australian migration clampdown', *The Press*, 19 May 1983, p.1
[21] Ibid
[22] Executive Director of the New South Wales Employers' Federation indicated that "opposition was being expressed against migrants, New Zealanders and married women in that order", Coates, *The Press*, 19 February 1983, p.15 This comment in itself is revealing in that New Zealanders were not regarded as general migrants but distinguished as a separate type of immigrant.
[23] See also discussion of 'The Blainey Debate', pp. 87-88
[24] 'Editorial', *The Australian,* (no date), cited in N. McMillan, 'Pressures for change to the trans-Tasman travel arrangements', Master of Arts, Political Science, 1989, University of Canterbury, p.141

Another telling feature of the speech from the Australian Immigration Minister, Stewart West, was mention of the difficulties facing the Australian shearing community. The 'wide comb dispute' raged in shearing sheds and country towns of eastern Australia from around 1980 to 1983. Controversy centred on the use of sheep shearing combs wider than 64 millimetres. The Australian Workers' Union (AWU)[25], the union predominantly representing shearers in this region, had prohibited the use of wide gauge combs since 1910-11.[26] In contrast, the New Zealand shearing industry did not ban combs over 64 millimetres. This made Kiwi shearers and their aptitude with the equipment popular with Australian woolgrowers because shearing costs were reduced.[27] From the late 1970s increasing numbers of New Zealand shearers began working in eastern Australia. These shearers found the shearing seasons in the two countries complementary, thus extending the period they could work, plus New Zealand shearing award rates were becoming increasingly unattractive.[28] The New Zealand shearers brought with them their wide combs and their shearing culture which had a history of strike breaking in Australia[29] and an ambivalent attitude to unions.[30]

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[25] The AWU became an affiliate union of the ACTU in 1966

[26] The reason given for the ban was that wider combs caused uneven cutting, known as ridging, risking injury to sheep or damage to the fleeces of Australia's wrinkly-skinned, fine-wool merino. See R. O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)' unpublished Bachelor of Arts (Honours) thesis, School of Classics, History and Religion, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, November 2003, pp.54-5 and R. O'Malley, 'The Eclipse of Mateship: The 'Wide Comb Dispute' 1979-1985', *Labour History*, 90 (May 2006), p.160 and p.164

[27] Wide combs increased the pace of shearing meaning that shed hands, hired by the hour, handled more fleeces, see O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)', pp.55-56 and O'Malley, 'The Eclipse of Mateship', p.166

[28] O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)', p.48

[29] New Zealand shearers were recruited as non-unionised labour by Australian pastoralists in the 1890s, see R. Arnold 'Yeomen and Nomads: New Zealand and the Australasian Shearing Scene 1886-1896', pp.117-142 and M. Hearn and H. Knowles, *One Big Union: A History of the Australian Workers Union 1886-1994* (Melbourne, 1996), pp.67-8, and again in 1956, see O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)', pp.32-33

[30] See Arnold, 'Australasian Aspects of New Zealand Life, 1890-1913', p.63 and O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)', p.21
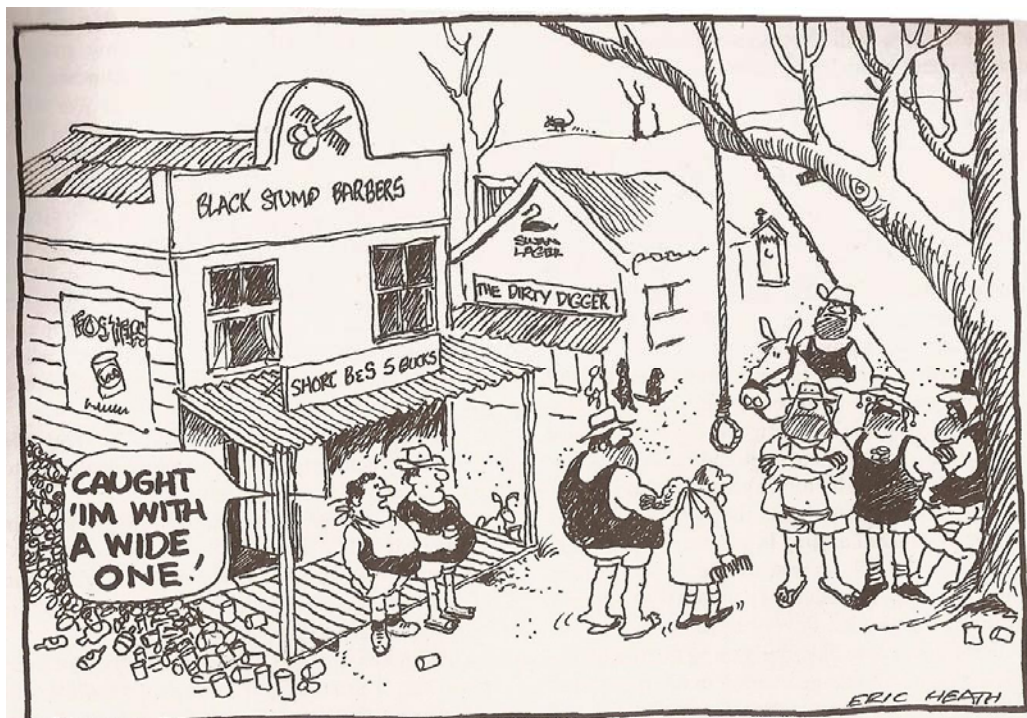
Plate 4: E. Heath, 'Caught 'Im With A Wide One', *The Dominion*, 16 October 1984. Source: I. Grant, *The Other Side of the Ditch: A cartoon century in the New Zealand-Australia relationship* (Wellington, 2001), p.79

With the long standing tradition of sheep shearers crossing the Tasman, this cartoon makes fun of the seemingly absurd Australian attachment to narrow sheep shearing combs and highlights the danger of non-compliance.

In 1980 the AWU raised concerns about the use of wide combs; the main argument being that wider combs caused a loss in shearing quality. Although acknowledging that wider combs were faster, the union feared widespread use of the equipment would equate to a pay cut for shearers and reduced employment opportunities.[31] Claims for and against the prohibition of wide combs were made to the Industrial Court in 1980 and 1981, leading to the decision in 1982 allowing for the use of wide combs. The AWU, after losing an appeal against this decision, launched a strike and called upon the ACTU for support.[32] The strike saw much ill-feeling and violence erupt in the countryside. Strike-breakers were brought in, some from New Zealand, and although violence ensued, shearing in 'scab' sheds continued for the six weeks of the strike.[33] AWU

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[31] A 'shearing formula' for shearing awards was based on 480 sheep per week. It was believed that use of the wide comb would push this divisor towards 500 or 520, in effect a pay cut for shearing and a reduction in employment as sheep would be shorn faster, see E. Hodder, 'The Wide Comb Dispute in the Australian Shearing Industry: A background paper', *Queensland Digest of Industrial Relations*, 2:2 (1983), pp.16-18

[32] 'Dispute may cut off wool exports: Shearers seek to extend strike', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 1983, p.9

[33] For more detail see O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)', pp.54-62. Mention of the strike is also made in *The Press,* 16 December 1982, p.11

protests against wide combs continued[34] but the dispute effectively turned from the equipment used, to concentrate on the presence of New Zealand shearers in Australia.

The issue of wide combs tended to disguise the core issue at the heart of the AWU's grievances: New Zealand shearers and their free entry into the Australian job market. The AWU Secretary, Errol Hodder, summed up union concerns about New Zealanders:

> New Zealand is dumping its unemployed, along with government subsidised goods in Australia. It's intolerable this should be occurring at a time of record unemployment. The influx of New Zealanders, particularly in the shearing industry has led to tensions. Some trans-Tasman immigrants refused to join unions and were prepared to work outside awards. This led to friction which a work permit system could overcome.[35]

Letters were written to the Prime Minister and Australian Labor Party calling for restrictions to be placed on New Zealanders' freedom of movement across the Tasman. The ACTU took up the AWU cause requesting ministerial meetings to discuss "work permits, breaches of awards and non-payment of income tax in relation to New Zealand workers"[36]. By March 1985 the ACTU Executive was in support of the introduction of entry permits:

> in order to subject New Zealand workers to normal skill related immigration tests along with the need to investigate taxation loopholes which were providing further incentives for New Zealanders to exploit the system.[37]

The shift to a focus on New Zealanders' right to work in Australia rather than on their equipment reflected public attitudes of the time. As the country faced persistent unemployment queues and economic pressures these strains meant 'outsiders' could be scapegoated.

During this period debate over Australian immigration policy intensified. Controversy centred on historian Geoffrey Blainey's 1984 assertion that levels of Asian immigration were too high and potentially placing strains upon Australian tolerance of multiculturalism. This argument

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[34] O'Malley's analysis of the 'wide comb dispute' suggests that it was celebrated as one of the first major wins by adherents of economic rationalism with the combs exemplifying 'labour flexibility' and 'choice'. See O'Malley, 'The Eclipse of Mateship', pp.155-176

[35] 'Kiwis take our jobs, union says', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 November, 1982, p.3

[36] ACTU, Executive Minutes, March 19-23, 1984 'New Zealand workers in Australia', N147/397, NBAC

[37] ACTU, Executive Minutes, 12-15 March 1985 and 20-24 May 1985, N147/399, NBAC

culminated in the release of Blainey's book *All for Australia.*[38] The 'Blainey debate' fuelled

Australian racist sentiment towards Asian immigrants.[39] This echoed the 'mateship'[40] ethos of the

AWU, which cast foreigners (particularly Asians and Pacific Islanders) as 'outsiders'.[41]

The fact that New Zealanders generally integrate easily into Australian society meant that they

were often overlooked as major foreign influences. Yet the New Zealand shearing fraternity set

itself apart from its Australian counterpart. As mentioned previously New Zealand shearing

culture was not highly unionised. The work ethic and shearing culture also differed[42] and the

majority of the Kiwi shearers found in the eastern states were Maori. Warnings of a "bloody race

war"[43] were made and Maori shearers encountered racial resentment and hostility.[44] Thus a racial

element in the shearing dispute can be seen as a factor contributing to the rigidity of the definition

of New Zealanders as 'outsiders' rather than 'mates'.

Although the ACTU came to support AWU calls to restrict Kiwi entry into the Australian job

market, this policy contradicted other ACTU policy referring to relations with New Zealand,

particularly endorsement of CER. Records of formal meetings between New Zealand and

Australian union leaders do not indicate migration was a major issue in trans-Tasman union

dialogue. Discussion over the negotiation and phasing in of closer economic relations took

precedence; like the Labor party to which the ACTU had strong ties, the ACTU, although

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[38] G. Blainey, *All for Australia* (North Ryde, 1984). See in reply to Blainey, A. Markus and M. Ricklefs (eds.), *Surrender Australia? Essays in the study of uses of history: Geoffrey Blainey and Asian Immigration* (North Sydney, 1985)

[39] See M.C. Ricklefs 'Why Asians?' in Markus and Ricklefs (eds.), *Surrender Australia? Essays in the study of uses of history,* pp.36-48

[40] 'Mateship' was synonymous with AWU membership, see M. Hearn, 'Mates and Strangers: The Ethos of the Australian Workers Union' in D. Palmer, R. Shanahan and M. Shanahan (eds.), *Australian Labour History Reconsidered* (Unley, 1999), pp.18-37

[41] Ibid. The 'mateship' of the AWU also excluded women

[42] In New Zealand shearing was a 'young man's game' often for the upwardly mobile. New Zealand shearers generally treated shearing as a means to accumulate money to invest in another occupation, often buying land. This meant they worked intensively until 35 or 40 years of age while Australians tended to shear for life, pacing their efforts. See O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)', p.24 and p.30. Further New Zealand shearers were "even know to drink beer with growers after 'the cut'", O'Malley, 'The Eclipse of Mateship', p.165

[43] *Warwick Daily News*, 3 June 1992, cited in O'Malley, 'Shearers from New Zealand in the Australian Wool Industry (circa 1955-1995)', p.85. Although this headline comes from outside the period studied it reflects an underlying racial element in the shearing community.

[44] See comment in McMillan, p.138

sympathetic to the expressed resentment towards New Zealanders' freedom of entry to Australia, possessed a conciliatory outlook towards its unionist neighbours.

This attitude reflects wider trans-Tasman considerations rather than the narrow, somewhat nationalist, possibly racist, industry specific concerns of the AWU or unfounded public attitudes about the 'kiwi dole bludger'. It displays a broader commitment to the continuation of the traditional trans-Tasman labour market which enabled workers flexibility of movement across the Tasman. This mobility allowed workers to follow economic and employment peaks and troughs in the Australasian region to their advantage. Importantly the common labour market underpinned the gradual acceptance and development of the highly integrated trans-Tasman economies.

The approach of the ACTU leadership to override the expressed concerns of rank and file members and affiliates also reinforces the idea that the leaders of the trans-Tasman alliance were an elite leadership group. The shared labour market facilitated links between workers across the Tasman but tensions were evident in this relationship. These grievances bubbled up to the leadership of the ACTU but were ultimately not enacted at a trans-Tasman level where broader international concerns, including the continuity of the shared labour market, took precedence over domestic migration disputes.

▪ **Adjusting to Closer Economic Relations (CER)**

Closer Economic Relations or the CER agreement between Australia and New Zealand came into force on 1 January 1983 following protracted negotiations over several years. This ambitious agreement sought to open up trade between the two countries, providing a zone free of tariffs and quantity restrictions. It built upon a previous trade agreement, NAFTA,[45] which had been operational since 1965 but was heavily regulated. By the late 1970s it was seen to be too

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[45] New Zealand-Australia Free Trade Agreement

cumbersome and time consuming to operate effectively having reached a "plateau"[46] of achievements.[47]

Political interest in a free trade deal was also renewed because of a decade of poor economic performance by both economies. New Zealand also saw an opportunity to stop the slide in its living standards and the exodus of human capital by being closely aligned with the larger, more prosperous, economy of Australia.[48] The political intention displayed in the new agreement also sprang from the 1978 Nareen statement which confirmed that Australia and New Zealand were "linked by deep ties of common origin and shared ideas and institutions"[49] implying that they stood together in the face of new global circumstances and sought closer relations with each other.[50]

Viewed as a "resounding success,"[51] CER is one of the positive legacies of the interventionist conservative government of Muldoon.[52] Since its inception trans-Tasman trade has increased by 500 per cent[53] and the World Trade Organisation has described CER as "the world's most comprehensive, effective and mutually compatible free trade agreement."[54]

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[46] Telegram from L.J. Francis, New Zealand High Commissioner in Australia to Muldoon, Canberra, 30 April 1981, Document 167, Australia/New Zealand Relations in P. Andre, S. Payton and J. Mills (eds.), *The Negotiation of the Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations Trade Agreement 1983* (Canberra & Wellington, 2003), p.485

[47] 'Communique by Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers', 20-21 March 1980, p.2, Box 392, Z282, NBAC. See also, A. Bollard, D. McCormack and M. Scanlan*, Closer Economic Relations: A View from Both Sides of the Tasman* (Wellington, 1985), pp.18-19, H. Templeton, *All Honourable Men: Inside the Muldoon Cabinet 1975-1984* (Auckland, 1995), p.129 and Andre, Payton and Mills, p.xxi

[48] I. McLean, 'Trans-Tasman Trade Relations: Decline and Rise' in R. Pomfret, *Australian Trade Policies* (South Melbourne, 1995), pp.180-181

[49] Nareen Statement, Canberra, 20 March 1978, Document 1, 'Australia – New Zealand Relations' in Andre, Payton and Mills, p.2

[50] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.207

[51] Claim made by Australian and New Zealand trade ministers at the conclusion of their CER review in October 1992, see McLean, 'Trans-Tasman Trade Relations', p.185

[52] Although CER is generally not associated with the Muldoon government, see Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand,* p.207

[53] Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *The Spirit of CER: A Celebration of trans-Tasman relations*, A commemorative exhibition held at Old Parliament House, Canberra from 25 March 2003 to Sunday 29 June 2003, http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new_zealand/anz_cer_20years/spirit_of_cer_1.pdf, retrieved 14 June 2006

[54] CER 20th Anniversary Ministerial Forum, *Joint Statement on CER*, 28 August 2003, http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new_zealand/anz_cer_20years/joint_statement_on_cer.html**,** retrieved 14 June 2006

The successes of CER are also due in part to the highly integrated labour market. The long enjoyed freedom of movement by Australians and New Zealanders between their countries and job markets underpinned and strengthened the trade agreement. This meant fears by advocates of labour that free trade would lead to an exodus of New Zealand workers to lucrative jobs in Australia[55] were unfounded, as CER did not bring in any regulatory changes regarding migration.

The responses of unionists on both sides of the Tasman to signs that a new free trade deal was being negotiated were initially cautious. Scepticism was expressed about the ability of the two countries to produce a renewed trade agreement "in the absence of positive initiatives from the Governments of both countries."[56] This cynicism reflected the coolness between the two Prime Ministers of the time, Muldoon and Fraser,[57] which in turn contributed to the length of and difficulties in the negotiation programme. This fact aside, union leaders recognised that the changing international climate, particularly concerning the rapidly growing economies of the ASEAN[58] group of countries along with South Korea and Taiwan, demanded a "changed response on the part of trade unionists in Australia and New Zealand."[59]

Bob Hawke predicted that with the continuing trend of Asian economic growth, New Zealand and Australia were likely to face increasing economic difficulties which could, he felt, hasten government consideration of closer economic relations.[60] With this understanding the unions called for research and analysis into the concept of closer economic relations to:

> identify and anticipate the degree and manner of restructuring which may be required to meet the changing circumstances and hopefully minimise potential harmful effects on the respective work forces in Australia and New Zealand.[61]

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[55] See W. Rosenberg, *CER Closer Economic Relations with Australia: Sanity or Sell-out?* (Christchurch, 1982), particularly p.11

[56] R.J. Hawke, President ACTU and J. Knox, President NZFOL, 'Joint Press Statement', 17 September 1979, p.2, N68/132, NBAC

[57] T. Bridgeman, 'Mr Muldoon snubbed by Aust. PM – newspaper', *The Press,* 2 September 1980, p.1, 'Mr Muldoon denies rift with Australian P.M.', *The Press*, 4 September 1980, p.2, Templeton, p.128 and p.138 and Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand,* p.207

[58] Association of South East Asian Nations

[59] Hawke and Knox, 'Joint Press Statement', 17 September 1979, p.2

[60] Minutes of Meeting of ANZTUCC, 13 September 1979, p.5, N68/132, NBAC

[61] Hawke and Knox, 'Joint Press Statement', 17 September 1979, p.2

This acknowledgement of world economic and trade realities and the possibilities of industry rationalisation and restructuring produced one of the earliest joint requests for research into the effects of CER.[62]

In March 1980 the New Zealand and Australian Prime Ministers met and subsequently negotiations for the free trade deal moved a step closer. A joint communiqué highlighted the "special economic relationship"[63] already in operation across a wide range of industries and emphasised that Australians and New Zealanders "already had the habit of co-operation."[64] The statement took the 'special relationship' a step further for the benefit of both countries and their living standards. It made the closer Australia-New Zealand relationship "a stronger base for the expansion of their economic and trading links with other countries, particularly those of the Pacific and South East Asia."[65] The regional focus of the agreement reflects the altered international economic and geo-political concerns of the early 1980s; Australia and New Zealand were beginning to forge a comprehensive network of connections in the Asia-Pacific region, and most importantly with each other.

Three years passed before CER was finalised.[66] This signifies - apart from the tensions between the Prime Ministers - the essentially groundbreaking nature of the agreement; CER was one of the first, comprehensive free trade deals in the world. Yet recent celebrations of the agreement and its innovative achievements largely overlook the difficulties in the drawn out negotiations,[67] the

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[62] Bollard et al, p.103

[63] 'Communique by Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers', 20-21 March 1980, p.1, Box 392, Z282, NBAC

[64] Ibid.

[65] 'Communique Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers' p.5, see also pp.1-2

[66] Templeton provides an insider's recollection of the prolonged and often difficult negotiations, see particularly ch. 13 and pp.193-201. Also a variety of press reports detail the protracted negotiation period, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Press Clippings' in *New Zealand and Australia Closer Economic Relations: A collection of key statements and speeches* (Wellington, February 1982), pp.74-89

[67] See, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *A Celebration of Trans-Tasman Relations: Twenty Years of Closer Economic Relations Between Australia and New Zealand*, http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new_zealand/anz_cer_20years/index.html, retrieved 14 June 2006 and New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Trade, *The Australia New Zealand Closer Economic Relations (CER) Trade Agreement: 1983 – 2003 Backgrounder*, http://mfat.govt.nz/foreign/regions/australia/cer2003/cerbackgrounder.html, retrieved 14 June 2006. These accounts of CER generally highlight the positive outcomes of the trade agreement although "sticking points" encountered in March 1982 are mentioned in Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *The Road to CER*, http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new_zealand/anz_cer_20years/index.html, retrieved 14 June 2006

pessimistic responses expressed in Australian and New Zealand societies, and more particularly, for this study, the responses of the trans-Tasman union movement.

However in Australia the trade deal received only limited attention. Australia's regionalism has meant that CER was (and is) only widely acknowledged in New South Wales and Victoria,[68] if it is known at all. Illustrating this point, the Vice-President of the ACTU in May 1982 - some two years into negotiations over CER - noted "at the 1982 NZFOL Annual Conference I became aware of CER."[69] CER has therefore always been proportionally more important for New Zealand than for its larger, wealthier Australian neighbour.

CER negotiations were set against a background of alarmingly high unemployment in both countries. Full employment was no longer an assumed or expected labour force condition as both economies struggled to deal with the globalising world economy. The development of CER illuminated the need for unionists to respond constructively and effectively to the new economic and employment circumstances. This confronted conventional union thinking around free trade which saw it as inherently pro-big business and potentially anti-worker. Yet ultimately the trans-Tasman union leaders produced a cautiously muted but positive response to CER.

The response recognised the need for the union communities to work together in the face of the rapidly transforming world for the overall benefit of workers within their national borders as well as workers in the wider Asia-Pacific region. Additionally, the union reaction ensured workers' issues and concerns remained within the political orthodoxy of the period reflecting the realities of the international economic environment. Moreover, the response was the first major trans-Tasman union commitment to the freeing of trade between Australia and New Zealand.

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[68] Bollard et al, p.101
[69] P. Cook, 'Memorandum to ACTU Officers re CER', 13 May 1982, p.1, Closer Economic Relations, Jan 1982-August 1982, Economic issues – Corp Affairs (mergers and takeovers) and CER, 95-050-41, ATL. See also P. Cook comment to 1982 NZFOL Annual Conference, "For Australia, it is perhaps not as great an economic issue as for New Zealand", NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, 1982, p.82

CER drew a raft of concerns from the trans-Tasman union movement. The chief fear related to the overall impact of globalisation. Unionists considered the effects of the agreement upon workers in Australia and New Zealand and the potential negative flow on to workers in the South Pacific. The possible growth of multi-national companies across the region was also considered. Additionally, the union councils questioned the adequacy of Australasia's structures and mechanisms to cope with restructuring while providing for the equitable distribution of benefits across society. Further, concern was expressed that consultation systems between the governments and union interests were not effective, open and constructive.

The trans-Tasman union movement recognised that CER represented "a growing commitment to the integrated international economy"[70] which had broad implications for Australasian workers. In comparison to Australia, New Zealand was a low wage economy. This wage differential meant New Zealand goods and production potentially threatened Australian industry, particularly manufacturing. Both union councils were aware of this situation[71] and New Zealand unionists addressed this concern in a warning to their membership:

> It needs to be realised that in relation to Australia, New Zealand is a cheap wages country. When we talk about low-wage competition from the rest of the Pacific, we need to remember that we are seen as just as much of a threat to the Australian trade union movement as perhaps the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and other depressed countries are to us in New Zealand.[72]

Although Australian unions had fears about New Zealand's lower production costs these were not tenaciously pursued. Further, research validates the restraint shown as the Australian economy suffered only modest adverse affects from CER.[73] Rather trans-Tasman union discussions tackled the wider implications of globalisation upon both countries.

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[70] K. Douglas, 'Trade Union Responses to a Closer Australian – New Zealand Economic Relationship', Speech delivered to Australia- New Zealand Economic Relations Conference, Australian National University Public Affairs Conference, Canberra, 14 August 1980, p.3, Closer Economic Relations, May 1980-1981, 95-050-41, ATL
[71] C. Dolan and W. Knox, 'Joint statement on closer economic relations between Australia and New Zealand', 19 July 1982, p.2, point 2(iv), CER Working file, Box 765, Z102, NBAC and 'Haste opposed in effecting C.E.R.', *The Press*, 19 July 1982, p.6
[72] *FOL Bulletin*, 25 (May 1981), p.12. New Zealand Federation of Labour, fms papers 4100-53/6/10, ATL
[73] Findings indicate that following the introduction of CER only around 1000 jobs shifted from Australia to New Zealand as a result of industry rationalisation and relocation, see Bollard et al, p.96

As the Antipodean economies became more integrated with the world economy a major worry in unionist circles was that the importation of cheap goods from low wage nations would prevail. The union councils reasoned that cheaper imports were produced in countries that ignored or flouted international labour laws and thus New Zealand and Australian consumers potentially gained cheaper products at the cost of workers' wages and employment conditions in low wage nations. The Secretary of the NZFOL argued:

> Both Australia and New Zealand are tending to favour a shift to lower cost imports for the sake of efficiency. I have no argument with either low costs or efficiency but what must be considered is that the financial cost of such imports often relates to wage rates based upon a denial of trade union rights, poverty, malnutrition and gross economic and social inequities.[74]

This issue focused attention on the economies and working conditions in the South Pacific,[75] thus extending the sphere of trans-Tasman union concerns across the seas into the neighbouring region.

Another dimension of the union organsitons' anti-globalisation stance was the presence and potential growth of multi-national companies in Australasia and the contradiction this created about effective competition. Within the trans-Tasman context industries such as banking, petrol distribution, canned and frozen foods and brewing were dominated by a few large corporations.[76] This suggested that "labour must organise on trans-national lines"[77] and Australian and New Zealand trade unions needed to instigate closer co-operation and activity when bargaining with firms domiciled in both countries. Thus the internationalisation of the two economies and growing presence of multi-national companies implied the need for closer trans-Tasman union relations and co-ordination, as well as an expansion of union interests regionally and globally.

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[74] Douglas, 'Trade Union Responses to a Closer Australian – New Zealand Economic Relationship', p.3. Douglas also used this argument in a letter to E.A.Woodfield, Assistant Secretary, New Zealand Department of Trade and Industry, 29 July 1980, Document 125, Andre, Payton and Mills, pp.369-370

[75] Dolan and Knox, 'Joint statement on closer economic relations between Australia and New Zealand', 19 July 1982, p.1, point 2(ii), Box 765, Z102, NBAC and 'Haste opposed in effecting C.E.R.', *The Press*, 19 July 1982, p.6

[76] Douglas, 'Trade Union Responses to a Closer Australian – New Zealand Economic Relationship' p.2 and NZFOL 'National Executive report' to NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings,* Annual Conference, 3-6 May 1983, p.24

[77] Douglas, 'Trade Union Responses to a Closer Australian – New Zealand Economic Relationship', p.3

Aware that CER represented the Australasian response to the integration of the world economy, union leaders called for the globalisation of trade unions:

> Thus, as a shift to closer economic relations implies a closer integration into a trans-national economy then what it implies for Australian and New Zealand trade unions is a shift to trans-national trade unions and the extension of support to unions in countries where trade unions do not enjoy the freedoms associated with unionism in Australia and New Zealand.[78]

Ken Douglas expressed the internationalist rationale most clearly.[79] He was the Chairman of the Socialist Unity Party and the first communist to be elected to the National Executive of the NZFOL in 1977.[80] Douglas became NZFOL Secretary in 1979 and was elected President of its successor the New Zealand Trade Union Council in 1987. Ken Douglas was a pragmatic and progressive leader[81] with a strong Labour pedigree behind him; one of two key influences on his life was his Australian-born maternal grandfather who came to New Zealand around 1900 and became an activist in the Labour Party.[82] Douglas' personal philosophy was socialist with a strong adherence to the inter-connectedness of nations and people.[83] His socialism, along with his practicality, is evident in his comments and commitment to CER.

CER's potential impact upon social equity represented the third major concern of the trans-Tasman union alliance. Unionists feared free market mechanisms would inevitably lead to winners and losers; that is, an uneven distribution of benefits and disadvantages from the closer alignment of the two economies. Responding to this potentiality the ACTU and NZFOL expressed a strong desire for government intervention and action to balance the effects of free market mechanisms. Requests were made for programmes for training and retraining workers

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[78] Ibid.

[79] See for example Douglas' quotes: footnotes 72 and 78

[80] Socialist Unity Party, *Communism in New Zealand: An Illustrated History* (Auckland, 1986) p.37 and Franks, 'Knox, Walter, James 1919-1991' *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005 URL: http//www.dnzb.govt.nz/

[81] See G. Hawke, 'Bliss at dawn – social policy in the first term of the Lange Government' in Clark (ed.), p.88. See also, Top Shelf Productions, 'Ken Douglas: Traitor or Visionary', *New Zealand Festival Documentary*, screened on Television One, 17 June 2006.

[82] K. Douglas in A. Thomson (compiled), *What I Believe: The Personal Philosophies of Twenty-Two New Zealanders* (Wellington,1993), p.43

[83] Ibid., pp.43-48

affected by structural adjustments along with proper and adequate workforce development planning.[84]

As highlighted CER negotiations presented the ACTU and NZFOL with a pertinent opportunity to build upon the strong relations established by the joint union council, the ANZTUCC. The union bodies agreed to work together for the mutual benefit of Australasian workers and ultimately to present a joint stance on CER.[85] Consultation in Australia between the Fraser government and the ACTU was relatively open in contrast to the mistrust and bitterness experienced between the NZFOL leadership and the Muldoon administration.[86] The estranged relationship meant Antipodean union ties consolidated as the ACTU executive resolved to share with the NZFOL all governmental information they obtained relating to CER.[87] This development assisted the two organisations to reach a common perspective on the trade agreement, building trust and solidarity, although slight variations in their respective views are discernible.

The lack of information and consultation between the New Zealand government and the NZFOL meant the NZFOL leadership took a very cautious and somewhat conservative approach to CER.[88] The ACTU, although concerned by the potential negative effects of the trade deal was, generally, more enthusiastic about the agreement.[89] Yet both councils supported closer economic relations in principle, citing the potential mutual benefits for workers in both countries through the growth of both economies. Therefore the ACTU and NZFOL did not oppose the agreement,

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[84] See Dolan and Knox, 'Joint statement on closer economic relations between Australia and New Zealand', 19 July 1982, p.1, point 3, Box 765, Z102, NBAC and I .Watson, 'The implications of closer Australian-New Zealand Economic Relationship for the Trade Union Movement', Australia National University Conference, 14 August 1980, pp.7-9, Closer Economic Relations May 1980-December 1981, 95-050-41, ATL
[85] See Watson, p.2
[86] See Douglas, 'Trade Union Responses to a Closer Australian – New Zealand Economic Relationship', pp.1-2, Cook, 'Memorandum to ACTU Officers re CER', 13 May 1982, p.1, Minutes of Meeting of ANZTUCC meeting, 13 September 1979, pp.3-4, N68/132, NBAC and Templeton, pp.195 and 197
[87] ACTU, Executive Minutes, 13 May 1982, p.31, N147/B90, NBAC
[88] Cook mentions in his memo to ACTU affiliates that "NZ unions have not been briefed by their Government and are therefore taking a very cautious view pending more information", see Cook 'Memorandum to ACTU Officers re: 'CER', 13 May 1982, p.3
[89] See Watson, pp.161-168

although there was some robust and vocal opposition from within the trans-Tasman union community.

The strongest resistance to closer economic relations sprang from the numerically powerful Australian and New Zealand engineering and metal working trades' union lobby.[90] These two unions (respectively ACTU and NZFOL affiliated unions) joined forces to condemn CER. Their chief concern was that any adverse social effects due to the rationalisation of industry were being left to market forces rather than direct interventionist mechanisms. Additionally, fears were expressed that the trade agreement might extend into other countries particularly those offering low-paid non-unionised export processing zones.[91] Generally opposition to CER focused on the benefits for big business in opposition to "innumerable dangers"[92] workers faced.[93] Opposition was also voiced at NZFOL annual conferences where remits against CER were put to the vote but never gained widespread support.[94]

The ACTU and NZFOL response to the development of CER was a position of pragmatic compromise. Significant reservations were expressed about the evolution of free trade between Australia and New Zealand and the negative affects this could have upon the workforces of both countries and within the region, but the new international and regional situation demanded new responses. The integration of the world's economies had been underway for a number of years and the union movement was facing rising unemployment which undermined their traditional strength. This situation resulted in a somewhat unenthusiastic acceptance of the trade agreement which highlighted the need for a transnational response to the growing inter-connectedness of the

[90] The Australian Metal Workers' and Shipwrights Union represented some 350,000 workers and the New Zealand Engineering, Coachbuilding, Aircraft, Motor and Related Trades Industrial Union of Workers represented 75,000 workers.
[91] No explicit countries or regions are cited
[92] Memo, L. Carmichael to NAC, The Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights Union, 17 September 1982, Box 765, Z102, NBAC
[93] 'Metal unions want NZ tariff agreement renegotiated', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 January 1983, Box 765, Z102, NBAC, and 'Metal unions object to CER', *The Dominion*, 22 January 1983, p.2, Box 765, Z102, NBAC. See also E. Ball to K. Douglas, 8 March 1983 and New Zealand Engineering Press Statement 'A Second Chance for CER' 8 March 1983, International Correspondence, New Zealand, Box 562, Z102, NBAC. Author's discussion with E. Ball, April 2005 highlighted this situation.
[94] NZFOL, *Minutes and Proceedings*, Annual Conference, May 1982, p.133

Anzac economies. Further this integration signalled the need for the Australian and New Zealand union movements to combine their efforts for their mutual advantage and in turn expand their worlds into the South Pacific region to ensure lower wages and conditions within the region did not destabilise Australasian workers' conditions further.

Ken Douglas' 1980 observation that CER "may be the first step towards greater integration into the international economy"[95] was astute and has subsequently been proved correct. For Australia and New Zealand the development of CER represented a significant step towards the globalising economy and a precursor to developments within the economies during the mid-to-late 1980s. The union movements faced a drastically changing environment in which realistic compromise was needed to ensure their continued relevance within the political and economic realities of the period. This resulted in the unions' ultimate commitment to CER which brought with it a commitment to Australasian union ties and connections into the South Pacific union community as well as the continuity of the trans-Tasman labour market.

▪ **Conclusion**

CER and the common Australasian labour market are closely aligned; without the tradition of the trans-Tasman labour market underpinning CER it is difficult to imagine today's celebrations of the successes of trans-Tasman free trade. The two developments present the Antipodean world as a petri dish of globalisation where the economies and labour markets are highly integrated. The trans-Tasman union response to the 'Australasian globalisation experiment' reflects an evolving pragmatic acceptance of the realities of an integrating global economy and the endurance of the shared union community. Union contacts and decisions signal the first major Australasian workers' response to the most recent period of globalisation. The compromise evident in the union bodies reactions reveals an overarching commitment to CER and the continuity of the trans-Tasman labour market which overrode domestic concerns. The reluctant acceptance of the

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[95] Douglas, 'Trade Union Responses to a Closer Australian – New Zealand Economic Relationship', p.3

circumstances recognised and validated an authentic Australasian region although equally it identified the competing interests within this community. This resulted in a strengthening of the alliance between the ACTU and NZFOL leaders while the partnership sought to extend and translate the developing globalisation into transnational workers' solidarity across Australasia and into the South Pacific.

Chapter 6

Australasian Policy Transfer

and Counter Examples

Under the 1980s Labour administrations in Australia and New Zealand the relationships between government, business and unions were remade. The historic Australasian balance between capital and organised labour was re-negotiated in Australia and dismantled in New Zealand. From a shared background the two countries emerged with industrial relations systems and union movements more divergent from each other at the end of the 1980s than at any time since 1900.[1] This final chapter explores and seeks to explain the circumstances surrounding this divergence and the attempts made by the New Zealand movement to arrest it, particularly through policy transfer from the Australian union movement.

This chapter examines the relations between the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU using policy transfer methodology. Dolowitz and Marsh define policy transfer as:

> the process by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in one political system (past or present) are used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system.[2]

In other words policy transfer concerns taking ideas or programmes from one jurisdiction to another. This process rests upon the agents involved sharing a common ideology[3] and being

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[1] M. Bray and N. Haworth, pp.1-15

[2] D. Dolowitz and D. Marsh, 'Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making', *Governance*, 13:1 (2000), p.5

[3] Goldfinch and Mein Smith, pp.438-439

geographically proximate.[4] Further, this model considers knowledge transfer at multiple levels, including non-state actors.[5]

The transfers attempted between the Australasian union movements reveal these associated traits although the adoption of ACTU policy and arrangements in New Zealand was ultimately unsuccessful. That said, as EP Thompson argues, "the blind alleys, the lost causes, and the losers themselves"[6] are valid in history in terms of their own experiences and should not be neglected. Therefore from a framework of "failed"[7] policy transfer I examine the divergent circumstances of increasingly introverted Australasian union organisations.

▪   **Evolving the Shared Model: Australasian Corporatism?**

The National Economic Summits held by both Labour administrations soon after their respective election wins of the early 1980s signalled a change in the way the governments intended to consult and do business. Bringing together industry, government and unions the Summits represented a shift towards corporatist-consensus decision making, echoing the election rhetoric of Prime Ministers Hawke and Lange.[8]

The Australian Summit, held in April 1983, aimed to a large extent at co-opting industry support for the reintroduction of centralised wage fixing, fiscal stimulus and increases in the social wage while in exchange the unions agreed to restrain wage demands thus allowing for increased

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[4] A. Newmark, 'An Integrated Approach to Policy Transfer and Diffusion', *Review of Policy Research*, 19: 2 (2002), pp.163-164
[5] M. Evans and J. Davies, 'Understanding Policy-Transfer: A Multi-Level, Multidisciplinary Perspective', *Public Administration*, 77:2 (1999), pp.368-369
[6] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Hammondsworth, 1963), p.13
[7] The assessment of policy "failure" is discussed by D. Dolowitz and D. Marsh, 'Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making', p.6 and Newmark, 'An Integrated Approach to Policy Transfer and Diffusion', pp.172-173
[8] Goldfinch, pp.17-18. This corporatist initiative also served to distinguish the NZ Labour party from the non-consensual style of the Muldoon administration, W.H. Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', unpublished MA thesis, Massey University 1987, p.102

business profits.[9] These policies had already been negotiated with the ACTU when Labor entered office, in contrast to the Lange government which was propelled into power with a largely unsettled economic agenda.[10]

The New Zealand Economic Summit, held in September 1984, also brought together union and business interests along with community groups. Borrowing from the successes of the Australian Summit[11] the New Zealand event achieved consensus over unemployment, yet divisions remained in a number of areas; unionists wanted increased government intervention, business interests wanted less, community groups called for increased social spending and attention to equity issues while representatives from the primary and manufacturing sectors urged export strategies.[12]

The National Summits, and the rhetoric surrounding them, seemed to signal a move towards corporatism in both countries. The Hawke government 'stage managed' the Australian Summit and gained broad consensus for its pre-election negotiated policy directions[13] but in New Zealand decisions had already been made. Roger Douglas' assessment of the Summit reveals that the event only feigned consultation and worked to prepare the country and its politicians for the onslaught of Rogernomics:

> The greatest impact of the Economic Summit, ultimately, was on the psychology and mood of the country. I was already considering a comprehensive first Budget and the conference prepared cabinet, caucus and the public to accept and endorse the changes it would require. There was only one possible minus – that a few people would come from it with heightened expectations of continued consensus and involvement.[14]

Douglas' appraisal of the 'heightened expectations of continued consensus' accurately captured the mood within activist factions of the labour movement. Editorial comment in a publication

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[9] C. Walsh, 'The National Economy and Management Strategies' in B. Galligan and G. Singleton (eds.), *Business and Government under Labor* (Melbourne, 1991), pp.36-37

[10] See W. Oliver, 'The Labour Caucus and Economic Policy Formation, 1981 to 1984' in B. Easton (ed.), *The Making of Rogernomics* (Auckland, 1989), pp.11-52

[11] Newspaper clipping (publication unknown),19 June 1984, NZFOL – records and research notes, January – April 1987, MS-94-106-57/11, ATL

[12] P. Dalziel, 'The Economic Summit: What were people thinking' in Easton (ed.), *The Making of Rogernomics*, p63, also 'Economic Summit Conference Special Supplement', *National Business Review*, 24 September 1984, pp.49-50

[13] Goldfinch footnote 16, ch. 1, p.247 and P. Brosnan, J. Burgess and D. Rea, 'Two ways to skin a cat: government policy and labour market reform in Australia and New Zealand', *International Contributions to Labour Studies*, 2 (1992), pp.24-25

[14] R. Douglas and L. Callen, *Towards Prosperity* (Auckland, 1987), p.80

representing this group, *Labour Network*, urged New Zealand Labour and the trade union movement to continue following the Australian corporatist example, reasoning "if you're borrowing the recipe book, [the Summit] why stop before the main course [an Accord]?"[15]

However, in reviewing the demise of corporatism it is important to remember the "aura of crisis"[16] permeating the economic and political environment. A run on the New Zealand dollar coupled with Muldoon's refusal, for a time, to devalue on the advice of the incoming government (therefore debasing standing conventions) produced a constitutional crisis. These events helped convince the nation it was headed for economic chaos and aided justification of the extreme restructuring that followed. In Australia too, a perceived economic crisis allowed Hawke to abandon a number of election promises and advance a reform agenda.[17] Thus both nations launched on a process of rapid radical reform although the implications for the two union organisations were to be drastically different.

■ **Accord and Discord**[18]

A core plank in the industrial relations reforms in Australia was the introduction of a wages and incomes policy known as 'the Accord'. This arrangement, negotiated between the Labor Party and the ACTU, provided an electoral platform for the party in the March 1983 election, presenting an incomes policy as the best means for solving Australia's inflation and unemployment problems. Hawke stated that the Accord was a "crucial cornerstone in the Government's efforts to achieve economic recovery".[19]

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[15] 'The Economic Summit: Australian Lessons for New Zealand', *Labour Network: keeping activists in touch with Labour principles and policies*, 2:4 (Spring 1984), p.8
[16] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.208
[17] Goldfinch, pp.20-24
[18] Title taken from M. Bray and P. Walsh, 'Accord and Discord: The Differing Fates of Corporatism Under Labo(u)r Governments In Australia and New Zealand', *Labour & Industry*, 6:3 (October 1995), pp.1-26
[19] R.J. Hawke, 'Speech by the Prime Minister', ACTU National Congress, Melbourne, 12 September 1983, S784, NBAC

The terms of the agreement meant workers would forego wage increases in return for job creation, replacing conflict with co-operation in order to get Australia working again; signalling a shift towards a more positivist union policy agenda. Pursued in a variety of incarnations,[20] the Accord resulted in a gradual transition from centralised wage bargaining to more decentralised enterprise bargaining.[21] At its core was an incomes policy but it was also an important social and economic policy document which allowed the ACTU to have considerable say in macro-economic and broad social matters.[22]

The Accord was a commitment to an alliance between the ACTU and Labor in government. As Beilharz observes, this in itself was not an innovation in any strong sense. Rather, the Accord was a renegotiation of the historic compromise formed between the labour movement and the Labor parties in the 1890s.[23] The distinctive feature the Accord symbolised, from a trans-Tasman perspective, was the shift away from a shared Australasian style of industrial relations as New Zealand unionists were unable to emulate the corporatist path. Yet a number of key players in the New Zealand union movement looked to, and promoted, the Australian example as a solution to the isolation they felt from the Labour Party and to the rise of New Right economic rationalism.

The New Zealand proponents of a corporatist style agreement between the unions and the Labour party signalled a new breed of younger professionals taking up prominent positions in union structures. This group proposed policy which challenged the confrontation and defensive style of union leadership typified by the Knox Presidency. Centred around trade union economists, Rob Campbell, Alf Kirk and Peter Harris, they argued persuasively for a centralised industrial system coupled with some form of industry bargaining.[24] Frustrated by what they saw as a lack of

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[20] For a summary list of the Accords I to VIII see Goldfinch Table 7.1, p.152

[21] Castles et al (eds.), *The Great Experiment,* p.217. See also G. Singleton, *The Accord and the Australian labour movement* (Carlton, 1990) and B. Dabscheck, 'The arbitration system since 1967' in S. Bell and B. Head (eds.), *State, Economy and Public Policy* (Melbourne, 1994), pp.154-161

[22] It took into account income tax, the introduction of Medicare, the establishment of a pricing authority to assess price rises sought by public authorities and corporations, industry development policy and occupational health and safety. See, Goldfinch p.153

[23] Beilharz, *Transforming Labor*, p.123

[24] A. Kirk and R. Campbell, *After the Freeze* (Wellington, 1983)

intellectual depth and policy debate within the NZFOL, Kirk and Campbell prompted arguments for increased union participation in the overall economic framework of New Zealand.[25]

The shift from the "traditionally defensive orientation"[26] of New Zealand unionism towards a more strategic macroeconomic approach to policy, as well as the need to respond positively to restructuring, was influenced by events across the Tasman. As recorded in a letter from Rex Jones, the National Secretary of the New Zealand Engineering Union to the Australian President of the Metal Workers' Union, the Accord was viewed as an important stepping stone towards increased union involvement in the national economic policy community although the prospects of reaching such an agreement seemed remote:

> It would be fair to say we are being hampered by the lack of a prior agreement with the Labour Government (such as your Accord), their naivety on economic and industrial matters and some fundamental philosophical differences – while I am confident of reaching a correct position among the Unions involved, I see some difficulties in achieving this with the Government.[27]

Members of the New Zealand Labour Party also explored the Australia experience. Prompted by the New Zealand Engineers Union President, Ernie Ball and the NZFOL Affiliates Council, Labour Party MPs made concerted efforts to "get closer with the Australian Labour [sic] Party."[28] Therefore there was strong lobbying from strategically focused members of the New Zealand union movement urging the government to negotiate an incomes policy spurred on by the successes of the ACTU Accord process.[29]

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[25] See ibid., A. Kirk, 'The trade union response to structural change', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 8 (1983), pp.211-221 and D. Billing, 'Post-freeze wages far from fixed', *National Business Review*, 30 January 1984, p.9
[26] C. Eichbaum, 'Striking Accord: Incomes Policy and Labour', *Labour Network: Keeping activists in touch with Labour principles and policies*, 4 (September/October 1983), p.10
[27] R. Jones, National Secretary of New Zealand Engineering Union, to R. Scott, National President, Australian Metal Workers' Union, 30 November 1984, Box 562, Z102, NBAC
[28] M. Moore, 'Recommendations arising out of the South Australian Visit', Correspondence from M. Moore attached to Note to Caucus, 8 December 1982, Box 765, Z102, NBAC
[29] O. Harvey, 'The Unions and the Government: The Rise and Fall of the Compact' in J. Deeks and N. Perry (eds.), *Controlling Interests: Business, the State and Society in New Zealand* (Auckland, 1992), p.61 and Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', p.76

The Australian inspired approach, most clearly articulated and pursued in the so-called 'Harris/Rowling/Hercus Papers',[30] proposed to trade off wage increases for employment creation, blending "funding and co-ordination from the centre and participation and involvement from a wider community base".[31] But the pro-market Rogernomics adherents outmanoeuvred the corporatist faction leading to the release of vague party policy economic statements for the election; the vagueness of the statements blurred the splits within the Labour Party over economic policy but also pointed towards a lack of commitment to the union movement and any Accord type agreement.[32]

There are many reasons why the New Zealand Labour government and union movement failed to follow the Australian example. Important factors include the role and effectiveness of the arbitration systems, differences in the ACTU and NZFOL outlooks and structures, and their relationships with the Labour parties.

Beginning with compulsory arbitration, as previously noted, a centralised wage fixing system had a long heritage in both countries (see chapter 3). Yet by the early to mid 1980s the Australian union movement had not been "alienated from centralisation, arbitration and government intervention in the same way as their New Zealand counterparts".[33] In New Zealand the focus of the NZFOL moved away from arbitration as a solution to wage-fixing and began to concentrate on the problem of state intervention within the industrial relations framework. Boston reveals the degree to which the government interfered in wage negotiations:

> Between March 1971 and July 1984, for example, mandatory wage controls of one form or another were in force for almost nine years. Furthermore, of the remaining 4 1/4 years, only eight months can be legitimately described as a period of free wage bargaining (December 1972-August 1973).[34]

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[30] Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', pp.89-96, provides a detailed discussion of the development of these papers

[31] Harris et al 'A programme for economic recovery' 2/1984, Box 121, File 'Economic Policy 1983' p.25, cited in Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', p.96

[32] See M. Bray and D. Neilson, 'Industrial Relations Reform and the Relative Autonomy of the State' in Castles et al (eds.), *The Great Experiment*, p.74 and Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', p.96

[33] Bray and Neilson, 'Industrial Relations Reform and the Relative Autonomy of the State', p.72

[34] J. Boston, *Incomes Policy in New Zealand: 1968-1984* (Wellington, 1984), p.8

Intervention took the form of unilaterally imposed wage and price freezes and wage controls, the most extreme version accompanying the introduction of the Remuneration Act in 1979.[35] The continuing government interference in industrial matters, revoking the bargaining freedom of industrial labour, had a demoralising effect on union leadership, particularly as there was little that could be effectively done about it.[36] Additionally the supposed inflexibility of the award system and its inability to allow firms and sectors to respond freely to the specific circumstances they faced, particularly exposure to international competition and deregulation of the domestic economy, was influential in the decision to move away from the historic compromise.[37] Thus by the mid-1980s the loss of confidence in the arbitration system, first experienced in the 1968 'nil wage order,' left unions largely disillusioned with the Australasian experiment but unable to negotiate an effective alternative.[38]

In contrast to the controlling mechanisms of the Muldoon government, official NZFOL policy supported a return to free collective bargaining. The Labour government, with the endorsement of the NZFOL, legislatively abandoned compulsory arbitration in 1984,[39] marking a (largely unheralded) break in the Australasian industrial relations tradition. In retrospect this shift reflected the NZFOL's naïve confidence in Labour, an outlook enhanced by the reintroduction of compulsory unionism.[40] Against this backdrop the NZFOL agenda was effectively set for microeconomic reform rather than widespread macroeconomic exchanges as encapsulated in the Australian Accord.[41]

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[35] See K. Roper, 'The impact of the Remuneration Act, 1979-1980', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 7 (1982), pp.1-12. The Remuneration Act allowed the government to intervene and regulate specific wages and conditions. It provoked a general strike and created much trade union bitterness towards the government.

[36] Boston, pp.252-254

[37] Nolan and Walsh, pp.24-25

[38] There were lengthy discussions to find an alternative solution which were unsuccessful. See D. Billing, 'Unions back to basics, militant and anti-freeze', *National Business Review*, April 30, 1984, p.12 and D. Billing, 'Little changes; still 'all FOL's fault', *National Business Review,* 6 February 1984, p.10. A lack of trust between the NZFOL, government and business compounded this situation, ibid.

[39] P. Walsh, 'A Family Fight? Industrial Relations Reform under the Fourth Labour Government' in Easton (ed.), *The Making of Rogernomics,* pp.152-153 and 155 and Bray and Neilson, 'Industrial Relations Reform and the Relative Autonomy of the State', pp.76-77

[40] Bray and Walsh, 'Accord and Discord: The Differing Fates of Corporatism Under Labo(u)r Governments In Australia and New Zealand', p.15, Walsh, 'A Family Fight? Industrial Relations Reform under the Fourth Labour Government', p.155 and S. Shepard, *Broken Circle: The decline and fall of the fourth Labour government* (Wellington, 1999), p.152

[41] Bray and Walsh, 'Accord and Discord: The differing fates of Corporatism under Labo(u)r Governments In Australia and New Zealand', pp.14-17, Bray and Neilson, 'Industrial Relations Reform and the Relative Autonomy of the State',

The ACTU's experience of the arbitration system produced a philosophically different union body from that of the NZFOL. The ACTU leadership learnt what could be achieved through a centralised incomes policy based on arbitration and how such a policy could be managed.[42] Whitlam introduced a centralised wage indexation system through the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in April 1975; fundamentally Australia's first voluntary incomes policy.[43] The regime lasted over six years, until July 1981, providing a fertile training ground for the ACTU and making it receptive to, and well practised in, centralised wage bargaining.

The restoration of a centralised incomes policy after 1975 and the ACTU's role in negotiating and enforcing decisions improved its standing and reputation within the union movement, making it more powerful than it had been previously.[44] This enhanced status, combined with the fact that the ACTU came to represent a broader spectrum of workers through mergers with white-collar unions,[45] made it an attractive partner to the Australian Labor Party (ALP). This confluence was boosted by the very strong personal links between the two organisations, with a number of prominent Labor politicians previously holding important positions within the ACTU; the ALP was scattered with ACTU alumni.[46]

The close ties between the Labor Party and the peak union body in Australia in this period contrasted with the situation in New Zealand. The Australian relationship was built on strong personal connections, the authority and unity portrayed by the ACTU and fundamental agreement

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p.72 and R. Sandlant, 'The Political Economy of Wage Restraint: The Australian Accord and Trade Union Strategy in New Zealand', MA Thesis, Political Studies, University of Auckland, 1989, pp.51-53

[42] Bray and Walsh, 'Accord and Discord: The Differing Fates of Corporatism Under Labo(u)r Governments In Australia and New Zealand', p.17

[43] J. Teicher, 'Union compliance and incomes policy: The Australian Social Contract, 1983-87', *New Zealand Journal of Industrial Relations*, 13:3 (1988), p.214

[44] Teicher, 'Union compliance and incomes policy: The Australian Social Contract, 1983-87', pp.220-230 and Bray and Walsh, 'Accord and Discord: The Differing Fates of Corporatism Under Labo(u)r Governments In Australia and New Zealand', p.17

[45] G. Griffin, 'The Authority of the ACTU', Working Paper No80, 1994, Department of Management and Industrial Relations, University of Melbourne, pp.12-13 and Teicher, 'Union compliance and incomes policy: The Australian Social Contract, 1983-87', pp.223-224. Union mergers are discussed in chapter two.

[46] Former union officials, including Bob Hawke and Ralph Willis, and later Simon Crean, came to assume senior positions within the Australian Labor government. Hawke having been President of both the ACTU and Labour Party became Prime Minister while Willis, the Minister for Industrial Relations had been the ACTU Industrial Advocate

over a strategy to negotiate a voluntary incomes policy in opposition to the Fraser government. In New Zealand, although there were affiliate ties between the Labour Party and the NZFOL along with a shared opposition to the Muldoon administration, this was an alliance of convenience rather than conviction.[47]

The New Zealand Labour Party believed the union movement lacked the discipline and unity[48] necessary to enforce an Accord-style arrangement. Further Labour believed that close association with the often confrontational NZFOL would damage its electoral chances.[49] These factors, combined with a suspicion on the part of union leadership of 'doing deals' with government[50] and an undeveloped tradition of participation in wider macro-economic debate,[51] meant the NZFOL and the fourth Labour government remained relatively estranged in comparison to their Australian counterparts. Ironically it was the past-President of the PSA, Stan Rodger,[52] who sealed the fate of the 'New Zealand Accord' when he presented papers to caucus blocking a potential 'social contract' with the unions, concluding that "any formal agreement between the Labour Party and the Trade Union Movement was not worth pursuing."[53]

Thus the first major divergence in the trans-Tasman world's industrial relations policy centred around the ACTU's ability to negotiate an income and wages agreement with the Australian Labor government which maintained centralised bargaining through arbitration. New Zealand

[47] C. James, *The Quiet Revolution: Turbulence and Transition in Contemporary New Zealand*, (Wellington, 1986), p.155

[48] Goldfinch p.78. See also G. Scott, 'One advisor's view of the economics and politics of economic policy', Clark (ed.), p.63. Scott notes that "Ken Douglas and other key players of the time" told him of the "disciplined grip the union leadership in Australia had over its affiliates, including its aggressive left, and what a contrast this was to the New Zealand system."

[49] S. Rodger, 'Labour's Social Contract: What are the components', 2/1983, Box 118, File 'Caucus Economic Committee 1983', cited in Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', pp.76-77 and Oliver, 'The Labour Caucus and Economic Policy Formation, 1981 to 1984', p.40. See ch.2, p.26

[50] Rodger "Labour's Social Contract: What are the components' cited in Oliver, 'The Labour Caucus and Economic Policy Formation, 1981 to 1984' p.40 and Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', pp.76

[51] Prior to 1979 the NZFOL had only one research officer whose main role was the preparation of General Wage Orders not policy. "The NZFOL's policy was determined largely on the basis of what union affiliates sent in", K Douglas, personal interview, Wellington, 14 September 1988, cited in Sandlant, p.83. See also Kirk, 'The trade union response to structural change', pp.211-212

[52] Rodger became Minister of Labour within the fourth Labour Government

[53] Rodger, "Labour's Social Contract: What are the components', cited in Oliver, 'The Labour Caucus and Economic Policy Formation, 1981 to 1984', p.40 and Oliver, 'The New Zealand Labour Party and the rise of Rogerrnomics 1981-1984', p.77

abandoned the Australasian compulsory arbitration 'experiment' in favour of the reintroduction of compulsory unionism. From 1984, despite each nation being governed by Labour parties, the ACTU and NZFOL worked in increasingly divergent industrial environments despite attempts at policy transfer.

■   **There <u>Is</u> An Alternative**[54]

As the 1980s progressed the industrial relations situations in Australia and New Zealand provided each trade union movement with an alternative vision; the Australian situation was an inspiration to New Zealand while New Zealand's situation was viewed fearfully by the Australians. This section examines the 'dead ends' of policy transfer; firstly the import of Nordic-inspired 'strategic unionism' into Australia and New Zealand and secondly, the revived attempt to negotiate an Australian-style corporatist agreement in New Zealand. Although neither of these initiatives was successful they point to the continuing interaction of trans-Tasman union leaders and the similar approaches they tried to employ to address globalisation and the rise of economic rationalism.

In August and September 1986 a high level delegation of union leaders from across Australian industry and representatives from the Trade Development Council conducted a study tour of Scandinavia and Europe. The trip primarily explored "those countries which had overcome balance of payments constraints in ways which produced low unemployment, low inflation and economic growth which is more equitably distributed".[55] The resulting report, *Australia Reconstructed*, published in the following year was described as "seminal"[56] within the New Zealand union community and received widespread attention in Australia. The document's

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[54] This title challenges the often asserted slogan of economic rationalists that 'there is no alternative' which translated into the acronym TINA

[55] ACTU/TDC, *Australia Reconstructed ACTU/TDC Mission to Western Europe. A Report by the Mission to the ACTU and the TDC* (Canberra, 1987), p.xi

[56] Bramble and Heal, p.135 and P. Tolich (Trade Union Education Authority) quoted in G. Piercy, 'Strategy and vision: the influence of the AMWU on the NZEU from 1987-1992 with respect to education and training reforms', MSS, University of Waikato, 1999, p.143

significance was such that an entire edition of the *Journal of Australian Political Economy* was devoted to it as a ten year retrospective.[57]

Australia Reconstructed, at the time of its release, was the most detailed proposal for developing a social democratic tradition in Australia. It represented a transitional path away from the centralised award system towards enterprise bargaining. Key within its numerous recommendations was reciprocity based on the Government and major employers involving unions in policy making programmes. A crucial aspect of the report was the promotion of 'strategic unionism' which ascribed unions to go beyond a narrow focus on wages and conditions and concentrate on policy, organisational restructuring, labour market training, education and research.[58]

Although *Australia Reconstructed* received considerable attention, generating debate within the union movement,[59] and was largely influential in the restructuring of Australian unions,[60] the document is "notable for its lack of impact" [61] on the policy environment of Australia. The Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce, John Button recalls, "I don't think *Australia Reconstructed* got much attention in the Parliamentary Labor Party except from people like myself from whom it had to get some attention."[62] The muted response indicates that senior ministers' gazes were cast elsewhere; towards that of the New Right. Economic rationalism was gaining increasing popularity within the Labor government (particularly with Treasurer Paul Keating), the Australian business community and bureaucracy;[63] whereas New Zealand unions had been grappling with this situation since 1984.

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[57] G. Butler, D. Bryan, M. Eaton, E. Jones, P. Kell, A Mack, G. Meagher, S. Rosewarne, F. Stilwell, N. Towart (eds.), *Australia Reconstructed: 10 Years On*, Special Edition, Journal of Australian Political Economy, 39 (June 1997)

[58] ACTU/TDC, *Australia Reconstructed*, p.xi-194, Bramble and Heal, p.135, Goldfinch pp.138-139 and Editorial in Butler et. al., *Australia Reconstructed: 10 Years On*, pp.1-3

[59] It received formal backing from the ACTU at its 1987 Congress

[60] M. Rafferty, 'Union Amalgamation: The Enduring Legacy of Australia Reconstructed?', in Butler et. al., *Australia Reconstructed: 10 Years On*, pp.99-105

[61] Editorial, in Butler et. al., *Australia Reconstructed: 10 Years On*, p.2

[62] D. Bryan 'Interview with John Button' in Butler et. al., *Australia Reconstructed: 10 Years On*, p.8

[63] M. Bray, 'Unions, the Accord and Economic Restructuring' in J. Brett, J. Gillespie and M. Groot (eds.), *Developments in Australian Politics* (Melbourne, 1994), pp.270-1, P. Ewer, I. Hampson, C. Lloyd, J. Rainford, S. Rix and M. Smith *Politics and the Accord* (Leichhardt, 1987), pp.120-26. See also, Pusey, ch. 2 and 3

The challenge of managing the New Right was a pressing issue for the New Zealand union movement. The radical agenda undertaken by enthusiasts of this ideology had, by-and-large, excluded unions from restructuring processes contributing to feelings of alienation and increasing irrelevance.[64] Owen Harvey,[65] in a paper widely circulated and discussed by New Zealand unionists,[66] proposed that the answer lay with 'strategic unionism' as exemplified in *Australia Reconstructed*.[67] This proposal sought to deepen and broaden the Accord process constructing a place for unions within the wider macro-economic framework;[68] in short to create union influence.

Australia Reconstructed's publication created a flurry of interest in New Zealand. As Peter Chrisp of the New Zealand Engineers Union recalls:

> Once Australia Reconstructed …came out, all of a sudden people could start selling ideas and they were just sucked into New Zealand because they filled such an important vacuum because we were desperately finding a new agenda with the employers to talk on.[69]

Another Engineers Union representative, Chris Eichbaum, recollects organising a joint employer-union mission in 1988 to Australia to investigate the proposals contained in *Australia Reconstructed*.[70]

The NZCTU developed the Australian version of strategic unionism into a strategy known as the 'third way'; a strategy between the freemarket monetarism of Rogernomics and Muldoon's interventionist centralism.[71] This policy tied union negotiations to business productivity gains[72] and was most fully explored by the Engineering Union, particularly around workplace reforms

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[64] P. Walsh, 'Trade Unions in New Zealand and Economic Restructuring', p.6 and O. Harvey, 'Towards a Union Strategy for the 1990's, (Auckland, 1988), p.4
[65] An official in the Northern Distribution Union
[66] Walsh, 'Trade Unions in New Zealand and Economic Restructuring' p6
[67] See Harvey, 'Towards a Union Strategy for the 1990's', pp.16-24
[68] ACTU/TDC, *Australia Reconstructed*, pp.187-188
[69] Cited in Piercy, p.143
[70] Ibid. and author's discussion with C. Eichbaum, 26 January 2006
[71] See Bramble and Heal, p.135 and C. Eichbaum, 'The Politics and Economy of the Third Way' in S. Chatterjee, P. Conway, P. Dalziel, C. Eichbaum, P. Harris, B. Philpott and R. Shaw, *The New Politics: a Third Way for New Zealand* (Palmerston North, 1999), pp.33-37
[72] See NZCTU, *The need for change: challenges for the trade union movement of today* (Wellington, 1988) and NZCTU, *Strategies for change* (Wellington, 1989)

and industry training.[73] Thus as Piercy describes, "the Engineering Union became a conduit for ideas across the Tasman".[74]

Although both Australian and New Zealand union organisations failed to temper the New Right, their attempts to introduce strategic unionism indicate a new strategic focus. The changed circumstances challenged their traditional policies to economic restructuring and the approaches which emerged were novel in their active and positive engagement with the restructuring process.[75]

Yet fundamentally the new policies were introduced too late as both Labour governments had already started moving towards economic rationalism. Importantly they signify a considerable degree of traffic and interaction across the Tasman as the Australasian union organisations employed new tactics in response to the changing economic and political circumstances. This trend continued into the later 1980s with the re-emergence of a 'New Zealand Accord'.

Deemed unworkable in New Zealand in 1984 'an Australian-style agreement' was resurrected between 1988 and 1990. An apparent change of tack by the Labour Minister, Stan Rodger, acknowledged the success of the Australian model while visiting Australia:

> I believe now the country would be better served if we had one. The accord has produced here industrial harmony and economic growth. I am impressed at how the accord has operated and what it has given Australia…In retrospect New Zealand has missed the boat on the accord.[76]

The President of the Labour Party conceded that the government and unions "blew it"[77] in 1984 and had wasted the years since. He called for greater union influence in the Labour Party as part

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[73] See New Zealand Engineering Union, *Workplace Australia: The New Zealand Link*, Report from New Zealand Engineering Unions Inc (Wellington, June 1991) and New Zealand Engineering Union, *Strategies for the Future: The Engineers Unions Blueprint for Continued Development* (Wellington, 1991)
[74] Piercy, p.6
[75] M. Bray and P. Walsh, 'Unions and Economic Restructuring in Australia and New Zealand', p.144
[76] C. Peters, 'NZ missed the boat on Accord – Mr Rodger', *The Press*, 7 April 1986, p.4
[77] P. Luke, 'Call for greater union influence in Labour', *The Press*, 30 April 1988, p.2. This sentiment is also expressed by Harvey, 'Towards a Union Strategy for the 1990's', p.7

of a move towards an Australian influenced arrangement.[78] Therefore when Prime Minister
David Lange announced on 7 September 1988 the government's offer to negotiate a 'Compact'
with the trade union movement there was potential to re-align New Zealand's industrial landscape
to more closely resemble that of Australia.

Circumstances in New Zealand had changed to allow the concept of a wages accord more
potential for success. A major fact was the establishment of one peak union body (the NZCTU)
with leadership that was more open to a corporatist agreement. Additionally, shifting alliances
within the Labour Party sought to reaffirm its traditional union ties and thus aid its lagging
election prospects. Further, vocal support was forthcoming from ACTU officials.

The ACTU keenly promoted the successes of the Accord to their New Zealand counterparts in the
newly formed NZCTU. At the inaugural NZCTU conference, ACTU representative and Vice-
President, Martin Fergusson, highlighted the Australian path for the New Zealand movement:

> As your President, Ken Douglas stated the spirit of trade unionism means a willingness to co-
> operate in finding structures, policies and objectives around which members can unite, as one
> unified force, capable of protecting the interests and advancing the claims of workers. From
> the Australian trade union movement's point of view, that unifying force since March 1983
> when the Hawke Labour Government was elected to office has been the "Accord Process".[79]

Indicating the degree of influence the ACTU gained through the Accord process:

> The Accord Process is about the trade union movement having a legitimate say in government.
> Never before has the Australian trade union movement had an opportunity to influence the
> living and working conditions of the Australian working class in such a constructive and open
> fashion.[80]

These sentiments echoed those of the ACTU leader, Simon Crean. He asserted the Accord gave
the ACTU "legitimacy as a genuine partner in social and economic reform at all levels of the
economy."[81]

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[78] Luke, 'Call for greater union influence in Labour', *The Press*, 30 April 1988, p.2
[79] M. Fergusson speech to CTU Biennial Conference 1989, Appendix III, p.ix, Biennial Conference – Remits,
resolutions, minutes and speeches, CTU/2/2 Vol. 1, March – September 1989, 98-327-04/09, ATL
[80] Ibid.
[81] S. Crean, Speech to ACTU Biennial Congress, 25-29 September 1989, S784, NBAC

The Accord and the government's recognition of the ACTU as its negotiating partner had the effect of channelling union issues, submissions and problems through the ACTU.[82]   The Arbitration Commission, through the Accord, required a mechanism for the delivery of union compliance, and the ACTU fitted into this role.[83]   Griffin assesses the authority of the ACTU thus:

> This Accord process greatly enhanced the internal authority of the ACTU.   Its full-time officers and Executive sub-committees became the de facto negotiators for improved wages and conditions for not only unionised workers but also non-unionised employees as well. Inevitably, power and authority accumulated to the ACTU – it negotiated, it controlled access and, in the eyes of most affiliates, it delivered.[84]

The influence the ACTU gained centred particularly on Bill Kelty, who became the Assistant Secretary of the ACTU in 1977 and was elected as the General Secretary in 1983, a position he retained until 2000.   He was one of the chief architects of the Accord[85] yet his influence extended beyond this agreement into economic policy making.[86]   Indeed, Kelty was cited as one of the most important decision-makers in Australia in the late 1980s due in part to his very close personal relationship with Treasurer Paul Keating.[87]

The elevated status and influence the ACTU achieved encouraged the NZCTU to seek a similar arrangement with the New Zealand government.   The corporatist approach appealed to the leadership of the NZCTU who sought to establish a prominent role within the policy making structures of the Labour government.   It presented unionists with prospects for re-energising the movement and gaining more authority in economic and political debate.   As Campbell and Kirk outlined in 1983, a new approach was needed, a point that Harvey took up in 1988:

> If we continue to respond to the initiatives of employers and government in a way which seeks to limit the damage rather than influence the outcome of economic change then we will

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[82] Griffin, 'The Authority of the ACTU', p.9

[83] J Teicher 'Unions and Wages Policies' in B Ford and D Plowman (eds.), *Australian Unions: An Industrial Relations Perspective, Second Edition* (Melbourne,1989) pp.245-246, Griffin, 'The Authority of the ACTU', p.10 and Bray, 'Unions, the Accord and Economic Restructuring', p.267

[84] Griffin, 'The Authority of the ACTU', p.8

[85] Kelty was viewed as the most influential person on the Accord I and the second most influential person on the Accord VI. See Goldfinch table 7.2, p.154.

[86] See Ibid, table 2.8, p45 and table 6.2, p.127

[87] *Australian Financial Review*, 6 October 1988, p.48

quickly be marginalised and further fragmented to the great cost of our membership and the country as a whole.[88]

Union leadership viewed Lange's suggestion of a 'Compact' as an olive branch from which they could build union strength, legitimacy and influence. Support for the concept built quickly within the NZCTU and the ACTU experience served as a positive example of consensus politics.

New Zealand union officials travelled to Australia to study the effects of the Accord[89] and ACTU officials crossed the Tasman to brief New Zealanders on Australia's experiences. Laurie Carmichael, a principal draftsman of the Accord, actively rekindled interest in an Accord-style agreement amongst Labour Party trade union affiliates.[90]

Charged with developing the Compact agreement, Assistant Finance Minister, Mike Moore, built on his 'blue collar' background and philosophical attraction to corporatist strategy. Realising that personal trust and networks of relationship were pivotal to the success of corporatist agreements, Moore remarked: "What's interesting in studying all the different overseas models is that they are all based on the trust among half a dozen people."[91] He cited the ACTU example and four main negotiators from the Australian experience. As Moore observed, and Goldfinch confirms, the Accord was negotiated by a select group of individuals consisting of a few key ministers (mostly with previous ACTU experience) and ACTU officials, with the bureaucracy only playing a part in its implementation.[92]

In New Zealand a policy elite of ministers and union officials borrowed directly from the successes of the ACTU and Australian Labor Party. Importantly, this represented non-standard policy formulation for the fourth New Zealand Labour government; after assuming power Labour

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[88] Harvey, 'Towards a Union Strategy for the 1990's', p.1

[89] NZCTU, Biennial Report, Biennial Conference p.32, 98-327-04/09, ATL

[90] P. Herbert, 'Affiliates seek partnership based on Beattie report', *National Business Review*, 2 May 1988, p.7, Luke, 'Call for greater union influence in Labour', *The Press*, 30 April 1988, p.2 and C. Trotter, 'The Big Deal', *New Zealand Listener,* 9 September 1989, p.40

[91] M. Moore quoted in P. Herbert, 'Blue collar puts shirt on compact: Moore revisits trade union roots to win shop floor support', *National Business Review*, 2 December 1988, p.W12

[92] Goldfinch p.155 and p.171

largely excluded interest groups (unions) from policy making. Decision-making centred on a few core people and institutions, particularly Treasury,[93] emphasising the "village-like polity"[94] of New Zealand.

Moore, with his union connections[95] and identification with 'the workers', was more set in the mould of Australian Ministers, like Hawke and Willis, who had ACTU credentials. The bond Moore felt with unionists and his enthusiasm for consensus negotiations, assisted Compact developments. On the other side of the negotiating table, Ken Douglas, President of the NZCTU was keen to reach agreement, stating that: "If Labour in government can find the political will to forge a unity in government with Labour in industry, we are ready to participate."[96]

Douglas set up a group of policy advisors from the upper echelons of the trade union movement to consider and approve the Compact proposal.[97] Realistically the Compact only represented a consultative mechanism, although it did give unions early access to the policy making process. The Compact then evolved into the 'Growth Agreement' in which wage restraint was traded for union consultation over economic and social policy.

Throughout the negotiation period opposition was expressed at both ends of the political spectrum. The years of deregulation under Rogernomics led many unionists to mistrust the Labour administration and left-wing dissidents viewed the NZCTU leadership as collaborators in the move towards the free market. An activist against the proposed agreement stated in colourful terms his reticence about dealing with the fourth Labour government: "The Compact is like a haemophiliac going to a vampire for a blood transfusion."[98]

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[93] Ibid., ch. 3
[94] C. James, 'What made the revolution' in Clark (ed.)*,* p.20
[95] He retained his membership of the Printers Union and regularly contributed to its publication, 'Imprint', see P. Herbert, 'Unions table seven point accord basis', *National Business Review,* 16 September 1988, p.27
[96] K. Douglas, quoted in Trotter 'The Big Deal' *New Zealand Listener*, 9 September 1989, p.40
[97] New Zealand Government and NZCTU, *The Compact Statement*, December 1989, F. Rotheram, 'CTU to vote on Compact as opponents plan to march', *National Business Review*, 19 September 1989, p.3, Shepard, p.154, Goldfinch p.79
[98] Trotter, 'The Big Deal', *New Zealand Listener*, 9 September 1989, p.43

Just as advocates of the Compact rallied behind the successes of the ACTU Accord, opponents also used the Australian example to highlight their case against a deal with the government. A Wellington based anti-Compact group released a scathing report attacking the corporatist approach and citing inadequacies of the Australian Accord:

> Neither the current negative approach of the CTU nor an Australian type accord nor the 'Swedish model' are acceptable strategies because they are based on the vain hope that if we smile nicely at the government and the employers and concede labour market flexibility they might let us survive. Such a compromise will preserve the union bureaucrats in their professional offices as it has in Australia but it will not ensure the survival of real union organisation.[99]

Another anti-Compact group also utilised the Australian Accord in its protests:

> Similar types of social contracts with government have failed overseas. In Australia real wages have dropped by 17% since (sic) Compact was introduced in 1983.[100]

Employers too, felt the New Zealand union movement was still not mature enough to make a wages accord workable, with Business Roundtable representative, Roger Kerr, doubting whether the NZCTU possessed the economic literacy exhibited by its Australian counterpart.[101]

Yet for all the support and opposition the agreement met, its negotiation and eventual 'birth' came too late to gain relevance or significance in the long term. Labour lost the general election six weeks after closing the deal with the NZCTU. This rendered the agreement effectively redundant.[102] Thus an Australian inspired and influenced agreement was negotiated but never successfully implemented in New Zealand. Instead the outcome of the 1990 election resulted in the overhaul of the industrial relations system by the National government through the Employment Contracts Act which further disenfranchised unions and workers and severed the similarities in the Australasian industrial relations experiment.

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[99] Trade Union Solidarity Committee, *Report,* Wellington, June 1988, p.11, Political – Government and NZCTU – Compact (8/8), 92-016-14/08, ATL

[100] M. Ward, National Spokesperson for Trade Unionists Against the Compact quoted in Rotherham, 'CTU to vote on Compact as opponents plan march', *National Business Review*, 19 September 1989, p.3

[101] P. Herbert, 'Employers sceptical of unions' ability to deliver accord', *National Business Review,* 16 September 1988, p.34

[102] Harvey, 'The Unions and the Government: The Rise and Fall of the Compact', pp.75-76

Through a study of policy transfer it is apparent that the Australian and New Zealand union movements employed similar policy agendas in an attempt to combat the rise of the New Right. Although these initiatives were unsuccessful they represent innovative approaches to the integrating global economy in an attempt to create positive and effective relationships between workers, business and government. Ultimately the life-ring was thrown too late to realise a return to an Australasian model of industrial relations or effectively challenge the development of a New Right agenda.

▪ **Conclusion**

The mid-to-late 1980s witnessed a paradigm shift in both Australian and New Zealand industrial relations; New Zealand moved rapidly away from arbitration and down the road of free collective bargaining towards free enterprise negotiations while the Accord introduced to Australia resulted in a more gradual and controlled reform of the labour market. The changes were a decisive break in the Australasian industrial relations tradition and alienated the New Zealand union movement in contrast to Australia.

The authority of the NZFOL (or NZCTU as it became) and the ACTU shifted in different directions. The ACTU gained widespread influence over the political landscape of the Hawke-led Labor government. It aligned itself closely with this administration, moving beyond the traditional scope of union activity to actively participate in Labor's nation building project. In contrast the NZFOL was not consulted or included in government policy formation and was shaken by the speed of the Labour transformation. NZFOL Secretary, Ken Douglas, reflecting on events following the Labour election in 1984, stated:

> A lot of punch-drunk Kiwis wandered around an unfamiliar land. While they understood the broad direction of policy, it had so swamped them that organised resistance seemed very difficult.[103]

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[103] K. Douglas quoted in T. Reid, 'Change Daze', *New Zealand Listener,* 14 February 1987, p.11

Douglas indicated that the failings of the New Zealand union movement, and the labour movement in general, centred on a lack of cohesion:

> Our leadership, my leadership if you like, could not deliver the required union membership support in a coherent and progressive way. The fact that the Labour movement collectively has never seen itself as a cohesive movement of mass action, capable of developing consensus that was able to be turned into a popular political programme, was our Achilles' heel.[104]

The set of circumstances the union organisations faced meant the trans-Tasman union leaderships' focus contracted, drawn to domestic concerns. Although always primarily concerned for the welfare of workers in their own jurisdictions, from a trans-Tasman perspective a withdrawal from international concerns is apparent during the later 1980s. The shift from a broad internationalist approach within the Australasian union community to a more domestically centred view reflects the altering circumstances both peak organisations found themselves operating within; as the ACTU gained authority in the Australian political environment it concentrated more on interaction with government and policy development while as the New Zealand movement struggled to retain relevance within its domestic political sphere it sought accommodation within the political orthodoxy. Trans-Tasman dialogue changed focus towards attempts at understanding and interpreting the changing circumstances in both countries. Therefore, somewhat contradictorily the Australasian union organisations responded to global market forces by contracting their international visions and seeking broader domestic influence.

The interchange of union policy and the provision of counter examples across the Tasman became the focus of trans-Tasman dialogue. Although the Australian and New Zealand union organisations experienced divergent industrial relations environments and associated power, the strategic policy approaches they attempted to adopt were broadly similar. The similarities in the policy agendas were facilitated through Australasian policy transfer. These initiatives, although unsuccessful, highlight the ties between the two union communities, the continuing interaction of the leadership and the on-going use of counter-examples within the trans-Tasman world.

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[104] K. Douglas, 'What were the real issues?' in Clark, (ed.), p.83

Conclusion

As Philippa Mein Smith comments, globalisation has always shaken the kaleidoscope of connections between people into new patterns.[105] This observation applies equally to the ties between the peak union organisations of Australia and New Zealand during the two decades between 1970 and 1990. As both nations came to translate their positions in the globalising world economy of the late twentieth century the pattern of links between the elites of Australasian industrial labour were altered; the new circumstances demanded new responses.

Returning to my central research question of why interaction took place between the two union organisations, a number of key observations emerge. Fundamentally conversations evolved in response to globalisation. The integrating international economy, altering geo-political alliances and a recognition of shared industrial circumstances encouraged the ACTU and NZFOL to formalise their links. Underpinned by a common labour market and inherent international collectivism the organisations tried to understand the globalising world from a joint standpoint. This transnational perspective sought increasing engagement with international political and moral issues, asserting the Australasian union relationship globally, in the South Pacific, and with each other. Although an international focus was not new, what was novel was the unified and co-ordinated response that the Australasian union organisations developed. Further, the shared Australian and New Zealand outlook firmly established the South Pacific as the Australasian

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[105] Mein Smith, *A Concise History of New Zealand*, p.249

unionists' backyard in the face of realigning geo-political forces, reinforcing the concept of a fluid watery Australasia.

As economic integration continued and neo-liberalism became the orthodoxy, interactions between the ACTU and NZFOL increasingly withdrew from international issues to focus on trans-Tasman and domestic concerns. Conversations shifted to trans-Tasman trade and labour markets. The Australasian union responses reveal signs of positive engagement with the new free trade conditions, restructuring of the economies and industry, and support for the continuation of the free movement of people between Australia and New Zealand.

The last transition in the developing dialogue concerned union relations with the Labour governments. This discussion sought solutions for managing the rise of a world order that was rapidly replacing the 'working man's paradise' with the 'paradise of the consumer'.[106] Historic models for ordering industrial relations were deemed no longer appropriate in the deregulated globalised economy. This led to interactions centred on policy learning, innovation and transfer between the two union organisations as the ACTU developed strategies that assured them power in the macro-economic environment. Overall trans-Tasman union interactions reflect the tectonic movements of economics and politics during the 1970s and 1980s.

So how did this developing relationship constitute an Australasian or trans-Tasman 'community of interests'? This transnational community was underscored by its common labour market. This circumstance meant that economic and industrial issues in one location had the potential to rebound into the other through increased (or decreased) migration. The continuous interchange and circulation of populations cemented shared experiences of work and the transfer of people and ideas, shaping concepts of a 'trans-Tasman world of work'. The changes to the international economy which pushed the Antipodean economies closer together and a recognition by the union

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[106] See Denoon and Mein Smith with Wyndham, p.415

leaders of their common circumstances provided the foundation for building a community of interests.

The union leaders used their shared understandings and experiences to construct a community centred on Australasia and concerned with advancing mutual union views. The joint views the union leaders promulgated globally and in the Pacific (particularly on international moral issues) consolidated international readings of a common Australasian region. This impression was confirmed by shared responsibilities the ACTU and NZFOL held representing the Australia-New Zealand region at international union confederations.

Yet it is recognised that the Australasian union community was not the fundamental community each organisation identified with and advocated for; that was their own domestic membership. But importantly, at a transnational level of analysis, each organisation was the other's most significant and closest ally. They worked in tandem when facing the outside world while common understandings and compromises were reached over trans-Tasman labour market and industrial concerns. Further, they built their ties through sharing policy in an attempt to manage the rise of the New Right.

The Australasian union community, whose core was Australia and New Zealand, reached beyond its defined geographic zone. Both union organisations regarded the South Pacific within their shared sphere of influence. The spreading of the boundaries of the trans-Tasman world gives continuance to the concept of an 'elastic' Australasia. Although not necessarily particularly 'active' in trade union initiatives in the region, when challenged by competing labour interests the Australasian unionists intensified their relationships with Pacific union leaders. The nuclear issue provided a cornerstone of this triangular dynamic.

The organisations' leaders were pivotal in the trans-Tasman union community. While this highlights the importance of individuals and their personal relationships to advance networks of

connection and understanding, it also draws to attention the elitism of the group. The union officials that developed the Australasian community were small in number and through the bureaucratisation of the union movement during the period, were increasingly perceived as divorced from the 'real' concerns of workers.

The detachment of union leadership from its members and working people also comes through in the trans-Tasman community's failure to fuse substantially and effectively ethnicity and gender issues with those of traditional class politics. This reveals a lack of capacity to represent comprehensively 'the people' or 'the workers'; the union organisations' white masculine heritage continued to dominate dialogue. The union organisations' inability to advance class politics and the subsequent fragmentation of leftist politics partly explains the ascent of New Right ideologies in both Labour Parties.

In summary, the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU in the 1970s and 1980s developed their community of interests. Discussions moved from international issues and civil rights, to the trans-Tasman relationship, and finally to focus on attempts at managing the state and retaining power and relevance within the labour-capital equation. In response to the increasingly integrated world economy trans-Tasman dialogue developed across all three patterns of relation as the unions built upon their bonds of brotherhood. The strengthening ties however represent a continuation of trans-Tasman union tradition founded on masculine, ethnically Anglo, dominance. This reflects the inherent conservatism of the union elites who sought accommodation within the established industrial, economic and political models rather than outside them, and generally neglected domestic social movements and potential opportunities to expand their political alliances. Although strong divergences emerged in the respective power of the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU during the reformist Labour years of the 1980s, policy learning and exchange took place between the two organisations as they continued to present a unified, sometimes hesitant, perspective on trans-Tasman and international issues. The experiences of the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU may not have been identical but their connections reveal an interwoven matrix of links, confirming a

trans-Tasman union community; a community that forms a bond within the multiple strands of the trans-Tasman world.

Epilogue

Australian and New Zealand industrial relations developments over the past 16 years reveal on-going policy transfer as the Anzac neighbours continued to look sideways, towards each other, in pursuit of models designed to balance the capital-labour equation. In 1991 the New Zealand National government, continuing and intensifying the reforms begun by the fourth Labour government, radically restructured the country's industrial relations framework. The Employment Contracts Act "provided for individual contracts of employment between employer and employee and removed statutory recognition of trade union registration."[1]

In Australia reform of the labour market, through the recently enacted 'WorkChoices' legislation, has been described as a "policy shift reminiscent of New Zealand a decade earlier"[2] or even "copied"[3] from New Zealand. Highlighting the influence of the New Zealand experience, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

> The New Zealand experience was dragged to the forefront of the debate last month in a speech the Prime Minister, John Howard, made on the issue. "If we look at the experience in New Zealand, we find that while 85 per cent of people originally opposed labour market reform, 18 months after the changes 73 per cent of employees were either very satisfied or satisfied with their working conditions and terms of employment," Mr Howard told the Sydney Institute. Last week the federal Minister for Industry, Ian Macfarlane, said: "We've got to ensure that industrial relations reform continues so we have the labour prices of New Zealand. They reformed their industrial relations system a decade ago. We're already a decade behind the New Zealanders. There is no resting."[4]

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[1] Goldfinch, p.117

[2] A. McClelland and S. St John, 'Social policy responses to globalisation in Australia and New Zealand 1980-2005', Special Issue: Globalising the Antipodes?, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 41:2 (June 2006), p.185

[3] K. Taylor, 'Conference Report: 'The Past is Before Us'', *Labour History*, 89 (November 2005), p.235

[4] 'Kiwis here for good reason, unions say', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 August 2005, p.3

Policy transfer from New Zealand to Australia has led to on-going trans-Tasman union campaigns. In November 2005 the NZCTU launched a campaign supporting the ACTU which indicates the continuing links between the two organisations and the perception of a trans-Tasman world of work and employment:

> It is important to show solidarity for Australian workers when they are up against it – they have done so for us in the past. Also – there are many Australian companies operating in New Zealand – and the changes in Australia may well flow on to New Zealand, industrially and politically.
> The implications of the changes to the Australian labour market are truly Trans Tasman. Australian companies operating in New Zealand will look to the New Zealand workplace next.[5]

The joint campaign provides an important view on the continuing development of transnational union links and illuminates on-going interactions in the balance between labour and capital. This relationship, on the periphery of the global economy, is becoming increasingly cross-national as the Australian and New Zealand economies continue their integration and New Zealand companies are bought and managed by Australian corporations.

As this study has shown trans-Tasman business interactions and union organisational links are not new occurrences. But only through a transnational frame are these ties understood and their historical precedence explained. It is through our shared history that we can recognise and explain today's complex set of international relationships and events along with the transfer of ideas and policies across national borders.

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[5] NZCTU, 'Australian workers under attack! It's not fair mate', www.union.org.nz, retrieved 17 November 2005

Appendix 1

Leaders of the ACTU and NZFOL/NZCTU, 1970 to 1990

ACTU

President		*Secretary*	
1969-1980	Bob Hawke	1956-1977	Harold Souter
1980-1985	Cliff Dolan	1977-1983	Peter Nolan
1985-1990	Simon Crean	1983-2000	Bill Kelty

NZFOL/NZCTU

President		*Secretary*	
1963-1979	Tom Skinner	1979-1979	Jim Knox
1979-1987	Jim Knox	1979-1987	Ken Douglas
1987-1999	Ken Douglas	1987-1991	Ron Burgess

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4100-10/24   National Executive Minutes, 1974
4100-10/25   National Executive Minutes, 1975
4100-10/26   National Executive Minutes, 1976
4100-10/27   National Executive Minutes, 1977
4100-10/28   National Executive Minutes, 1978

14: Conferences with FOL participation
4100-14/2/2   NZCTU Preliminary Conference – Delegate papers, 1985

17: FOL Secretary – Subject files
4100-17/06   Papers – French nuclear testing, boycott etc, 1974

21: FOL Secretary – Overseas labour organisations – correspondence, conferences

4100-21/03/3	General correspondence – ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) 1969-1972
4100-21/03/5	General correspondence – ACTU (Australian Council of Trade Unions) 1974-1978
4100-21/01/2	General Correspondence - overseas

MS 0285: Sonja Margaret Loveday Davies, 1923-2005, Papers

2005-93-78	Australian New Zealand Trade Union Co-ordinating Council Part One, March – October 1984
2005-93-79	Australian New Zealand Trade Union Co-ordinating Council Part Two, March – October 1984

MS 0314: Herbert Otto Roth, 1917-1994, Papers

94-106-58/02	New Zealand Federation of Labour – Records and research notes, April – June 1985
94-106-58/05	New Zealand Federation of Labour – Conference papers, May 1985
94-106-58/07	New Zealand Federation of Labour – Records and research notes, April – June 1986
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95-050-05	National Executive Minutes, 1977-1988
95-050-22	Organisations – New Zealand National Committee for Pacific Economic Cooperation and Organisation etc
95-050-33	Australia and Oceanic Trade Union Co-ordination Committee and Pacific Trade Union Forum
95-050-41	Economic issues – Corp Affairs (mergers and takeovers) and CER (Closer Economic Relations)
95-050-72	Employment and training – Workers education and training, general
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MSX-2407   Minutes and reports, 1983
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