

RECORDER

Official organ of the Melbourne Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History

Issue No. 282—April 2015

IN THIS EDITION:

- Conference Report, by Liam Byrne, pp. 1-2
- Olga Silver Remembered, by Carmel Shute, pp. 2-3
- Surviving POW slave labour and the Nagasaki atomic bomb – Allan Chick's World War II story, by David Palmer, pp. 4-6
- Branch Condolences, by Brian Smiddy, pp. 6-7
- Revisiting a Struggle, by Rowan Cahill, pp. 7-9
- *I'll be there! Songs and stories of solidarity*, by Susanne Provis, p. 9
- *Citizenfour* – A must see, review by Brian Boyd, pp. 9-10
- *Jews and the Left*, review by Lyle Allan, pp. 10-11
- Unionism and Politics, by Peter Love, pp. 11-12
- Branch contacts, p. 12

LABOUR HISTORY CONFERENCE REPORT

By Liam Byrne

The 14th Biennial Labour History conference, 'Fighting Against War: Peace Activism in the Twentieth Century,' made a positive start to this year of commemoration, raising vital questions concerning war, its opponents, and its legacies, from both scholarly and activist-oriented perspectives. Taking place at Queens College, University of Melbourne, delegates from across the country gathered over three days to participate in a wide variety of discussions on these crucial topics.

The three keynote speakers, all of great renown and accomplishment, provide ample examples of the issues questioned and debated at the conference. Professor Marilyn Lake spoke at the conclusion of the first day's proceedings on Australia's foundation narratives, and the competing concepts of egalitarianism and militarism within pre-war political thought. Challenging the prevalent idea that the Australian nation was born in the sacrifice of that ill-fated campaign, Professor Lake examined the spirit of egalitarian and democratic experiment following federation that ground to a halt during the war years.

Day two was capped with a presentation from Professor Bruce Scates, drawing upon his work with Monash University's '100 Stories' project, tracing the experiences of one hundred of those who served during the First World War. Professor Scates provided a powerful example of how the war and its devastating effects can be remembered through utilising the stories of individuals irrevocably changed by the conflict – those who went, and those who stayed behind – challenging mythologies that seek to sanitise its effects. His was a poignant reminder of the power of history to challenge such mythologies and return a voice to those who experienced history personally.

The third day began with the final keynote address from Professor Verity Burgmann and her discussion of radical opponents of the war. She analysed the role of the Industrial Workers of the World as the radical flank of labour that enabled political space for the development of the more moderate movement against conscription. In this, she provided an important historical reminder of the contribution of those prepared to stand by their principles in times of crisis, and the potential this has to transform the state of politics.

These three keynotes were stand-out representations of the important discussions taking place at the conference. But, of course, a conference of this size and stature included many more contributions from a variety of perspectives around the topic of 'fighting for peace.' A simple listing could hardly do justice to the many highlights throughout the days. However I would mention the opening session where I was lucky to participate in discussing 'The War's Beginning.' Every seat was taken and there were plenty of participants standing in the back row to kick start the conference with three papers exploring responses to the outbreak of war. Douglas Newton spoke about the International Women's Movement's opposition to the war, Graham Willett about opposition in Australia, and Andrew Bonnell about protests by the German workers' movement. These three excellent papers encouraged a flurry of questions as this vital question of response was considered and debated. There was an atmosphere of friendly questioning, a desire to know more, and to dig deeper, to draw connections between these topics. It is worth mentioning as this atmosphere of comradely debate and inquest was a hallmark from that session to the last, inspiring an enthused atmosphere amongst participants.

Perhaps this atmosphere was aided by the strong postgraduate contingent at the conference, with graduates from a variety of campuses speaking throughout. It is a mark of labour history's strong ethos of participation and egalitarianism that postgraduates, and non-academics, were without a doubt so centrally involved in the life of the conference, an indicator of what it is that makes such meetings so unique, and so important.

Particular note needs to go to the good deal of hard work put into ensuring that the conference went as fantastically as it did – a great credit to conference organisers, Julie Kimber and Phillip Deery. Both acted in addition as editors of the conference book, which contains fifteen peer-reviewed chapters drawn from papers presented at the conference itself. This is an enduring record of the important discussions that took place, and of the hard work that they both put into making every facet of the gathering a success.

Around the formal gathering were a variety of stalls and activities. Notably, a guided tour of the famous personages who rest in the Melbourne Cemetery, across the road from the college. Led by Peter Love, raconteur-in-chief of the Melbourne branch, and lifelong unionist Albert Littler, this tour gave life to the cemetery's history. Mention should also go to the generous gift of voice provided by the Victorian Trade Union Choir, which regaled delegates before and during the conference dinner with songs of the movement, including those composed by Choir members themselves, in a particular poignant moment of these three days.



Liam at the University of Melbourne Archives

The University of Melbourne Archives also provided their support to the conference, accommodating a special display of material from the campaigns against conscription in 1916 and 1917. The exhibition was curated by Katie Wood, with a little help from me, and aimed to bring participants closer to this crucial period of protest that was so defining to Australian history – including a copy of the labour newspaper *Labor Call* from the campaign and both its censored and uncensored versions.

2015 will be a crucial year for commemoration and discussion on Gallipoli, its meaning, and its effects on how Australia comprehends itself as a nation. All those who participated in this 14th Labour History conference can be proud to have been part of such an exciting and enriching event, aimed at contributing to this discussion, and protecting the legacies of those vital points of resistance that otherwise would risk going unremembered.

Olga Silver Remembered

By Carmel Shute

A big crowd gathered in Clifton Hill on 30 January to pay tribute to veteran Melbourne communist, Olga Silver (18/12/1916 – 23/1/2015), who died at the age of 98 after a long illness.

Olga was born a year before the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 but her life was very much shaped by it. Her father Norm McKissack, a train driver based in Whitfield in northern Victoria, was a socialist who later joined the Communist Party of Australia (CPA).

Olga met her future husband Charles (Charlie) Silver in the Friends of the Soviet Union, an organisation which she helped form in the mid-thirties in Melbourne. They both became active, long-time members of the CPA. For much of her life, Olga worked for different CPA organisations. She went on to outlive the result of the Russian revolution – the USSR – by 24 years. Was it all fated? After all, Olga was named after a ballerina, Olga Petrova, much admired by her father.



Olga would have scoffed at such an irrational suggestion – her politics were forged by the politics of her time. Social being determined her consciousness. And, as it turns out, Olga Petrova was not Russian as her father presumed. It was the stage name of the English dancer, actress and vaudeville star, Muriel Harding, who toured Australia in 1913.

Olga, the eldest of the four children of Norm and Mabel McKissack, was born during the darkest days of the Great War. Australian troops were mired on the

Somme. The people of Australia, including her dad Norm, had just waged a bitter campaign against conscription and would soon face another war.

She started school in Whitfield, walking three miles each way with her brother Bruce from the small farm the family lived on. She later attended Benalla High School and Bright Higher Elementary School.

Olga finished school at the height of the Depression but, through a relative, managed to get a job at the Railway Refreshment Rooms in Melbourne where she threw her lot in with the left, becoming involved with the Eureka Youth League and later the Communist Party.

Olga was active in the Movement Against War and Fascism and remembered walking from the railway staff hostel in the city to the West Melbourne stadium in 1935 for a rally in support of Egon Kisch, the Communist Czechoslovakian writer and journalist, who famously jumped from the ship on Station Pier after being refused entry to Australia by the Lyons Government. He was an early illegal maritime arrival.

At the age of 19, she married Charlie, a dark-haired and rather dashing communist schoolteacher. They had four children – Peter, Lloyd, Michael and Bronwyn. They were both grief-stricken when Peter died of leukaemia in 1955.

When the Menzies Government banned the CPA in June 1940, police raided their house in Hawthorn. In 1942, when the CPA had been made 'legal' again, Olga helped Graeme Bell to organise performances of his jazz band at the Eureka Youth League Hall in North Melbourne.

In the fifties, ASIO noted that Olga was 'active in Mothers' Club'. As secretary of the Glenferrie Primary's Mothers' Club, Olga organised the sprucing up of the nineteenth-century school, carpeting the infants' hall, and installing combustion heaters in the rooms. This sort of political work, making real changes in ordinary people's lives, was to be one of the enduring characteristics of Olga's life. She read and thought a lot and always contributed to debates, but was never an ego-driven speech-ifyer.

Between work, politics and family, Charles and Olga lived a packed and passionate life. At their large Edwardian house, Olga created an impressive garden and threw wonderful Christmas garden parties for the Hawthorn CPA Branch. Olga was a mainstay of the annual Tribune Fair, churning out bottles of much sought-after lemon butter and potting much of the stock for the plant stall.

As Olga's children started in high school, she took up more and more voluntary work, distributing the CPA weeklies, the *Guardian* and then the *Tribune*.



From 1970 to 1990, Olga had paid work at the CPA's International Bookshop. For nearly a decade, she ran the second-hand shop, perched on the 6th floor of 17 Elizabeth Street, 4 floors above the main shop. When the bookshop expanded to take up all the second floor in 1979, Olga moved downstairs and became part of the staff of the main shop. As her co-worker Ken Norling recalls,

By then the International had become something far more than a traditional Communist Party bookshop. It still supplied Marxist classics and Soviet publications but Kathy Gleeson and others had transformed it in the early seventies into a centre of the women's liberation movement, and then under David Hudson's management in the late seventies it became Melbourne's biggest seller of gay literature.

Many of Olga's contemporaries would have found this new stock, and the customers it brought, confronting. Women's liberation was challenging enough; selling countless copies of *The Joy of Gay Sex* certainly wasn't something life in the Communist Party had prepared you for.

Olga may have been a sixty-year-old granny by then, but she wasn't fazed by any of it. She now found herself pricing endless copies of gay potboilers instead of endless copies of the speeches of Nikita Kruschchev, and she loved it.

Over this period, Olga was also an active member of the Australia Vietnam Society. Olga's stoicism was formidable. When faced with an impossible situation, she'd always utter 'Ah well' and just get on with it.

Besides her kindness and good sense of humour, what everyone admired about Olga was how she was up-to-the-minute in her attitudes and politics. It was often said that we would have had socialism in Australia had there been a few more Olga Silvers. She always fought the good fight.

Photographs have been taken from a slide show created for Olga's funeral by her daughter, Bronwyn. A link to the slides is available on the Melbourne Branch's website.

Surviving POW slave labour and the Nagasaki atomic bomb - Allan Chick's World War II story

By David Palmer

The people who were killed or injured by the atomic bombing of Nagasaki in August 1945 were not only Japanese. Thousands were from other countries, including Koreans, Dutch, Britons, Javanese, and Australians. The difference for non-Japanese, however, was that many were used as forced labourers, many of them in Mitsubishi's huge shipyard operations, munitions plants, and coal mine on Takeshima Island just outside Nagasaki Harbour. Many Koreans worked as forced labourers who were nominally paid but under armed guard in company dormitories and while on their jobs. Since the opening of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, a substantial number of Europeans lived in Nagasaki. But World War II changed the city's situation and the character of its labour force when hundreds of Allied Prisoners of War (POWs) were forced to work without pay as slave labour.

These non-Japanese forced labourers suffered a double catastrophe, first as victims of Japan's military-industrial complex, and then as victims of the US atomic bombing of Nagasaki city. Atomic bomb victims, known in Japan as *hibakusha*, have been eligible for full health care and living expenses paid by the Japanese government, but for many years those Koreans who returned to their homeland after World War II were refused these benefits. Japanese and Korean peace activists and atomic bomb survivors started a movement decades ago to change this injustice, which has led to many court cases in Japan. In the past decade most cases have been successful.

Nagasaki peace activists in the last few years extended their movement to also seek recognition of other overseas *hibakusha*, particularly POWs from Europe and the United States. Australian POWs didn't receive these benefits until 2013, when I assisted a team from the Nagasaki Overseas Hibakusha Network, which included long-time peace activist and retired high school teacher Hideto Kimura, in locating Allan Chick, the last surviving Australian former POW who was in Fukuoka POW Camp 14 in the Urakami District where the atomic bomb was dropped.

I located documents in the Australian War Memorial Archives and National Archives of Australia detailing the identity of the 24 repatriated Australian POWs who survived the atomic bombing. I also discovered that author Craig Collie had interviewed Allan Chick in Heyfield a few years ago for his book *Nagasaki*. This led me to contact local RSL (Returned Servicemen's League) representative Sue Artso in Heyfield, who had been in contact with Allan and Anita for a number of years. Sue was instrumental in making the meeting possible between the Nagasaki team and myself with

Allan, which allowed us to complete the Japanese government forms with him.

This effort began because of the role of community researchers of the Nagasaki Overseas Hibakusha Network, led by Nobuto Hirano, with their office located in the local headquarters of the teachers' trade union. Most of the researchers have been trade union members and have worked as teachers, shipyard workers, and a range of other jobs and professions. History - labour history - is a powerful tool these community researchers deal with daily. Their research work has been crucial to collecting documents and conducting interviews with atomic bomb survivors used as evidence in major court cases involving Korean *hibakusha* who have been denied medical benefits and the *hibakusha* living allowance. These activists have also conducted many protests outside the Nagasaki court and have coordinated with community researchers in Hiroshima who have been involved in similar court cases there. Nobuto Hirano had contacts in the United States, the Netherlands, and the U.K. but I was the only contact his group had in Australia, so he was adamant that I should try to find any surviving POWs who were in Nagasaki.



Allan Chick with David Palmer

Allan Chick received an atomic bomb survivor certificate from Nagasaki city officials on 19 June 2013. This happened after I submitted his formal application to the Japanese Consulate in Melbourne, acting for him as power of attorney. Due to his age and physical condition he could not submit the application himself. This was the first time that an application for atomic bomb survivor certification had been lodged through any Japanese diplomatic post. The Consulate forwarded the application to the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Labor in Tokyo for review. Finalisation of the review was done by the Nagasaki City government, which had to verify evidence that Allan had been in the city at the time of the atomic bombing. Nagasaki representatives also needed to verify that Allan was still alive and living in Australia.

The Nagasaki peace activists, Hideto Kimura in particular, were able to get Allan's forms fast-tracked

due to his advanced age. These were approved in Nagasaki city, which has a special government section specifically for *hibakusha* cases. Nagasaki city officials led by Shinichi Goto then flew directly to Australia and presented Allan with the certificate book in Heyfield, Victoria. This was the first time that the Japanese government had directly given an overseas atomic bomb survivor their registration booklet and demonstrates the commitment of the Nagasaki city government to addressing the concerns of *hibakusha*, as well as opposition to nuclear weapons. It stands in contrast to the intransigence of the Japanese national government, which has had to constantly be challenged in court when it has denied benefits to non Japanese atomic bomb survivors living overseas. The story made national news in Japan.

Allan Chick was the only one of the 24 Australian POWs who were incarcerated at Fukuoka Camp 14 and survived the atomic bombing to ever receive the certificate from the Japanese government. He passed away in 2014, only a year after receiving the certificate, but it was a final recognition of his status as an atomic bomb survivor and a former POW who was in Nagasaki. He was born in St. Helens, Tasmania in 1920 where his family fished for a living. At the start of World War II he tried to join the Army even though he was underage. Initially turned back, he finally got in and joined the fight against the Japanese Imperial Army in Timor as part of the ill-fated Sparrow Force. Soldiers in his brigade were captured by the Japanese Imperial Army and were taken as Prisoners of War to Java. He recalled how the Japanese assigned POWs to locations throughout the region controlled by the Imperial Army. Authorities made the captured troops stand in two lines facing each other. One man in the opposite line asked Allan if he would trade places so he could be with his friend, who was next to Allan. He agreed and they switched, but it turned out that those in the line Allan had been in were sent to the Thai-Burma Death Railroad, while those in the line Allan had moved to were shipped to Kyushu in Japan.

Allan's group was put on the Tamahoko Maru with other POWs bound for Kyushu. This dilapidated vessel was like many 'death ships' that carried POWs to Japan that were vulnerable to US submarines that attacked any Japanese ship on the high seas. When an American submarine torpedoed the Tamahoko Maru with 772 POWs and 800 repatriating Japanese aboard, the POWs below deck scrambled up the main hatch on an iron ladder to get to the top deck, but there were so many men in the passage that it became jammed. An Australian mate of Allan's grabbed him and took him underwater through another smaller opening to the surface. Allan had lost consciousness, but when he came to he found himself clinging to a wooden float with an English POW, a Japanese guard and two other POWs. A Japanese naval vessel picked up the Japanese guard but left the three POWs in the sea to die. A Japanese fishing boat finally rescued the men and set them ashore on Kyushu. From there they were taken captive again and sent to Nagasaki.

When Allan arrived in Nagasaki with the other POWs, he was put to work at the foundry that was part of Mitsubishi's shipbuilding and manufacturing complex. Mitsubishi and the Japanese Imperial Army and Navy jointly dominated Nagasaki during the war. Forced labourers used by Mitsubishi included Dutch, Javanese, English, and Australian POWs, and hundreds of Koreans taken from their homeland who had little contact with the POWs. The Japanese also utilised regular paid Japanese workers, but near the end of the war many of these were young students diverted into war production. At Fukuoka POW Camp 14, Allan did not experience the level of brutality that many Australians endured at other Japanese-run POW camps. Nevertheless, conditions were difficult, and a number of POWs in his camp died from disease. Those who did not fully cooperate were beaten.

On 9 August, the day of the atomic bombing, Allan was working at POW Camp 14 with a team fireproofing the storehouse by spreading soil over the roof. He recalled an extremely bright flash but did not remember what happened next. When he regained consciousness all he could see was black everywhere. When dust cleared, he saw small fires and destruction in every direction. Eventually a Japanese guard ordered the surviving POWs onto a road that crossed over Inasa Bridge and then climbed up towards Mount Inasa. Allan and the other POWs remained in Nagasaki until early September, no longer prisoners but waiting to leave Nagasaki when the Allied Occupation could organise their repatriation.



Allan and Anita

When he was back in Tasmania, Allan decided to re-enlist. He returned to join BCOF (British Commonwealth Occupation Forces) based in the Kure-Hiroshima region, which was part of the American-led Allied Occupation and after a while was temporarily reassigned to security duty in Tokyo where the War Crimes Tribunal was being held. He was at Tokyo Station when he ran into an Army friend who was with a young Japanese woman. His friend asked Allan to keep her company while she waited for her half sister, Hiroko. When Allan met Hiroko he knew he had met someone special. They married in Japan a few years

later and returned to Allan's hometown in Tasmania together. Hiroko adopted the name Anita and became one of the first Japanese admitted to Australia since the inception of the White Australia Policy. A number of Australian soldiers returned with Japanese wives, which led to the long process of dismantling this racist immigration policy from the ground up before the final official end to the White Australia Policy under the Whitlam government.

Allan and Anita decided to move to the state of Victoria when a relative arranged for him to get a job in a local saw mill in Heyfield. The two stayed together until the end of their lives, a marriage that spanned more than 60 years. Allan learned to speak Japanese in Japan and still conversed with Anita in Japanese when we met and talked with both of them in Heyfield in April 2013.

The effort to get Allan Chick his Japanese government benefits involved a new level of cooperation between local community groups internationally, but at the grassroots level – one in Nagasaki, and the other, through the RSL in Heyfield. Sue Artso, who assisted in Heyfield, believes that 'the significance is very important – it's Australian history and Allan has played a major role in it – the story must be told.' It is also a very significant part of Japanese history that deserves far more recognition. Allan Chick's story of survival encompasses the terrible history of Nagasaki's destruction from the atomic bomb, with 39,000 deaths and 100,000 casualties, out of a total population of 174,000. But his personal story also helps reveal the experiences of thousands of non-Japanese, including Australian POWs, who were forced to work for Japan's war industry and who never received compensation pay from Mitsubishi.

Death of four notable politicians

By Brian Smiddy



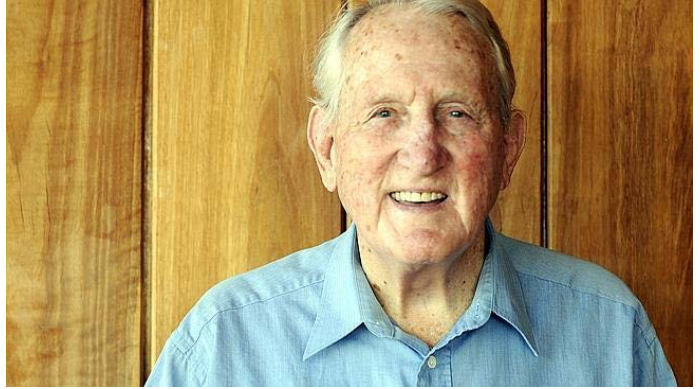
Lynne Kosky

The death of Lynne Kosky on 4 December 2014, left her family and many friends with sad hearts. Lynne was a community minded person, and leader of Save the Bulldogs Campaign and ultimately a board member of the Footscray Football Club. She was a Councillor and Mayor of the City of Footscray. Later as

the State Member of Parliament for Altona and Minister for Education in the Bracks Labor Government.

Following her retirement from Parliament, due to ill health, Lynne continued to serve the community through the Victoria University and other organisations associated with the Western suburbs.

Deepest sympathies are extended to Lynne's family and friends.



Tom Uren

Tom Uren, a hero to the working class, died on 26 January 2015, after a life time of service to his country, both as a soldier and a Parliamentarian.

Tom left school at thirteen to become a boxer. On his twenty-first birthday he was fighting in World War II in Timor. Later on he was a prisoner of the Japanese on the infamous Thai-Burma railway. He saw the sky change colour over Nagasaki after the atom bomb was dropped.

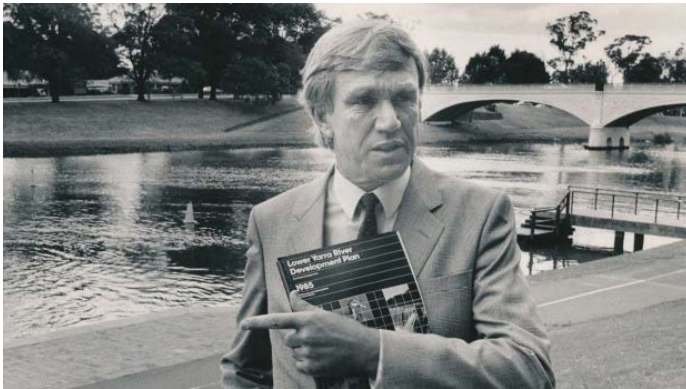
After his discharge from the Army he joined the Labor Party on his way to the funeral of Ben Chifley, the former Labor Prime Minister.

It was while living in Guildford in 1958 that he won the Western suburban seat of Reid in the Federal Parliament. He went on to serve in both the Whitlam and Hawke Labor Governments.

One of his most notable achievements as a Minister was an improvement in the quality of the environment. He retired from Parliament in 1990.

Tom had a life time of service to the Peace Movement, notably opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. He was the first Labor Member of Parliament to question support for the American intervention in Vietnam in 1962.

Tom lived until he was 93. His life was lived to the full and we thank him for his service to his country. He will remain a hero to people who believe in the cause of Peace. To his family we extend our sympathies on his passing.



Evan Walker

Evan Walker, the father of urban renewal died on the 15 February 2015. His death closes a chapter on urban renewal which is unlikely to be seen again in this century.

Evan was Minister for Planning in the John Cain Labor Government elected in 1982. He was responsible for the development of Southbank and also the installation of lights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. One of his other successes as a Minister is the Heritage Protection of Collins Street. Many people proclaim Evan as one the best planning ministers we have had since the portfolio was created in 1974.

John Cain remarked on Evan's passing that 'he understood what cities can and should be'. Further 'he made planning for the long term the goal – it was not about tomorrow's headlines'. We extend to Evan's family, our deepest sympathies on his passing.



Malcolm Fraser

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the death of Malcolm Fraser. Though his historical legacy for those of us in the Labor/labour movement is mixed, he will be fondly remembered for his important contributions to anti-apartheid, refugees, and more recently Australia's place in its region and the role of our military alliance with the United States. With the death of Whitlam, and now Fraser, another significant and tumultuous chapter in Australian history is closed.

REVISITING A STRUGGLE: PORT KEMBLA, 1938

Rowan Cahill ruminates on the premiere screening of the documentary film Pig Iron Bob (Why Documentaries: Sandra Pires, Producer and Director) in Wollongong, 21 March 2014.

By Rowan Cahill

I first met legendary Australian left-wing journalist Rupert Lockwood (1908-1997) in 1969. He had not long returned from a lengthy journalistic assignment in Moscow, and was in the process of leaving the Communist Party of Australia, which he had joined in 1939. We became friends, and eventually I wrote an account of his life and work. Meeting Rupert was, for me, an eye-opener in many ways. In his time Rupert had been a well-connected journalist with a great deal of insider knowledge and access to leaks. Listening to his accounts of Australian politics and history was like travelling with Dr Who through an alternative politico-historical universe; same key people and events, but hugely different with loads of forgotten/ignored characters and working people with agency. In his accounts were the seeds of my versions of, and approaches to, 'radical history'.

One story that got me hooked was his account of an event in Canberra, December 1938, on the eve of the parliamentary Christmas break. The previous month, Port Kembla waterside workers (wharfies) on the south coast of NSW had placed a ban on the loading of an Australian export cargo of 'pig-iron' on the British steamer Dalfram, bound for Japan. Their action, they explained, was in protest against the Sino-Japanese war, in progress since July 1937, and they did not want to assist the Japanese war effort.

Further, they argued, war between Japan and Australia was a distinct future possibility, in which case Australia could well be on the receiving end of strategic materials it exported to Japan. The conservative Lyons government, in accord with its policy of appeasement and friendship towards Japan, denounced the ban, arguing the wharfies were trying to dictate foreign policy, the preserve of the government.

Attorney General Robert Menzies (hatefully dubbed 'Pig-Iron Bob' by the wharfies) vigorously sought to end the ban, eventually deploying the harsh provisions of the *Transport Workers Act* against the wharfies, bringing a bleak Christmas to them and their families, and to the local community which largely supported them, and permanently threatening their long-term employment. At various times during the 1930s, Menzies expressed his admiration for the public order and anti-trade union solutions of Mussolini and Hitler.

The Port Kembla dispute became the focus of national attention until its resolution with a compromise in January 1939. Its achievements were political, placing the politics and foreign policy of the conservative government under scrutiny in a way they had previously escaped. It also added the tactic of 'political strike' to the arsenal of the Australian trade union movement, one that would be later deployed with great international effect in the 1946-49 bans by Australian unions which prevented vital Dutch shipping and strategic supplies leaving Australian ports during the struggle for Indonesian independence from Dutch colonial rule.

In 1938, Rupert Lockwood was a young *Melbourne Herald* journalist, a rising star in the burgeoning press empire of Sir Keith Murdoch, and a senior galleryman. But he was leftish in sympathies. He had not long returned from a lengthy roving assignment abroad, reporting from Asia and Europe. In China he had seen the Japanese invasion up close and personal. He had visited Nazi Germany. More recently he had been under fire, reporting sympathetically from the Republican lines of the Spanish Civil War.

In the December sitting of Parliament before the Christmas break Lockwood watched and listened as quixotic Labor MP Maurice Blackburn made an eloquent and stirring speech in support of the Port Kembla wharfies and their ban. Blackburn was a politician Lockwood admired and respected, in his estimation a parliamentary rarity, a democrat in theory and practice, and a person who remained true to his principles no matter what.

Blackburn told the House the action taken by the wharfies 'will have the sympathy, silent support, and as far as possible, active support of the people of this country, and not only the working class. I believe that the Government is making a gigantic mistake in attacking these men'.

The speech touched Lockwood deeply. And Lockwood agreed with the arguments of the wharfies. His experiences in Asia had led him to believe war with Japan was inevitable. Subsequently, at the Canberra press gallery's annual break-up dinner, Lockwood, as a senior galleryman, was called upon to toast the guest, Attorney General Menzies. Both men had attended the same elite Melbourne private school; both came from the same part of rural Victoria; their fathers knew one another; both were gifted public speakers.

In his toast Lockwood caustically congratulated Menzies for his humanitarianism in recognising the lack of iron in the diet of the Chinese people and his efforts to rectify this deficiency via the bomb racks of Japanese aircraft. Scuffles between journalists erupted as a consequence of the toast. Lockwood was assaulted, other journalists joined the affray, blood was shed. Menzies was livid.

The rest is history. Menzies contacted his political ally, Murdoch, and expressed displeasure regarding Lockwood. Murdoch ordered Lockwood to toe the line, which Lockwood refused, thus extinguishing his status as a rising star. Menzies, derisively and widely known henceforth as 'Pig-Iron Bob', an appellation that upset him, eventually went on to become Australian Prime Minister (1949-1966), and was/is regarded as an icon by conservatives. Lockwood went on to become an iconic leftist journalist, eventually throwing his lot in with the wharfies, editing the *Maritime Worker*, journal of the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF) of Australia, for thirty years. Both men remained implacable lifetime foes. Lockwood's account of the Port Kembla ban, *War on the Waterfront* (1987), is well worth reading.



All this came vividly to mind on Saturday night (March 21), in Wollongong Town Hall, not far from the port where the Dalfram was delayed for over two-months in 1938/39. I, and some 800 others, were there to see the premiere screening of the new film by producer and director Sandra Pires, *Pig Iron Bob* (Why Documentaries, 2015).

For her sympathetic film about the Dalfram dispute, lovingly crafted over some five years and financed on a small budget, Pires recreated scenes, interviewed survivors, travelled to China and sites of the rapacious brunt of Japanese militarism, and liberated rare footage from archives. Her film also pays due credit to the leader of the dispute, Ted Roach, just turned twenty-nine years of age, his lifelong activism often under/downplayed by historians.

Ted Roach (1909-1997) had been elected to office earlier in 1938 as Secretary of the South Coast Branch of the WWF. Born in the small coal-mining community of Coledale north of Port Kembla, subsequently raised in the steeltown of Newcastle, he had left school at 13, and was something of a pugilist, having attended a local gym; one of his brothers became an Australian featherweight champion. Various itinerant worker, steelworker, cane-cutter, political organiser, wharfie, Roach was a believer in the philosophy of direct action. In later life he served two prison terms for his radicalism, including a long stretch in solitary, and was one of the national leaders of the WWF between 1942-67. During 1946-49, Roach was prominent in the leadership of the Indonesian independence solidarity bans by Australian unions against Dutch

imperialism, having learned the ropes, so to speak, in Port Kembla with the Dalfram.

Thank you, Sandra Pires, for a great piece of film making, a wonderful tribute to a principled moment in Australian history, and a reminder of what a relative 'handful' of ordinary people, 180 workers in this case, and a supportive community, can do when they put conscience above profiteering and what passes for 'law', and for the glimpse of something that tends to be excised from national narratives of the 1930s – a reprehensible Australian ruling class, elements of which were treacherously comfortable with, and accommodating towards, Japanese militarism and imperialism.

Rowan's thesis on Lockwood can be read at <http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/3942>

***I'll be there!* Songs and stories of solidarity**

By Susanne Provis

The Victorian Trade Union Choir show '*I'll be there!* Songs and stories of solidarity' continues to delight audiences and, as one of the major sponsors of the initial development, Melbourne branch members will be pleased that the show is still spreading the word about the importance of organised labour for major achievements, such as working hours and collective bargaining for wages and conditions; and for individual struggles, like bullying and unfair dismissal. A series of linked vignettes tell funny, scary and moving personal stories of the power of individual and collective action and celebrate workers' achievements in song.

Following sell-out shows in Trades Hall (2012), La Mama (2013) and the Unitarian Church in East Melbourne (October 2014), the choir began a regional tour, partnering with the Geelong Trades Hall Council and Gippsland Trades and Labour Council to perform to enthusiastic audiences in Geelong (November) and Morwell (December). Local papers and radio stations ran stories about the shows, which were also strongly promoted through social media and websites. The Morwell show even made local TV. The regional shows were financed by a very successful Pozible campaign, Bush and Mine Fire Recovery funding for Morwell and some in-kind support from the local TLCs. Discussions have begun with Ballarat Trades Hall and with a community group in Castlemaine for performances later in 2015.

The first performance this year will be at the Footscray Community Arts Centre May Day events on Friday 1 May. These begin with the 2015 George Seelaf Address given by Dr John Lack (4-6pm), a mini butchers picnic (5.30-7.30pm) and culminate with *I'll Be There!* at 7.30pm. <http://footscrayarts.com/events/category/event/> FCAC 45 Moreland Street, Footscray 9362 8888.

***Citizenfour* – A must see**

A review of *Citizenfour* (Directed by Laura Poitras)

By Brian Boyd

Keepers of the labour movement and all progressive thinking Australians need to see this documentary film. The 2013 revelations about the omnipresent American spy machine by US National Security Agency (NSA) whistle-blower Edward Snowden have had a greater impact and reach than most similar exposés over the last four decades. It is a story worth knowing.



But does the claim Snowden 'changed history' stack up? Just like the damning material released by WikiLeaks a couple of years earlier (by Assange and Manning) concerning the brutality of how the US conducts war, the NSA, CIA and other 'unknown knowns' have already recovered and re-jigged their respective massive surveillance juggernauts to an even higher level of capability.

If anyone is under the illusion that the spies have backed off because of 'embarrassment' they would be sadly mistaken. This is not to take anything away from Snowden's brave and personal sacrifice in bringing his batch of classified material to light.

Filmmaker Laura Poitras and *Guardian* journalists Glenn Greenwald and Ewan MacAskill bring a real life spy drama into the international public domain, in almost real time. Back in June-July 2013 they met Edward Snowden in a Hong Kong hotel room. Soon after the stories of NSA global spying went viral.

Citizenfour captures the tense, almost fraught atmosphere in the room as the filmmaker and the two reporters work to gain the trust of the, by now, missing NSA operative. Paranoia is palpable. When the phone rings everybody jumps. Are they about to be raided? Snowden tells them all their phones and laptops will now be bugged, even when not in use and even turned off. Hand written notes become the order of the day, held up to be read with no words spoken. The notes are then ripped up and disposed of.

A key element of the story is the synthesising of Snowden's massive data cache into digestible chunks for the print media. The revelation that Britain's GCHQ is a NSA lapdog for spying, where the Americans 'can't go', is startling. The lies told by various senior US military and political leaders at Congressional hearings are blatant. While the segment on an earlier NSA whistle blower, William Binney, giving testimony to a German parliamentary hearing puts Snowden in a wider, linear context of the US world surveillance effort on behalf of its huge military-industrial complex.

Mass collection of all human communication data is not new, Binney calmly recounted from his wheelchair. In the 1990s he was given the one-man job of coming up with the methodology to achieve this, more comprehensively and easier than ever before, exploiting the rapidly advancing and morphing IT, WWW, phenomenon. The US came up with Operation Stellar Wind and the British invented Operation Tempura. Regardless of the constant denials by the '5 Eyes' joint spy operations, these and related programs quickly developed the capability of harvesting every electronic signal around the globe, 24/7, 365 days a year – meta data AND content.

During the taping of the Snowden debriefing the journalists learn from other sources that there are more than 1.2 million people on a global intelligence watch-list. They also are told that all main intelligence authorisations lead back to POTUS – the President Of The United States. Footage of Obama promising to end the excesses of George W. Bush is spliced into the film for effect.

Also spliced in are shots of many of the NSA facilities around the world. One long distance shot shows a huge new NSA complex currently being constructed in the vacant expanses of the mid-west. We are informed it will house all electronic data for all time. Much of the material in the film has had some airing in the public domain. To see it as it unfolds, and as its impact shocks the power elites, makes it well worth seeing.

The threat of the fanatics is an issue our police and security agencies should monitor. However, like Menzies in the 1950s and a number of successive Prime Ministers since (eg Howard and Rudd) Abbott has politically beat-up selected aberrations – including the 'lone wolf' Man Haron Monis – to justify the need for even more extreme 'anti-terror' laws. No evidence of systemic failure within the judiciary, law enforcement or the social services regime was put forward. But hard won democratic, civil, social and industrial rights in Australia have increasingly become jeopardised.

Many commentators speculated without being challenged that Abbott was just 'talking tough' in order to try to shore up his diminished leadership status. *Citizenfour* highlights how far mass surveillance has come and more importantly what its scope is about to exponentially become. And *Citizenfour* is like George Orwell's *1984*, but re-visited one thousand fold. A must see for every 21st century social activist.

Jews and the Left

A Review of Philip Mendes, *Jews and the Left. The Rise and Fall of a Political Alliance* (Houndmills, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), \$134.95.

By Lyle Allan

Associate Professor Philip Mendes is Director of the Social Inclusion and Social Policy Research Unit in the Department of Social Work at Melbourne's Monash University. He is well known and widely published as an author of several books on the politics of Jews, which include *New Left, the Jews and the Vietnam War* (1993), as well as joint editor, with Geoffrey Brahm Levey, of the book *Jews and Australian Politics* (2004). This book is an elaborate treatment of Jewish politics on a world scale from the immediate post-revolutionary France to the present. The book refers to Left/Jewish involvement in 37 individual countries, including Australia, plus a small treatment of Asia, including individual Jews supporting Mao in China and the brief rule of David Marshall as the first Chief Minister of Singapore.

The definition of a Jew is adapted from American academic Arthur Liebman. It is wide, and includes self-definition, regard by political peers, and having one or both parents who regard themselves as Jewish. The term Left is harder to define. It was first used during the French Revolution, when those groups seeking a broader franchise sat at the left of the National Assembly. Mendes uses the term for those groups seeking a more equal distribution of wealth.

The hammer and sickle on the spine is misleading. The primary focus of the book is not about Communism. Mendes lists five time periods encompassing key left-wing traditions and movements. These commence with the French Revolution of 1789; the revolutions of 1848, with this period including the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx; the establishment of the Communist International in 1918; the emergence after 1965 of non-orthodox Left groups including Maoist, Trotskyist and gay-rights groups; and the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

It is an oversimplification to suggest that poverty and religious oppression are the root causes of Jewish attraction to the Left. There is a theoretical treatment of Jewish cultural values, and it is suggested that socialism, being an urban phenomenon, attracted support from Jews who were both city-dwelling and intellectual. Jews benefited from the egalitarian ideals of the French revolution, and were strong participants in the failed revolutions throughout Europe in 1848. Not all Jews supported left causes, and some rabbis, particularly in the Russian Empire, were unhappy with Jews – particularly intellectuals – who did.

Some leftists, particularly those in the early British labour movement, were clearly anti-Semitic. Beatrice Webb, for example, a leading member of the British Fabian Society, argued that the strongest impelling motive of the Jewish race was the love of money. In the 1890s the London Trades Union Council condemned Jewish immigration.

Bolshevism was not a Jewish phenomenon. The Jewish presence among early Bolsheviks, while significant, was not excessive. More Jews had been involved in the Mensheviks than the Bolsheviks. Communist declarations critical of Zionists, Jews who supported the creation of a Jewish homeland, date from 1921. Communists generally sought to downplay such attitudes, for they could be harmful to the Communist cause among Jews in non-Soviet countries.

The establishment of the Jewish Autonomous Oblast centred on Birobidzhan in the Soviet Far East in 1934, sometimes called a 'new Jerusalem' or even a 'Jewish homeland', may have been part of a policy to influence sympathetic Jews outside the Soviet Union. Few Jews ever lived there. A scheme for a Jewish settlement in the Kimberley region of Western Australia was proposed in the late 1930s by Isaac Steinberg, Minister of Justice in Lenin's first government. Arthur Calwell was a key opponent of the scheme, and it was never adopted. The state of Israel was established as a Jewish homeland in 1948, ironically with combined support from the Soviet Union, the United States and Australia.

The largest Jewish population in Europe prior to the Holocaust was in Poland. Here left wing parties were the only ones consistently willing to accept Jewish members. Few Jews remain in present day Poland. Mendes refutes as demonstrably false the claim, first made in 1950s Poland, alleging cooperation between Zionists and Nazis during World War II.

Another claim often made is the Jewish nature of the first Communist government in Europe after that of the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Hungarian Soviet Republic led by Bela Kun that lasted about five months in 1919. Kun, despite having a Jewish father, led a government with clear anti-Semitic leanings, a fact that is relatively unknown.

Much of the Communist leadership in both the Soviet Union and its satellites after World War II feared that too many Jews in high positions would alienate the party from its support base among workers and peasants. For example, Rákosi, the feared Stalinist party boss in Hungary, was replaced as Prime Minister after the death of his mentor in 1953. Soviet secret police chief Beria claimed that Rákosi had become a 'Jewish king' and that this was not in the Soviet interest. His replacement, the moderate non-Jew Imre Nagy, later supported the popular uprising in 1956.

Australian content is only a small part of the book. The Jewish activity in the Australian Communist Party is important but not overwhelming. Frank Hardy is

praised for his sympathetic portrayal of Jews in his book *Power Without Glory*. The most significant left Jewish organisation in Australia is considered to be the non-Communist Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism, of which Sam Cohen, elected to the Senate in 1961 on the ALP ticket, was a prominent member. There are currently a number of Jewish parliamentarians from left parties in Australia, two from Victoria being Mark Dreyfus and Michael Danby. Former Melbourne *Age* and *Truth* newspaper journalist Leon Gettler, author of a book about the Steinberg proposals for Jewish settlement in the Kimberleys, credits the ALP's Annastacia Palaszczuk, with the distinction of being Australia's first Jewish Premier. Nick Greiner, the Hungarian-born Liberal Premier of New South Wales from 1988-92, has a Jewish mother and is probably entitled to that honour.

Jewish attraction to left causes suffered after the Israel-French-British invasion of Egypt and the Suez Canal in 1956, and later after the Six-Day War in 1967. Many Jews continued to be active, however, supporting particular left positions. For example, a number of Australian Jews were prominent in the leadership of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Norman Rothfield and Sam Goldbloom, who were both left-wing members of the ALP, were particularly strong activists. Since the 1970s each of the various Communist parties in Australia, as well as the various Trotskyist organisations after the 1980s, have advocated anti-Israel and anti-Zionist policies. One Trotskyist organisation advocated an independent Croatia in the 1980s. Bizarrely it sold newspapers outside Ante Pavelić Dom, a Croatian centre in Footscray named after the leader of the pro-Axis Croatian state that existed during World War II.

This book is an important source of information about Jewish involvement in the Left, and offers sensible explanations rather than propaganda about the role played by Jews in radical politics. The book is expensive, and a cheaper paperback version would almost certainly see better sales.

Unionism and Politics

By Peter Love

At a Fabian Forum on 18 February 2015 three trade union leaders addressed the question 'Your Rights at Work – Worth Fighting For?' In giving an emphatically affirmative answer they addressed the place of modern unionism and its role in Australian politics.

Tim Kennedy, National Secretary of the National Union of Workers, declared that unions must go well beyond traditional wages and conditions negotiations if they are to serve a useful purpose in the contemporary world. Union density is at crisis levels. Under attack from all sides – militant employers, neoliberal radicals and their institutional tools in Royal Commissions and

the 'Sack 'Em and Sell It' brigade at the Productivity Commission – unions need to fight back. In doing so, they need to be something more than just a cheer squad for the ALP. They need to organise on the shop floor, train more delegates and take decisive action to win disputes and support in the wider community. Unions should be more activist rather than defensive, as in a recent case where rather than picket a factory, workers occupied part of it and, as a result got a better and more speedy resolution of their claims. Active, energetic and assertive unions are the only way to lift low wages and reduce inequality in Australia.

Luke Hilakari, Secretary of Victorian Trades Hall Council, explained the principles of the independent organising campaign that the Victorian union movement conducted so successfully during the last Victorian election. The first priority is to build recognition of unions within our own 'frame of reference', to project unions to their own members and the community in more positive terms than those of their detractors in public media. In a clear eyed way, unions identified the marginal seats that would be necessary to change the Government and set to work in mobilising 4,000 unionists in each of those seats. More precisely, the unionists chosen for each of the seats were those working in fields that were 'hot' issues in the area, TAFE teachers in some, Firefighters, Paramedics, Nurses and Midwives in others, all in 'uniform'. The principal focus in the 93,000 door knocks was to convince people to pledge their vote for labour and, by implication, the ALP. The distinction was crucial to the strategy of having the message delivered by people voters could trust. This was supplemented with some 98,000 follow-up phone calls. The results of the strategy were clear, as were the implications for the discussion of the relationship between unions and the ALP.

Sally McManus, Secretary of the NSW Branch of the Australian Services Union, emphasised the role that unions have in defending and improving the living standards of ordinary working people by confronting, head-on and in every domain where it is expressed, neoliberal ideology. She explored several domains within the multi-faceted assault on workers' rights at work and, hence, their living standards. The neoliberal/employer offensive must be confronted at every turn, whether it be in the mass media, the public sphere generally, at Royal Commissions or in the put-up job that is the current Productivity Commission enquiry timed to present a revised 'official', 'independent' WorkChoices policy framework for the next federal election. Unions' role in politics is to fight this on every front to protect living standards.

Two weeks later the ACTU and its affiliates organised a series of mass rallies (*March 4 March*) to fight for our rights against the unrelenting hostility of the Abbott government. They were very well attended at sites across Australia. In Melbourne a particularly wide range of unions, activist associations and community organisations boosted the numbers and

displayed the impressive range of people who have been attacked or threatened by the Abbott government and its punitive 2014 budget. Many of the problems arising from that belligerent blueprint included the funding of Higher Education, which remains a hot issue, as does the attack on poor people in their various guises.



Rachel and Dustin Halse at March 4 March - Pic by Peter Love

The more active engagement of the unions in politics is evident in both the refinement of campaign strategies and the maintenance of political momentum against Coalition governments, their supporters and urgers in institutions and at the big end of town.

Melbourne Branch ASSLH Contacts

President: Peter Love <plove@swin.edu.au>

Secretary: Brian Smiddy <tel: 9435 5145>

Treasurer: Phillip Deery <phillip.deery@vu.edu.au>

Website: <http://www.asslh.org.au/branches/melbourne>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LabourHistoryMelbourne>

Instagram: [instagram.com/labourhistorymelbourne](https://www.instagram.com/labourhistorymelbourne)

Recorder is published three times a year. The opinions of the contributors are their own and not necessarily those of the editor or executive of the ASSLH, Melbourne Branch. Send all contributions and queries to the editor, Julie Kimber (jkimber@swin.edu.au). Commentary not attributed to an author is written by the editor. *Recorder* is published with the generous help of Ellen and Brian Smiddy and Kevin Davis.