

RECORDER

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Trades Hall: Living Heritage Restoration

Peter Love

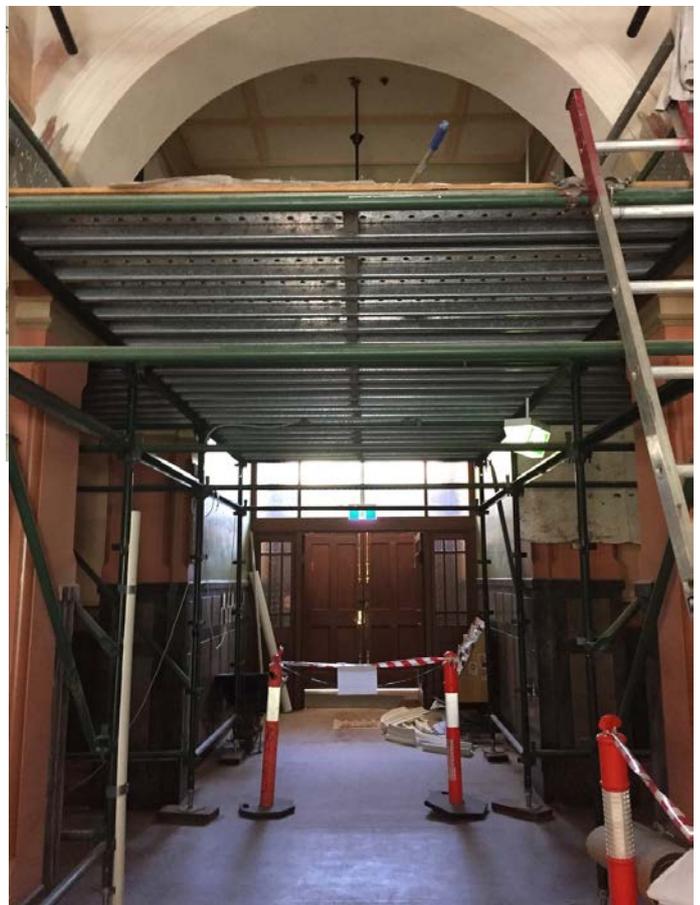
As many readers will recall, Melbourne Trades Hall was allocated \$10m under the Living Heritage program in the 2016 Victorian Budget. To the casual observer, it appears that not much has happened since then. There is the work going on in the Lygon Street foyer to preserve and restore the commemorative details of the victories in defeating Hughes in the Conscription plebiscites of 1916-17. As repairs to that section were urgent, they were undertaken as a separate project. The action on the Living Heritage project has, so far, been in the architectural and engineering planning stages.

The main work planned for the ground floor is the installation of a disability lift which will transform access to the first floor for many people who have so far had to make do with the rather inadequate lift in the 1960s wing of the Hall. Some new 'conveniences/amenities' as well as kitchen facilities will be added upstairs to enable greater public use of all the meeting rooms. The steps from the Victoria Street Hall will be repaired, although it is not clear how the balance between heritage wear and tear and current safety requirements will be resolved.

The substantial restoration works will be to the Old Council Chamber; the Old Ballroom (currently Bella Union) and the New Ballroom. The New Council Chamber (current one) was considered to be substantially beyond the scope of heritage restoration because most of it was a 1960s rebuild after the disastrous fire. There will only be funding for repair of the original honour rolls on the north side of that chamber. We, the union movement, will have to find the funds for the transformation of, what many agree, is a less-than-ideal space! Plans for how that will be done are currently under discussion.

Work is to begin in June-July and be completed in February-March 2018. Those of us who have experience of

heritage restoration work can only wish the Trades Hall and Literary Institute Committee good luck with that timetable. If the Old Council Chamber is to be returned to its late 19th century splendour, as we all hope, the work is sure to be meticulous and time-consuming. No matter how brisk or tardy the progress, we can expect to be kept up-to-date and, when different stages of the work have been finished, be invited to inspect and rejoice in the restoration of our Hall.



Victorian Trades Hall. Photograph by Peter Love.

Ken Inglis in History: A Laconic Colloquium

Frank Bongiorno

Monash University, Caulfield Campus, 24-25 November 2016

Ken Inglis is one of the giants of Australian history, a leading member of that generation of scholars who entered university soon after the end of the Second World War and did so much to shape the profession in the decades that followed. While his work has mainly been in the broader field of social history, he has strong links to labour history. His Oxford doctorate on the churches and the working classes in Victorian England was supervised by the guild socialist G.D.H. Cole and, informally (and more substantially), by Asa Briggs, the spiritual founder of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. Inglis also supervised several theses in the field of labour history, including – with the late Barry Smith – my own on the early history of the Victorian Labor Party.

The recent conference – or, rather, ‘Laconic Colloquium’ – hosted by Monash University in his honour, touched on most of the major aspects and phases of his long and distinguished career. Ken’s own presence at the conference, and his occasional timely interventions and recollections, were among the occasion’s highlights.

Several of Ken’s closest friends and colleagues in the profession were among the speakers. Bill Gammage, one of the colloquium’s conveners, opened proceedings. Gammage taught with Inglis at the University of Papua New Guinea and as the author of *The Broken Years* (1974), was instrumental with him in reviving interest in the history of Australia in the First World War. As in so many of the other presentations, Ken’s role as an encourager and mentor was in evidence; he had done much to give this talented country boy a start in academia. Inglis’s sister Shirley Lindenbaum, a professor of anthropology who pursued her career in the United States, then provided an account of Inglis’s engagement with that discipline which gave fresh insights into the academic roots of his career-long interest in ritual – most famously in his distinguished work on Anzac.

The remainder of the first day followed Ken’s career more or less chronologically, with an entertaining (and occasionally rollicking) collection of reminiscences from the Pacific historian Gavan Daws – read by Judy Turner – recalling those lively times at the University of Melbourne in the post-war years; Stuart Macintyre taking us through Inglis’s earliest journalistic writings and studies at Melbourne and Oxford; and Peter Browne picking up on Inglis’s contributions to Tom Fitzgerald’s *Nation*. We then followed Inglis around Australia and beyond: to the University of Adelaide with Robert Dare, to Canberra and the Australian National University with Di Langmore, and then off to Papua New Guinea with Ian

Maddocks, a medical academic who worked at that institution alongside Inglis. We encounter Inglis as a youthful vice-chancellor of the still young University of Papua New Guinea in the 1970s. Inglis, we learn, was good at this job and respected by staff and students, but university administration was not his vocation. Still, PNG had a profound impact; Inglis once told me that for years after their time there, he and his wife Amirah, if told by somebody that something was so, were in the habit of asking themselves: would it be so in PNG?

The fears of John La Nauze that Port Moresby might be the end of Inglis as a historian proved unfounded. Inglis would return to the ANU in 1975, this time to the Research School of Social Sciences, where he would spend the remainder of his career apart from occasional visiting posts overseas. On each step of the way, he was accompanied by Amirah, a formidable historian and author in her own right. Judith Keene discussed their partnership at the end of the first day, shortly before many of those present made the journey from Caulfield to Carlton to celebrate with a dinner in Inglis’s honour at his alma mater, Melbourne University. The films of Ken being interviewed by his grandchildren will long be remembered by those present, as will the Inglis family sing-along; all with original Ken Inglis words (A talented lyricist, Ken was once kind enough to produce a stanza on me, when I was one of his PhD students, which rhymed ‘laugh warm and raucous’ with ‘pledge and caucus’. I was, of course, working on the Labor Party.)



Frank Bongiorno and Phillip Deery at the colloquium. Photo by Julie Kimber

The second day was more thematically organised: Janet McCalman explored Ken’s earliest books: one on the Royal Melbourne Hospital – a commission that doubled as Inglis’s master’s thesis – and the book of his Oxford doctoral dissertation, on the *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (1963). Bob Wallace, an economist who worked with Inglis at Adelaide and was active with him in progressive political causes there in the 1950s, surveyed Inglis’s role in and writings on the Stuart Affair, the case involving the Aboriginal circus-worker Rupert Max Stuart who was sentenced to hang for the rape and murder of a nine-year-old girl. The Wallaces revealed

that Inglis was even more involved in the day-to-day campaign to save Stuart's life than at least some of us imagined; his famous book on the case was very much a participant history. The Wallaces' account of Inglis's much later meeting with Stuart, by which time he was a respected Arrernte elder, was particularly striking.

Inglis is now probably best known, both in Australia and internationally, as a historian of war and memory. The session that followed included a paper by Bruce Scates, the leading historian of Australian battlefield pilgrimage, that took us back to Inglis's part in, and writings on, the 1965 'return' to Gallipoli by First World War veterans. Scates based his paper not only on Inglis's published writings of the trip, such as those in the *Canberra Times* (Ken was officially their correspondent), but also on unpublished manuscripts in Inglis's papers. Annette Becker, a distinguished French historian of the First World War, then reflected on Inglis's famous work on war memorials, which culminated in *Sacred Places* (1998), and its place in the international context of work on that subject. This session, appropriately enough, was followed by a performance of the first movement of 'Gallipoli' by the Australian soldier-composer, Frederick Septimus Kelly.

The final afternoon of the conference produced in me that feeling you sometimes get when confronted with the achievements of a historian of Inglis's eminence and productivity: when did he sleep? There was Glyn Davis, Melbourne University vice-chancellor and himself the author of a major study of the ABC, on Inglis's work as an historian of the national public broadcaster – not just the first time round, as the commissioned author of *This is the ABC* (1982) with access to its internal archives, but later as the author of *Whose ABC?* (2006), where Inglis took up the story from 1983 from the public record. Davis explained how Inglis's interest in the subject came out of his own engagement, from childhood onwards, with an organisation whose lifespan (born 1932) very closely matches his own (born 1929). We were also reminded that Inglis had to endure the threat of legal action from Charles Moses, the long-serving ABC general manager, who hadn't liked something or other that appeared in *This is the ABC*.

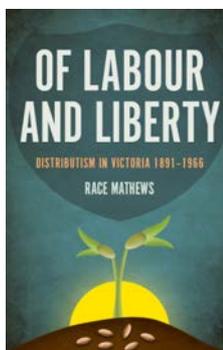


Ken Inglis. Photograph by Julie Kimber

Seumas Spark, who coordinated the gathering and is currently collaborating with Inglis, reported on their work-in-progress about the experiences of, and impact on Australian life, of the Dunera migrants. Another of the gathering's organisers, Jay Winter, a distinguished cultural historian of World War I and frequent visitor to Australia, then paid tribute to his friend's literary gifts. Inglis's prose has always been open and inclusive, as if welcoming a friend into a conversation, and Winter captured these qualities vividly. In the final session, Joy Damousi discussed her experience of Inglis as a PhD supervisor, while Graeme Davison recalled two important Inglis contributions to Australian historiography and public life: his address at a 1964 conference held at the ANU that gave rise to his ground-breaking *Meanjin* article, 'The Anzac Tradition' (1965); and his role in the conception, leadership and execution of the multi-volume *Australians: A Historical Library* (1987), with its innovative 'slice' method of focussing on particular years (1838, 1888, 1938) – an Inglis idea.

Conferences of this kind, or even laconic colloquia, are part retrospective, part tribute, part family reunion – the family, in this case, being literally Ken's own – who had come together from around the world – as well as the 'family' of scholars, historians and writers that inevitably coalesces over the years around a great and respected elder. I've been to quite a few of these kinds of occasions over the years, and this one was as warm and enjoyable as any of them. The obvious success of the event had much to do with the esteem in which Inglis is held by so many people for his achievements, modesty and generosity, as well as his own contribution over the two days. Rae Frances, the Dean of Arts at Monash University, deserves the gratitude of the historical profession for her support of the occasion, and Bill Gammage, Jay Winter and Seumas Spark are to be congratulated for bringing everyone together with just the right balance of organisation and spontaneity to make it all work.

Of Labour and Liberty



Race Mathews' new book *Of Labour and Liberty: Distributism in Victoria 1891-1966* follows on from his 2009 publication *Jobs of Our Own: Building a Stakeholder Society*, which located the origins of distributism in the social movements of England, and explained its application in the worker co-operatives in Spain. A wide ranging text, *Of Labour and Liberty* revisits the question and considers whether it is possible to 'reshape economics along democratic lines in a way that genuinely serves the interests of the community'. Published by Monash University Publishing, it is available for purchase for \$34.95AU. Go to <http://www.publishing.monash.edu/books/oll-9781925495331.html>

Danny Spooner

Margaret Walters

Danny Spooner (16 December 1936 – 3 March 2017) was an archetypal troubadour, singing a rich variety of songs from the folk traditions of the British Isles, North America and Australia and travelling the world sharing these songs with anecdotes illuminating the social history behind them. He sang with rare warmth, winning the hearts and imaginations of his audience with his humour and conviction. Through his own work and life experiences Danny was drawn to songs that illuminated working-class and social history and he was a popular figure at rallies with his chorus of "Bring Out The Banners", inspiring audience members to proudly wave high their union membership cards.

Born into a working-class family in the East End of London before World War II, Danny grew up with the traditions, music and folklore of a typical Cockney family, singing music hall and traditional English and Irish songs round the piano.



Danny Spooner. Photograph by Peter Love.

His working life began at 13 on various crafts on the Thames, picking up an education via the libraries en route and via Captain Bob Roberts who later became known in the English folk scene as a great source of songs.

Danny migrated to Sydney in 1962 doing labouring work and starting to sing regularly in the burgeoning Sydney folk scene where he met Declan Affley. He moved to Melbourne in 1963 and was a regular at Frank Traynor's jazz/folk club, singing along with performers: Martyn Wyndham-Read, Brian Mooney, David Lumsden, Trevor Lucas and Margret RoadKnight. From social historians and folklorists Wendy Lowenstein and Gwenda Davey, he learned the importance of the social context of the songs and proper attribution.

Thanks to his prodigious memory and a willingness to learn about his craft, Danny quickly developed into one of the best singers of British folksongs in Australia. He also developed into an academic and

teacher, researching, writing, performing and presenting programs for ABC national radio and TV using folk songs as source material. From 1968 he held appointments at secondary colleges (Geelong and Mowbray) and at Deakin and Melbourne Universities. He retired from teaching in 2002.

Over 50 years involvement in the folk scene, Danny presented nearly 50 workshops delving into the origins of British or Australian folk songs on many topics and he produced over 20 LPs and CDs. Danny performed regularly at folk festivals at the National in Canberra and Port Fairy in Victoria and at dozens of regional festivals. Once he retired, he alternated tours to Europe and the British Isles (2002-08) and North America (2003-15) becoming a huge favourite among the strong maritime/folk community in New England. The National Library has released the catalogue record for Danny's 4-hour oral history interview made with Rob Willis in May 2016: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-287236132/listen>

Danny's website has a great deal of information about his life, his songs, and his recorded output. In due course the website will be revamped and all his work will be available to download. Meanwhile, there are several links on YouTube where you can listen to this inimitable singer.



Margaret Walters with Danny Spooner in February this year. Photo by Peter Hicks.

In the last months of his life, Danny recorded an album of Australian traditional and bush songs poignantly titled *Now I'm Home*, which starts with Eric Bogle's song *Shelter*, and ends with another moving song by Eric, *The Gift of Years*. The album will be finalised mid-year. If you would like to be advised when it becomes available, please email: kilmaley@mmnet.com.au with the subject line: Please add to mailing list re new CD.

Danny's health declined markedly in the last 4 months due to lung cancer and he died early in March aged 80, less than a week after giving a remarkable performance at the Cobargo Folk Festival. Our condolences to Danny's wife, Gael Shannon, who was a wonderful balance for Danny with her strength and grace. A giant of a man – we shan't see his like again.

Hot Metal: Material Culture and Tangible Labour

Diane Kirkby



Review of Jesse Adams Stein, *Hot Metal: Material Culture and Tangible Labour* (University of Manchester Press, 2016), pp.+214.

This book is a welcome addition to studies of Australian labour history. The subject is the process and impact of deindustrialisation on the workers employed at the NSW Government Printing Office. This

was a workplace with a long and important history. Established in 1840 it was one of the oldest industrial workplaces in Australia and one which also held a particular place as an institution of government. It reflected the relationship between print culture and authority that is now rapidly disappearing.

The analysis starts with that particular moment in 1989 when the Greiner government decided to shut down its printing office with just four weeks' notice. Despite its apparent suddenness the decision was a longer time coming in the processes of economic, technological and workplace change. The book concentrates on the thirty years leading up to that event, and reconstructs the meaning of those changes for the people on whom the decision impacted. As the author says, in a memorable sentence, 'significant technological shifts do not just happen with a bang. They are gradual creeping sequences that we unwittingly prepare for in advance through' [what Lewis Mumford wrote of in 1934 of as] "our will to order" and our connection with machines.'

This is a book about the connection to machines – the material culture – the object of the labour process that has been the subject of much labour history literature. It takes that focus further as it bridges different fields, that of design/material culture studies, and that of labour and working-class history. It sets out to retain the voices of the workers while simultaneously attending to the role of objects and spatial design. A constant thread throughout is that politics underpins it all.

As an interdisciplinary study, it is not just technology history, it is also oral history and architectural history, engaging with workers' recollections of the building and drawing on its spatial factors to construct meaning. 'The institution and the bulky modernist building that housed it were one and the same' while they worked there and continue to be so in the workers' memories. And she makes very full use also of visual photographic sources. These she integrates into the interviews not as memory triggers in the service of the oral history, but to open up new ways of speaking about the past. She demonstrates the dissonance between the institutional or official photographs and the stories the workers had of their

workplace. The visual and the oral sometimes reinforce each other, sometimes collide, all suggest meaning. It is also gender history. Technological change for craft workers cannot be disassociated from gender, from the masculinity where identity and social status were tied to technology, tools and manual skill. This has been well-established in previous literature going back decades, but this study brings new insights to enrich the texture of the story.

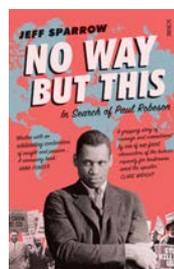
Stein starts with the proposition that the world of work is inextricably bound up with things, like the hot metal of the title (which comes from the old craft skill of setting linotype), and that the experience of the workplace is tightly interwoven with material objects so that design has an important role in shaping workplace environments, cultures and identities. Understanding how we interact with those objects affects knowing how to adapt to changing environments.

The author asks the important question: must labour history (i.e. the politics and culture of working life) be disassociated from material culture and design which has become depoliticised as innovation and consumption? And she emphatically answers no – that labour history and the focus on material culture and technology are part of the same piece, all are social and political.

It's an ambitious work. Printers, and the printing trades have been the subject of quite a lot of scholarship over a long time, which produced some truly classic works. Yet in this book the author has found a way to bring a new approach to contribute to a well ploughed field. She succeeds admirably. She takes a workplace which is a building, with a single employer, a skilled workforce, an institutional identity which extends beyond the work, and a long history, and gives us a cohesive and compelling account of working life.

It is at once a study of people and their relationship to technology, and a record of a period of history that is usually treated from quite different perspectives. It shows us how labour history can lead the way that history is written. In that, it is pathbreaking and important. This a terrific story. It is a critical reflection on the mistakes of economic rationalism, and the losses from deindustrialisation without becoming only a story of loss with nostalgia for a golden era. Its findings are salutary.

No Way But This



Published by Scribe, *No Way But This: In Search of Paul Robeson* takes us on a journey with Jeff Sparrow as he walks in the footsteps of Paul Robeson. It was launched at Trades Hall on 16 March. <https://scribepublications.com.au/books-authors/books/no-way-but-this> We will carry a review of the book in the July edition.

Democratic Opposition to War

Michael Hamel-Green

2017 will mark the 100 year anniversary of the second of the two 1916-1917 WWI conscription plebiscites. During the 1917 plebiscite, in the midst of the war, Australian anti-conscription campaigners succeeded in defeating the introduction of conscription by an even greater margin. This was a unique example of popular opposition to conscription in the countries engaged in the war yet appears to have received relatively little attention and analysis in current official ANZAC WWI commemorations.

A one-day conference, jointly sponsored by the Brunswick-Coburg Anti-Conscription Commemoration Campaign (BCACC) Melbourne Labour History Society, Victorian Trades Hall Council and supported by Moreland Council, will be held on 20 May 2017, 9.00am-4.30pm at the Siteworks in Saxon St, Brunswick. The conference theme is: 'Democratic Opposition to War: the 1916-17 Anti-Conscription Campaigns, Impacts and Legacies'. It will examine the role of specific strands and figures within the anti-conscription movement, including Trade Unions, Labor Party, Socialists, IWW, Women's groups, Irish Catholics, Quakers, and pacifist and conscientious objector groups. Particular key figures, such as John Curtin, Frank Anstey, Doris and Maurice Blackburn, Frank Hyett, and Bella Guerin (all of whom lived or were closely linked to Brunswick), as well as Adela Pankhurst, Vida Goldstein and Daniel Mannix, will be discussed.



The conference will further explore some of the impacts and implications of the referenda in Australia's subsequent history, as well as continuing issues associated with conscription during the Vietnam and current policies relating to war-making powers in Australia.

Speakers: Professor Barry Jones (opening speaker), Professor Murray Goot (Macquarie University), Professor Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne University), Assoc. Professor Bobbie Oliver (Curtin University), Professor Joy Damousi (Melbourne University), Dr Val Noone, Dr Carolyn Rasmussen, Kate Laing, Dr Ross McMullin, Dr Peter Love, Dr Ann-Mari Jordens, Paul Barratt (former Secretary, Department of Defence), & Dr Jennifer Grounds (MAPW). For further details contact: anticonscription1916@gmail.com

John Curtin Research Centre Launch, Melbourne – Wednesday 25 January 2017

Peter Love

Bill Shorten launched the Curtin Research Centre with a finely crafted speech pitched to the Party faithful but with resonances for those who hope for a return to a more equitable and civilised political community. He spoke of Labor's legacy of nation-building reforms in the early twentieth century, of the great vision embedded in the Post-War Reconstruction planning during Curtin's time and the great programs bequeathed by the Whitlam, Hawke and Keating governments. Despite setbacks, significant improvements have grown out of recent Labor governments' works. But the dominance of neoliberal ideas in the public sphere and the evangelical zeal of their apostles in Coalition governments have wrought deep and enduring damage on the ordinary citizenry who need clear-sighted, intelligent alternatives advocated by an energetic and purposeful Labor Party. Anticipating the 'Fair Work' cut to penalty rates Shorten committed the ALP to resolutely oppose it. 'This is not the country John Curtin knew, it's not the Australia Labor built – and it's not a future we will accept for the nation we love.'



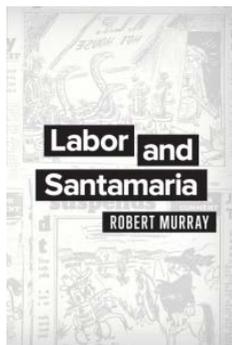
Nick Dyrenfurth, Henry Pinskiar and Bill Shorten. Photo by Peter Love.

Our very own Nick Dyrenfurth, prolific writer on labour history and contemporary politics, is to lead the Centre in developing ideas to support and strengthen the campaign to return Australia to some of the civilising values that characterised great Labor leaders like Curtin.

The first of the Centre's events was Kosmos Samaras speaking about 'The Re-Awakening of the Working Class' on Wednesday 22 March. His point was to suggest that the Labor Party needs to re-engage with its working class foundations if it is to build a viable future for itself in an increasingly cynical political community. In the light of recent risible behaviour by Labor MLAs, the need for robust policy development and associated political discipline is manifest. The latter is in the hands of the Party, but the Curtin Research Centre can play a very active role in the former. We are confident that Nick Dyrenfurth has the talent and energy to lead the Centre in doing just that. *Recorder* wishes Nick and the Centre well.

Labor and Santamaria

Michael Easson



Robert Murray, *Labor and Santamaria* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016), pp. + 100. \$24.95.

As Australian labour history goes, Robert Murray's *The Split* (1970) on the tumultuous splits in the mid-1950s, is only rivalled by H.V. Evatt's *Australian Labour Leader* (1942), a sympathetic account of the life, disillusionment and failures of

one of the movement's pioneers, one-time NSW Labor Premier William Arthur Holman who ratted on the ALP in 1917. Both books are connected to another great tragic Labor figure, "Doc" Evatt, who arguably did more than R.G. Menzies to keep Labor out of office for 23 years.

In this short 100-page booklet, part crib of the original, memoir, update and reconsidered assessment, Murray in *Labor and Santamaria* provides a clear, absorbing account. The book's chapter titles signal to any newcomer the story of what happened over 60 years ago: After 'Chif', The ALP, 1954, Bob Santamaria, The Split in NSW, The Split in Queensland, The Rise of Whitlam, After Half a Century, Memory Lane. In part, the book conveys the sense that without the reforming zeal of Whitlam, the sorry disaster of The Split had decades left to unfold without national party intervention in the Victorian Branch in 1970-71.

At the launch of the book at the Melbourne Trades Hall in March 2017, two former Victorian Premiers, John Cain and Steve Bracks, urged all new party members to read the book. There was much lamenting that not enough Victorian Labor history has been written. What is striking in this account, is the calm, sober assessments of personalities and ideologies that challenge conventional opinion – such as the myth that the Split represented the struggle between progressives and reactionaries for the soul of the labour movement. This is in marked contrast to the traditional Labor view that has emphasised the ideological at the expense of the accidental, the rationalisations ahead of the personalities and chaos that capture better what really happened. In his study, Murray complements the insight of the late British political theorist Henry Drucker, himself a great admirer of *The Split*, that there's too much doctrine and not enough ethos in the telling of labour history. One important conclusion of Drucker's UK study, *Doctrine and Ethos in the Labour Party* (1979), is that if the narrative is clear and ideologically coherent, be suspicious. Murray argues that the Split was a power struggle and not particularly ideological:

'The most revealing discovery to me was how little most people involved thought about ideology ... [I]deology hardly arose at all in the innumerable interviews and informal conversations I had; and if it did [it] was usually

in the context of being dismissed as unimportant. The politics at hand was the game'

Murray has an insider's grasp of the workings of the ALP and a novelist's ability to capture the essence of person, situation and context. One example: 'Santamaria was a flawed leader who succumbed to hubris in the heyday of the Groups, with the smell of power over public policy while still young and admired by the bishops, clergy and many laity. Religion and politics can be an intoxicating, unstable mix, risking misjudgments due to over-confident belief that one is doing God's work.' As Santamaria moved on from his concern with industrial and union issues, from the late 1960s onwards, he seemed to act 'like a shrewd, typically autocratic small businessman, cultivating new markets for his firm as old ones weakened.'

This frank, sad, compelling story opens up the richness of labour history including, notwithstanding the downplaying of ideology, the significance and compatibility of Catholic social thinking to Labor theory. The Victorians, as Santamaria and Murray saw, were trying to pioneer something new. Was Catholic social and political philosophy compatible with Labor values, something better than the crude notion of a big family on every acre, as anti-Grouper propaganda later presented? There are indications in Murray's book about the missed opportunities for Labor to renew its reforming agenda, as the Split furries blew themselves out. Some issues, the formulation of a reform agenda for one, are never ending and require a mastery of contemporary challenges. Perhaps this book will inspire a new Bob Murray to do just that.

DLP Unions and 1985 State ALP Conference

Brian Boyd

An interesting political and industrial event in Victorian history was the April 1985 Victorian ALP State Conference held at the Coburg Town Hall. The April 1985 Conference was to be an amazing left/right clash that pitted people who knew each other reasonably well around the Victorian trade union movement against each other. In the lead up to the Conference the Socialist Left held meetings and discussions about the push by PM Bob Hawke and others to have the Victorian ALP re-admit the four right-wing (DLP aligned) unions: FCU, ASC&J, SDA and FIA.

The majority of the 'Left', especially most of the left ALP affiliated unions, strongly opposed their readmission. The scars of the 1950s Split, the ramifications of which continued into the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s, were still raw, because of the DLP's preferencing to the conservatives at every election. In addition there were no illusions that Hawke and co were hoping the infusion of right-wing influence into the Victorian Branch would help dilute the dominant Socialist Left faction. In his biography, *John Cain Years: power, parties and politics* (MUP, 1995), John Cain Jnr wrote:

'Hawke was a player in the readmission planning for the four [right-wing] unions ... [He] regarded the actions of

the Left in Victoria on the Combe issue and on uranium as betraying the federal government. He wanted me to try and arrange for the Independents to support the Labor Unity group to ensure that the Left was crushed in the councils of the party.'

The 'tomato' Weekend: On Saturday 20 April 1985 protesters with large banners assembled in force outside the Coburg Town Hall opposing the motion that would see the four unions readmitted. The Secretary of the Musicians Union, Alex Hutchinson, played the *Last Post* on his clarinet. Inside, the vote was carefully managed despite the tension, yelling and general turmoil. Of great note was the intention of the large left-wing AMWU delegation. They met in a big huddle at the back of the hall just before the vote was taken. The delegation was led by Secretary John Halfpenny. The word spread fast. The AMWU were going to break from the left and vote for readmission.

The more determined Socialist Left unions and rank and file riled against the vote. It came down to a narrow win for readmission. Halfpenny came in for heavy criticism. Many knew the AMWU Vic Secretary was after a Senate seat in 1987. (Ironically, the core 'tomato' unions, led by Bill Hartley and the Food Preservers Union, would later thwart Halfpenny's Senate bid with their short lived Independent Labor Party preferencing against him).



Photograph supplied by Brian Boyd.

The next day, the delegations of the four unions assembled at the bottom of the driveway of the Coburg Town Hall. On a signal, they filed up as a block to the front door of the hall. Skirmishes broke out and tomatoes were thrown. Eventually the four right-wing union delegates signed in amongst chaos and loud exchanges. They took their seats on the floor of conference. Bill Hartley and others spoke passionately from the floor microphone against the anti-left 'insertion', to no avail.

The wider political environment of the time needs to be taken into account, besides the Cold War wounds of past decades. It was the first couple of years of the Hawke/Keating/Kelty Accord experiment. Not all 'Left' unions were on board. Hard-nosed politicians well knew they had to strike while the iron was hot, with electoral success at an all time high. Another chapter in ALP and trade union history had occurred.

Wartime Munitions Mill Gains Recognition

Kevin Davis

The Albion Explosives Factory, which was situated on the farming plains of Deer Park from 1939 to 1986, was remembered in February by the awarding of an Engineering Heritage National Marker to the only remaining building on the site, the Black Powder Mill. At its peak production time, during World War II, the facility comprised about 400 buildings and covered approximately 500 hectares. It employed over 1,500 workers. After the war, it still had a workforce of about 350. The factory was part of a complex of munitions factories in the western suburbs of Melbourne, vital to the war effort. After the war, the factory continued making explosives for peaceful purposes such as mining and engineering projects until 1986, when encroaching housing development necessitated a move to Mulwala. The area became the new suburb of Cairnlea.

As the factory buildings were being demolished, a group of local citizens determined to save what they could as a reminder of the area's history. In the event, the only building that could be saved was a small mill used to mix and grind the ingredients for gunpowder, called the Black Powder Mill. A feature of the mill's operation was the extreme concentration on safety, with design and regulation insisting on a rigorous regime of practices to eliminate any danger. However, on 18 May 1944 an accident was recorded in the mill when an explosion injured two workers, with one, Robert Taylor, sadly passing away in hospital after extensive burns.

With the assistance of the Brimbank City Council (who have strongly supported the project and made a series of financial grants), Heritage Victoria and the National Trust, the group, called the Friends of the Black Powder Mill, worked to restore the mill, which had ceased to operate at the end of the war and been neglected since. The mill was in a very dilapidated condition, and required restoration, but was eventually returned to its original fully working condition and now conducts open days, talks and demonstrations to interested groups.



The Black Powder Mill today. Photographer unknown.

Engineering Australia, which made the award, said that the Black Powder Mill is of social, scientific and historical significance to Australia as the only surviving component of a gunpowder manufacturing facility on its original site. It represents a phase in Australian defence when local manufacture of material was an absolute necessity, and acts as a tribute to the 25,000 or so people who worked in the munitions industry in Melbourne's western suburbs during World War II.

Remembering Ben Chifley

Mary Elizabeth Calwell

This is an edited extract from a speech given by Dr Calwell at the launch of Remembering Ben Chifley, in Canberra last year. It is reproduced here with permission.

Joseph Benedict Chifley was born in Bathurst on 22 September 1885 and grew up in an Australian pioneering community influenced by his Catholic and Irish heritages. This environment imbued him with a strong sense of the importance of social justice and he learnt to discern between the roles of church and state.

Chifley enrolled in a night school, studied four nights a week for 15 years and later lectured at the Railways Institute. He became the youngest NSW railway driver at the age of 26 and a prominent unionist. Chifley played a significant role in the 1917 railway strike that spread to many unions and other States. It resulted in his humiliation, his perseverance and vindication. He recovered his position in 1925.

In 1928, Chifley won Macquarie and in 1931 became Minister for Defence in the Scullin Federal ALP Government. He lost Macquarie in the Government's defeat partly caused by a hostile Governor of the Commonwealth Bank. Two English economists recommended policies agreed to by Premiers in the Premiers' Plan. The ALP Federal Executive, including Arthur Calwell, strongly opposed the decision to reduce government salaries and payments. The Federal President ruled that ALP Federal Members could decide whether to support The Premiers' Plan and Chifley did so. The Victorian President, Calwell ruled in favour of official ALP policy. A Minister was expelled and following a State Election, the former Premier and a former Minister were expelled. Chifley became President of the NSW Branch of the ALP and unsuccessfully challenged Lang in his State seat. Calwell and Chifley endured Lang's hatred.

When I first visited Canberra with my parents and brother in 1941, Labor had increased its representation in the 1940 Federal Election. This resulted in Chifley regaining his seat after nine years and Bert Evatt and my father entering the House of Representatives. There were nine past, present and future Prime Ministers in the House and, for ALP Members, politics was a vocation for life. Calwell and Chifley would have met by 1930 when Calwell was a member of the ALP Federal Executive.

Most Labor Members and Senators stayed at the Kurrajong Hotel with a few UAP (later Liberal Party and Country Party) parliamentarians while most Conservatives and a few Labor Members and Senators stayed at the Canberra Hotel. At breakfast, Mr Chifley sat at the head of a Labor table near the central door of the dining room with my father on his right. When my mother was there she joined them and when our

family came in school holidays, we sat at an adjoining table. Several public servants lived there and sat to the right of the Parliamentarians' tables with secretaries on the far left while a lady called May allocated seats and ruled the dining room. From early childhood, we attended Question Time with our mother but some parliamentary wives, not interested in debates, spent most of their time in the lounge room knitting, playing cards and observing the activities of everyone who came through the lounge. It was unthinkable and impossible for anyone to indulge in any impropriety.

Chifley spent every second weekend in Canberra, and in school holidays we generally dined with him. On a Sunday, he would walk to the 7am Mass at St Christopher's Church in Manuka, then have a rest and we would dine together in the evening. On the other weekend, he returned home, stood on the steps of the local newspaper office where anyone could talk to him, went to his church and took his wife to her church. Canberra had a population of about 20,000 people. My parents and Mr Chifley shared values, a love of Australia and a sense of humour.

All ALP Members were committed to the Socialist Objective that promoted government ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange where exploitation existed. When the Curtin ALP Government took office in 1941, Chifley became Treasurer and promoted Keynesian economics. He was a member of the 1935 Royal Commission on the Monetary and Banking Systems. The control of income tax was transferred to the Federal Government. In 1945, two banking acts established a Central Banking Department in the Commonwealth Bank, continued war-time controls of private banks and returned control to a Governor and Board. The Federal Government promoted full employment and established a free Commonwealth Employment Service in 1945 ratified by ILO Convention 88 in 1949. It also introduced unemployment benefits as well as widows' pensions, ensuring a stable economy in war-time and the transition to peace-time.

In 1943 my father became Minister for Information and Prime Minister John Curtin transferred the role of censorship to him. When Chifley became Prime Minister in July 1945 he continued as Treasurer. He agreed to Calwell's suggestion that a Department of Immigration should be established with Calwell as Minister so that he had two portfolios. In his first speech as Minister for Immigration, Calwell stated that all people were eligible within our existing legislation, and he was the first person to amend the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 in March 1947.

In early 1946, our family flew to Tasmania and called at Eaglehawk Neck where Chifley was having a quiet holiday. He was an ardent reader and Liberal Member Percy Spender and his wife were also there. Mrs Spender wrote detective stories and Chifley was enjoying reading the draft of her latest book. When my

brother was seriously ill Chifley sent a telegram for his birthday – Art died three weeks later.

The 1946 Referendum resulted in several new welfare benefits. The ALP Government introduced the 40-hour week, established the Australian National University, ASIO, TAA, the Snowy Mountains Scheme, the Australian Shipping Board, the take-over of Qantas and Commonwealth Scholarships. The Department of Information supported service personnel overseas and then promoted Australian culture and the arts in 50 countries. John Dedman initiated extensive schemes for returned service personnel. Dr Evatt, External Affairs Minister, became President of the United Nations and played a major role in the recognition of Israel. Two electorates were called after women. Chifley led a government of equals with experience, knowledge and dedication to Labor policies.

By late 1949, over 150,000 assisted migrants had arrived as well as many thousands of sponsored migrants, despite a shipping shortage. The term, 'New Australian' was introduced to make new arrivals welcome, Good Neighbour Councils were established and the words 'assimilation' and 'integration' were used interchangeably to mean a willingness to be part of our society while respecting peoples' heritages. At the first Naturalisation Ceremony, my father presented the first Certificate to Mr Chifley and at the first Immigration Convention, Chifley said there was something God-like about immigration policy.

Until the late 1960s, Federal Members attacked policies of their opponents in Parliament. They often had a cup of tea or drink afterwards. I remember Chifley and Robert Menzies, who had recently defeated him, sitting at the back of the House together.

Mr Chifley had his last meal with my parents and died a few hours later. My mother stayed up consoling his secretary, Phyllis Donnelly. Sue [Martin] quoted from my mother's tribute. She also wrote that he came from the people who had no treasure but hope. 'He was not dismayed when elected to the highest post in the land ... He tried to place ... "this land of the dawning" ... aloft ... assured of its destiny'. At Bathurst cemetery, on the 10th anniversary of Chifley's death, my father declared that Chifley had the modesty and the simplicity of those who possess innate greatness. He stood above all for Party unity. He read his Bible nine times. Calwell said that it was his privilege to have known two great Treasurers, Theodore and Chifley, a rare and exquisite privilege. My father declared that we shall ever remember Chifley for his integrity in his public and private life. He concluded with the words of the Irish poet, John Kelly Ingram: 'And true men, like you men, remember him with pride'.

Remembering Ben Chifley, by Sue Martin is available in hard copy or as an ebook and can be purchased from http://www.inspiringbookshop.com/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=342

Hinterland: A Memoir

John Myrtle

Chris Mullin



Hinterland

A very and revealing political memoir from the man behind the celebrated phrase 'A View from the Frontline', A Walk with Power and Justice in 1981

Chris Mullin, *Hinterland: A Memoir* (London: Profile Books, 2016), pp. 271. £20 cloth

There is something unusual about a politician who when preselected for parliament would be described as 'a certifiable lunatic' by his party leader; and who some years later would be labelled by Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* newspaper as a 'loony MP'; and who

after more than twenty years of parliamentary service would publish widely acclaimed political diaries. All these things apply to Chris Mullin, author of *Hinterland: A Memoir*. Mullin, a Labour Party member of the British parliament from 1987 to 2010, has had a remarkable career as a journalist, writer, political activist, parliamentarian, government minister and diarist.

Mullin grew up in a Catholic family; his mother's family came from Ireland and his father was a Scot. He was sickly child; at school he failed the crucial eleven-plus exam and as a consequence he missed out on a place at the local grammar school. Instead, he was sent to a Catholic boarding school ('a mixture of inspiration and terror'), run by the De La Salle Brothers. He studied law at university but spent more time working for the student newspaper and was therefore drawn to journalism, rather than the law.

In 1971 Mullin visited China in a party of young people in a tour organised by the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding. He wrote that this was one of the seminal moments in his life, awakening a lifelong interest in Asia. In the following year he bought a one-way ticket to the Far East, initially visiting Laos, and then 'eight months bumming around', including visits to Burma, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Many years later, in April 1985, he visited Vietnam, escorting a group of British tourists. During the trip he met and fell in love with Nguyen Thi Ngoc who was working for the state-owned Saigontourist organisation. They were eventually married in Ho Chi Minh City on 14 April 1987; he was 37 and she was 30. Two months later Mullin was elected MP for Sunderland South in the general election; he was to hold the seat for 23 years.

The late 1970s and early 1980s had been a period of considerable upheaval for the Labour Party in Britain and Mullin was closely involved as an activist, including the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, focussing on the selection and re-selection of MPs and demands for reforms in the method of selection of the party's leader by MPs, trade unions and party members. During this time (from 1978) Mullin had been working as a journalist for *Tribune*, the weekly journal of the Labour left. He was elected editor in May 1982 and was pitchforked into considerable upheaval as he and the

journal's staff battled to maintain their independence and to sustain the viability of the journal.

As a politician and parliamentarian Chris Mullin will chiefly be remembered for two aspects of his political life; firstly, his campaigns to publicise miscarriages of justice; and secondly, publication of his political diaries.

On 21 November 1974 bombings in Birmingham pubs resulted in 21 people killed and 182 others injured. Six Irishmen were sentenced to life imprisonment for the bombings. These men, who became known as the Birmingham Six, always maintained their innocence and insisted that they had been coerced by police into signing false confessions through severe physical and psychological abuse. In the years prior to his election to parliament (and after) Chris Mullin emerged as an indefatigable campaigner to free these innocent people. Part of his campaign involved publication of a detailed study of the issues, *Error of Judgement: the truth about the Birmingham bombings*. The more that Mullin exposed shortcomings in the prosecution of the Birmingham Six, the more he was subjected to hate mail and abuse. In January 1988 the most bizarre was a front-page headline in Rupert Murdoch's *The Sun*; 'Loony MP Backs Bomb Gang', published following a fresh consideration of the case in the Court of Appeal. In spite of this unsuccessful appeal, pressure for review of the case increased. Among other shortcomings, police evidence was shown to be fabricated and on 14 March 1991 the convictions were quashed and the Birmingham Six were released. Chris Mullin's investigative journalism had played a critical role in achieving the release of the Birmingham Six. His memoirs quote the author Robert Harris: 'Whoever planted the bombs in Birmingham ... also planted a bomb under the British legal establishment.'

Once elected to parliament, Mullin sought appointment to the Home Affairs Select Committee as a means of continuing to investigate miscarriages of justice and inadequacies in the legal system. Among issues of importance to Mullin were increases in the prison population; accountability of the security service; funding of political parties; appointment of judges; gun control; and the role of Freemasons in the criminal justice system. Initially there was resistance to Mullin's appointment to the Committee but once appointed he was an energetic and effective member and served as Chairman for four years during his time in Parliament. Mullin's campaigns and successes with the Committee are described in some detail in *Hinterland*. Chris Mullin utilised his skill and experience as a journalist and writer, and his involvement in the political life of London and the north of England, to produce a remarkable series of diaries of his life as an MP. There were three volumes published, commencing in 1994 with the death of party leader John Smith and the launch of New Labour under Tony Blair, and ending with the general election of 2010, the defeat of the Labour Party and Mullin's retirement from Parliament. The three volumes (not published in chronological order) are *A Walk-On Part: diaries 1994-1999*; *A View From the Foothills* [covering July 1999-May 2005]; and *Decline and Fall: diaries 2005-2010*. The diaries have been widely acclaimed and provide a

valuable record of life for a keenly engaged member of parliament. It is a significant shortcoming in *Hinterland* that Mullin provides little information on his motivations for maintaining the diary for such an extended period. Clearly, there is a range of issues involved in such a project that could have been explained, such as how he found time to write a diary (work trips to and from Sunderland and London?); when to reveal his diary writing to colleagues and friends; and the procedure for gaining government clearance to publish the diary for the period in which he was a junior minister.

Overall, *Hinterland* is a most engaging memoir; funny, moving, inspiring and a valuable record of a period of considerable upheaval in British politics.

Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion

Allan Patience

KARL MARX
GREATNESS
AND ILLUSION
GARETH
STEDMAN JONES

Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press, 2016), pp. i-750.

Compared to Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx is perhaps the most misused and abused of this trinity of early and most original of social and political theorists of modernity. All three were profoundly disturbed by the emerging trajectories of capitalism. All three were deeply pessimistic about its future (in Weber's case to the point of abject despair). But of the three it is Marx's voluminous writings that have been the most crudely plagiarised, reductively misinterpreted and ideologically distorted by thousands, if not millions, of self-proclaimed followers of bad faith on the one hand and critics of a similar character on the other. So much so in fact that the plagiarists, reductionists and ideologues have continuously and comprehensively white-anted the enormous moral and political philosophy project that Marx struggled throughout his life to bring together into a coherent opus. The tragedy, of course, is that he never succeeded in completing his project.

The political and intellectual distorters of his work provided copious ammunition for Marx's enemies to deploy in attacking the entirety of his thinking. Here one thinks especially of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Che, Fidel, and others of this ugly ilk. And of course we have myriad communist parties around the globe, past and present, which have laid diverse and mostly spurious claims to a Marxist legacy. Their ravaging of Marx's work was aided and abetted by self-proclaimed would-be "true" Marxists like Louis Althusser and Nicos Poulantzas and postmodern or "neo-Marxists" like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida who all crudely misused Marx to advance their own narcissistic and malevolent agendas.

These recondite figures provided deadly ammunition for Marx's enemies – and for sure those enemies are legion. These include the usual suspects in the Western media. Acting as a kind of Cold War Greek chorus, Western writers – such as Irving Kristol and Daniel Bell in the United States, Karl Popper in the UK, and Raymond Aron in France – all tilted wildly at the various totalitarian windmills they called Marxism in order to reject it absolutely. Their ideological successes – despite the palpable falsity of their interpretations of Marx – far out-weighed their intellectual failings. This is despite the immensely more scholarly approaches to Marx taken by great intellectuals like E. P. Thompson, Ralph Miliband and Leszek Kolakowski. However these honourable figures were drowned out by the cacophony of anti-Marxism that swamped the West's political culture during the Cold War, closing down so many alternative ways of seeing and understanding a world that right now is in gravest danger of heading to hell in a hand basket.

Marx was alarmed by the capitalism he saw coming into being in Western Europe and America. He railed against the inhumane conditions workers were being subjected to by their regimentation in factories, by their long working hours and shocking conditions, the horror of child labour (which was a form of slavery), and the venality of their paymasters. He was scathing in his critiques of the selfishness and cruelty of factory bosses and their owners and shareholders. He was appalled by the ideological false-consciousness – the lies (“post-truths”) – purveyed by the media as it collaborated unconscionably with the owners of capital and their banker backers. And he identified the deep psycho-emotional (or spiritual) malaise that was setting class against class, gender against gender, ethnic group against ethnic group, and so on. This he labelled as “alienation.” His analysis has never been surpassed in its deep knowledge of how things really are in what Weber described as modernity's “iron cage of rationality.”

The grimmest fact of the twenty-first century is that the capitalism Marx prophesied has well and truly arrived across the globe. As Thomas Picketty has shown, the divide between the owners of capital and the non-owners has widened to an historical extreme. It has advanced from its post-war relatively retrained form of welfare capitalism through predatory capitalism to its present form of neo-liberal parasitic capitalism. It has produced the Global Financial Crisis and populist revolts in all the Western so-called democracies delivering toxic victories to the campaigners for Brexit and Donald Trump while plunging the Eurozone into crisis. And the economic catastrophe of 2007/8 is undoubtedly a relatively mild forerunner to further and bigger global financial crises.

Criticise him all you like for what you think is his materialism, his historicism, or his economic determinism. Accuse him of laying the foundations of Stalinism. Attack him for being a fermentor of bloody

revolution as much as you like. But this all completely misses the point. As Gareth Stedman Jones has so scrupulously documented in this major work, trying to pin any of these labels on Marx is a cynical exercise in scholarly duplicity and political deceit. As he notes at the outset, his aim “is to put Marx back in his nineteenth-century surroundings, before all of [the] posthumous elaborations of his character and achievements were constructed.” The intellectual biography that he unveils portrays an extremely complex and often vulnerable man, an intellectual outsider, a man of unfathomable physical and mental passions actively seeking to make sense of the extraordinarily complex times in which he was living, responding to those times by drawing on a host of philosophical, literary and other super-structural realities that ebbed and flowed and occasionally erupted in flashes of amazing clarity in his mighty imagination.

The Marx that Stedman Jones has revealed to us set himself a many-dimensional challenge that no ordinary mortal could hope to surmount. That Marx almost did surmount it marks him out as perhaps the greatest giant ever in understanding capitalism's imminent dénouement. Others have swarmed across his shoulders ever since but none has ever seen what Marx saw with such apprehensive clarity and moral outrage. And what he saw was a capitalism whose endgame was inevitable. His prophesies – in a rabbinical tradition going way back in the Old Testament and before – are today being fulfilled as neo-liberalism's parasitic capitalism wreaks its terrible destruction across the globe. It is time to return to Marx – to find a deeper, richer understanding of what he was analysing and predicting, free of the hyperbole and bad faith that he has been met with for far too long.

Stedman Jones has opened the great door that will enable us to return to Marx, to fully grasp the often Hegelian, frequently poetic, and profoundly philosophical moralising that remains at the very core of Marx's immense project. This book is compelling reading and must become a major reference for anyone concerned about reviving hope in achieving a civilised and decent world – a new social democracy – in which we will all, how and whenever we wish, be able to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening and criticise at night, “without,” in the words of *The German Ideology*, “ever becoming a hunter, a fisherman, a cattle breeder or critic.”

Mary Owen (1921-2017)



We note with sadness the death of Mary Owen, founding Coordinator of The Working Women's Centre Melbourne, and much else. Our condolences to Mary's family. A full obituary of Mary's remarkable life will appear in the July edition.