

# Recorder

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

Issue No 256—December 2007

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## MELBOURNE BRANCH NOTICE OF AGM

## VALE BOB GOLLAN

8 December 1917 – 15 October 2007

### MELBOURNE BRANCH, ASSLH

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday  
6 December at 5.30 pm

Melbourne Trades Hall  
Meeting room 1

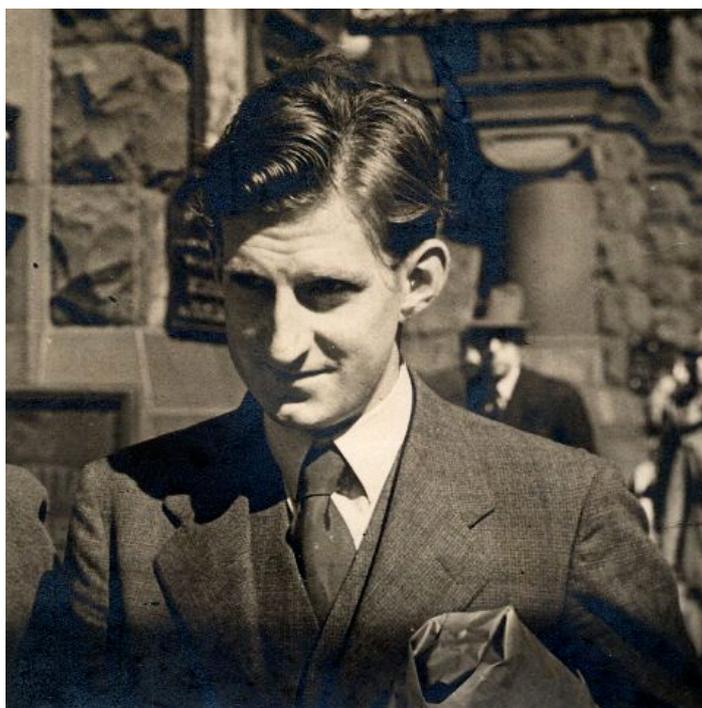
#### *Agenda*

Reports: President, Secretary,  
Treasurer.

Election of Office Bearers and  
General Business.

*(map on page 4)*

### LABOUR HISTORY LOSES ANOTHER OF ITS FOUNDERS



Emeritus Professor Robin Allenby Gollan died in Canberra on 15 October after a short illness. A much-loved teacher, respected scholar and indefatigable political activist, he guided and encouraged a generation of post-graduate students (including Eric Fry) in the Institute of Advanced Studies and, later, undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts at the Australian National University. His books illuminated the history of radical and labour politics in Australia. His thoughtful and quietly resolute radicalism gave courage and steady purpose to younger activists. Indeed, he was considered such a threat to national security that members of successive Menzies governments pressured the ANU to terminate his contract. Their failure was a measure of both the stout defence of academic independence that Sir Keith Hancock provided and the deep respect that senior

colleagues had for Bob's scholarship. His abiding distrust of political authoritarianism was expressed in his scholarly and political writings, his humorous party piece renderings of 'The Balls of Bob Menzies', resignation from the Communist Party after the events of 1956 and his most recent reminder to John Howard that the present government's cynically contrived patriotism bore no resemblance to the ideals that he and his fellow servicemen fought for in the Second World War.

The son of an impoverished rural family in the south coast region of New South Wales, Bob Gollan applied his sharp intellect and purposeful determination to advancement through learning, moving to Fort Street High, Sydney University and the London School of Economics, where he completed his PhD. Returning to Australia, he took a position at the newly-established ANU in the early 1950s and remained a member of staff until his retirement. His scholarly works included *Radical and Working Class Politics*; *The Coalminers of New South Wales*; *The Commonwealth Bank of Australia*; and *Revolutionaries and Reformists*. The deep learning embedded in these works inspired his students and expressed a conviction that politically engaged scholarship could be both academically rigorous and socially constructive. That same belief informed the decision that he, Eric Fry and others took to form a labour history society in Australia, inspired by the British society and directly encouraged by Asa Briggs during a visit to the ANU. Despite early difficulties, they laid the foundations of the ASSLH that sustain the Society to the present day.



On 29 October 2007 a large gathering of Bob's family, friends and comrades gathered at University House, ANU to celebrate his life and work. The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History was well represented at the ceremony and its members paid sincere tribute to Bob's work. Society members made a recording of the speeches and took photographs of the occasion as preparation for more extensive appreciations of his and Eric Fry's work in the May 2008 issue of the Journal *Labour History*. It is there, we hope, that Bob will be properly honoured.

Meanwhile, the Society offers our sincere condolences to Anne and family for the loss of such a fine scholar, loyal friend and solid comrade.

*Peter Love*

## REMEMBERING HARVESTER: A CENTENARY SYMPOSIUM

University of Melbourne  
8 November 2007

The symposium, jointly sponsored by the Australian Centre and the Centre for Human Resource Management at the University of Melbourne, and the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University, considered the historical significance and contemporary relevance of the living wage and national values.

Julia Gillard delivered a spirited opening address. Comparing the civilizing social liberalism of Higgins with the hard-eyed neoliberalism of the present Federal Treasurer, she offered a very well-informed and measured account of the 1907 Judgment and the opposition to it at the time. This was the occasion for a swipe at Peter Costello's radical associations with the H R Nicholls Society, delivered in much the same spirit as his attack on her membership of the Socialist Forum.

Drawing on his biography of Higgins, John Rickard explored some of the more interesting dimensions of Higgins' career and personality that informed his Harvester Judgment. This led him to muse on some humorous aspects of the opposition to the Judgment and the more bizarre positions advocated by leading members of the H R Nicholls Society, such as Ray Evans and Des Moore. Charles Fahey spoke about Higgins, the Harvester workers and their families. Based on the long-term research that he and John Lack have undertaken, he explored aspects of the labour process at the Harvester Works, the details of the case and its relationship with the drawn-out negotiations in the relevant wages board.

After morning tea Joe Isaac presented a detailed, forensic examination of the economic consequences of Harvester with specific reference to issues such as the economic sustainability of the living, family wage, the effects on women's wages and the legacy it left in the history of wage-fixing principles in Australia. Marian Sawyer spoke about liberal and feminist perspectives on Harvester, setting the argument against the background of her book of turn-of-the-century social liberalism, *The Ethical State*. She went on to survey the historiography of feminist critiques of the Judgment.

Sonya Michel from the University of Maryland presented the keynote address after lunch. It offered a very interesting and informative comparative perspective on the 'Rise and Fall of the Male Breadwinner Regime' in Australia and the USA. Her reference to the recent revival of living wage campaigns in State jurisdictions in the US was one of the more notable issues in the address.

In the last session Marilyn Lake and Paul Pickering considered 'Public Memory and Australian Values'. Comparing recent Federal Government funding for the promotion of a particular version of public memory of Australian military history, she suggested that the principle of civilized living standards embedded in the Harvester Judgment ought to be a matter for celebration, even a national day, celebrated annually. Comparing the recent revival of

interest in labour heritage in the United Kingdom, Paul Pickering suggested that Australian labour heritage ought to be more systematically identified and rescued from the ‘enormous condescension of posterity’, and so brought into the mainstream of contemporary cultural discourses.

At the end of the day there was a reception at which Geoffrey Giudice considered the Harvester Judgment and its legacy from the perspective of a much-diminished AIRC bench, while Sharan Burrow concluded the day with a spirited defence of the living wage principles of Harvester in the age of WorkChoices.

*Recorder* congratulates John Murphy, Marilyn Lake and their organising team for organizing such a sharp, tightly-focussed and timely conference in one of twentieth-century Australia’s landmark events.

*Peter Love*

**Political Citizenship Conference**

**Victorian Women's Suffrage and Political Citizenship**

The School of Historical Studies at the University of Melbourne, together with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the League of Women Voters of Victoria, has planned a conference to celebrate the centenary of women’s suffrage in Victoria in 2008.

To be held on 5 and 6 December this year (2007), it will feature 2 panels and 15 papers, including keynote addresses by 2 of the leading historians of women in Australia, Professors Patricia Grimshaw (University of Melbourne) and Marilyn Lake (La Trobe University), and a public lecture by the Hon. Judy Maddigan MLA, the first woman to be appointed Speaker of the Victorian Legislative Assembly. The conference program includes papers on a variety of aspects of Victorian women’s political citizenship up to the present, as well as on the fight for the vote.

The conference will be held in the Fifth Floor Common Room of the John Medley Building at the University of Melbourne, commencing in the afternoon of 5 December. The public lecture, to be presented on the evening of 5 December, will be held in Theatre C Old Arts.

Conference contributors will be invited to submit their papers for possible inclusion in a special issue of the RHSV’s Victorian Historical Journal to be published and launched in early November 2008 to coincide with celebrations of the winning of the vote by Victorian women.

The conference organisers invite all those interested in attending to register now. The registration form and a draft program can be found on the School of Historical Studies website. <http://www.historical-studies.unimelb.edu.au/events/suffrage.html>

Cost \$67.50 and \$35 for students (includes morning and afternoon teas, pre-lecture drinks and canapes, and lunch on 6 December). Further information can be obtained from Assoc. Professor Judith Smart ([jsmart@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:jsmart@unimelb.edu.au)) Closing date for registration: Monday 26 November.

**Conference Program: Victorian Women's Suffrage and Political Citizenship**

Time	Wednesday 5th December 2007
12:30pm	CONFERENCE OPENING: <i>The Hon. Maxine Morand</i>
1:00 - 2:00pm	KEYNOTE ADDRESS <i>Marilyn Lake</i> ‘The White Australia Policy Gone Mad’: Feminism’s Shifting Attitudes to Race
2:00 - 3:00pm	<i>Clare Wright</i> Golden Opportunities: The Early Origins of Women’s Suffrage in Victoria <i>John McCulloch</i> Evicted from the Closet: Why Queensland Suffragists Beat Victoria to the Vote
3-3:30pm	AFTERNOON TEA
3:30 - 5:00pm	<i>Joy Damousi</i> ‘An easy delivery of speech, charming voice and absence of anything masculine’: Vida Goldstein, Women’s Public Speech, Suffrage and Australian Femininity <i>Marian Quartly and Judith Smart</i> The National Council of Women and Political Citizenship 1904–14 <i>Ellen Warne</i> Advertising the work: Putting Modern Media Publicity to Work in Women’s Suffrage Campaigns
5-6pm	DRINKS
6:00 - 7:00pm	Public Lecture in Theatre C, Old Arts <i>The Hon. Judy Maddigan MLA</i> The Parliamentary Debates on Women’s Suffrage in Victoria 1864–1908

Time	Thursday 6th December 2007
9:00 - 10:30am	<i>Deborah Towns</i> Miss Clara Weekes: A “born teacher”, Suffragist and Equal Pay Campaigner <i>Rosemary Francis</i> Exercising Political Citizenship: Muriel Heagney and the Australian Labor Party <i>Deborah Jordan</i> Politics and Text: Generations of Feminisms: Ina Higgins, Nettie Palmer and Aileen Palmer
10:30-11a	MORNING TEA
11:00am - 12:00pm	Suffrage City Press Group Panel discussion of the putting together of ‘They are but Women’: The Road to Female Suffrage in Victoria RMIT Social Science and Industrial Design Students Panel discussion of the stories of twelve significant women of Victoria who have worked toward gender equality and public participation
12:00 - 1:00pm	<i>Shurlee Swain</i> ‘The supervision of homes and food and care for babies is woman’s work, and cannot be rightly done by men’: Victorian Women’s Organisations and the Introduction of Female Child Welfare Inspectors, 1890–1915 <i>Renate Howe</i> Agents of Change: Women’s Social Reform Networks in Melbourne; 1900–1940
1- 2pm	LUNCH
2:00 - 3:00pm	KEYNOTE ADDRESS <i>Patricia Grimshaw</i> Reflections on the Women’s Vote and Australian Democracy: The Victorian Adult Suffrage Act, 1908
3-3:30pm	AFTERNOON TEA
3:30 - 4:30pm	<i>Janet Powell</i> Electing Women: The Democrats and the Australian Greens—Why is it so? <i>Madeline Grey</i> Four Decades of Struggle for Women’s Political Citizenship in Victoria: 1972–2007

**Research note**

Vincent Buckley's papers in the National library of Australia contain in NLA ms 7289, Series 1, Box 14, File 20 three letters from Amanda Buckley to Vincent Buckley. One of these may be of interest to political historians. In it, after apologising for abandoning academic studies for a career in journalism for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, she gives the background to Phillip Lynch's recent resignation. She says he resigned in expectation of appointment to some prestigious post, such as an ambassadorship. More significantly, the reason for his resignation was to block Andrew Peacock and leave the way open for John Howard, presumably for election to the Deputy Leadership. This explanation is credible, as Amanda's father had been Lynch's press officer. As the matter was not pertinent to my immediate research, I did not record the date of the letter or its precise file.

*John McLaren*

**Events of Interest**

**Thursday 29 November 2007: 10.30 am-12.30 pm**  
**Public Record Office Vic**

**Records of work: our employment and industrial heritage**  
 We all work, earning a living by the sweat of our brows, by muscle or brain. But are there records to find relating to work, employment, business and industry? Presented jointly by PROV and the University of Melbourne Archives this seminar looks at a range of records from PROV and the rich business and union related holdings of UMA.  
 Victorian Archives Centre. 99 Shiel Street, North Melbourne

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**Wednesday 12 December 2007: 6.30 pm**  
**University of Melbourne School of Historical Studies**  
**Valedictory lecture**

**The University in the Neo-Liberal Revolution, 1957-2007: Writing and Teaching History from the Cold War to the Age of Terror.**

**Speaker: Professor Charles Sowerwine**

Chips Sowerwine studied history at Oberlin College and completed post-graduate degrees at the University of Wisconsin. He taught at the University of Paris before joining Melbourne University in 1974, and was visiting Professor of Contemporary History at the Université de Versailles-Saint Quentin en Yvelines 1995-2002. He is a specialist in 19th and 20th century French history with an emphasis on gender. Theatre A, Elisabeth Murdoch Building, University of Melbourne. Enquiries: Caroline Hamilton. Tel: 8344 7235. Email: hamec@unimelb.edu.au

**Events of Interest**

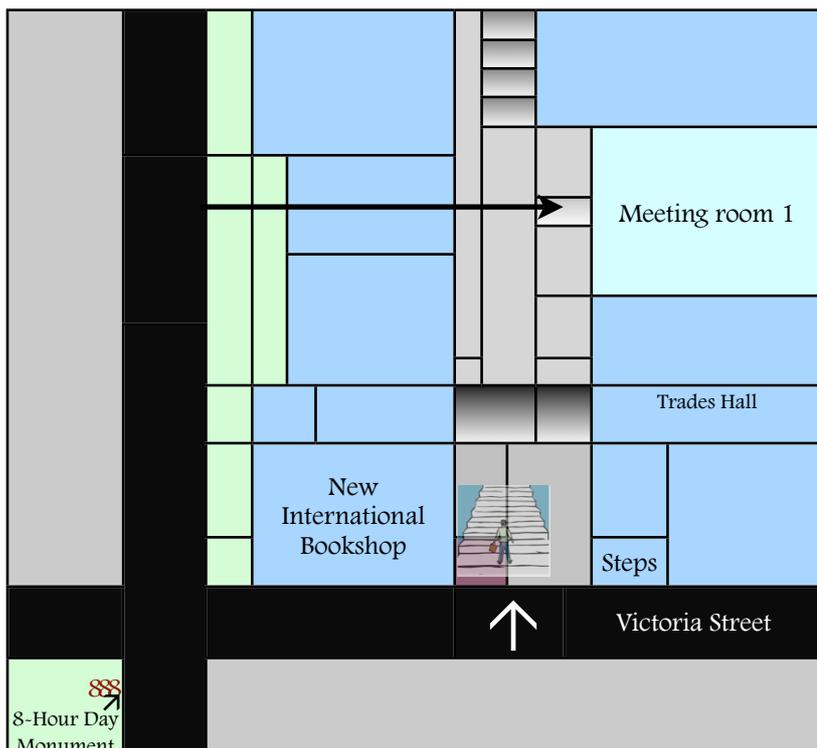
**Thursday 29 November 2007: 6.00 pm**  
**History Council of Victoria Annual Lecture**  
**Fractional Identities: the political arithmetic of Aboriginal Victorians**

**Guest speakers: Professor Janet McCalman and Dr Len Smith**

This lecture will tell two stories: how a team, that included an Aboriginal genealogist, a demographer, a medico, historians and computer specialists, recreated the history of Aboriginal Victoria backwards from genealogies, and uncovered the hidden political arithmetic of colonization. Roadshow Theatre. State Library of Victoria. Cost: \$10 (\$5 concession) Bookings: 8664 7261 or [hcexecofficer@slv.vic.gov.au](mailto:hcexecofficer@slv.vic.gov.au)

**Melbourne branch ASSLH contacts and meeting place**

*Meetings of the society are held in Meeting Room 1 in the Trades Hall. Enter Trades Hall through the Victoria Street entrance.*



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Please send all submissions and research questions/ notes for inclusion in *Recorder* to the editor, Julie Kimber ([juliekimber@unswalumni.com](mailto:juliekimber@unswalumni.com))