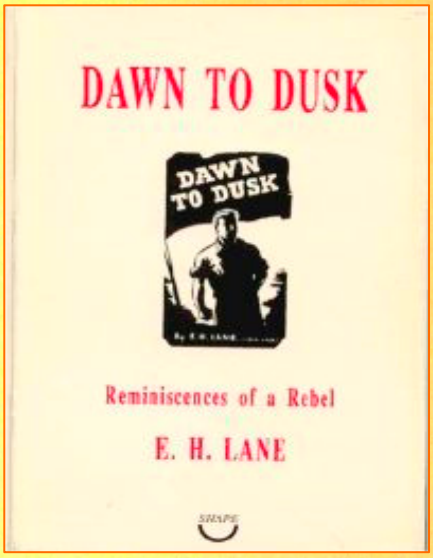


Dawn to Dusk

Reminiscences of a Rebel

By

E.H. LANE

("JACK CADE")

First Published by William Brooks & Co. (Qld) 1939.
Republished by SHAPE 1993.

I wish to make it clear that my criticism of Labour men in these pages is not to be taken as a reflection upon their private lives and conduct. I have discussed solely their public and political actions.

E.H. Lane

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This book has been reprinted without editorial changes to maintain the character of the original. Obvious typographical errors have been corrected. We have left intact other errors where alteration could impinge on the author's intention, for example: page 29, para. 4, line 8 and page 32, para. 3, line 15.

The graphics introducing the six parts of this book are all taken from "The Daily Standard", Queensland's labor newspaper, with the exception of that from Part 1. This graphic is from the bulletin issued during the Brisbane tramway's strike of 1912. "The Daily Standard" evolved from that bulletin.

SHAPE P.O. Box 5093, West End, Brisbane 4101



(above) some of the 220 emigrants bound for the New Australia colony aboard the 'Royal Tar' which sailed from Sydney on 21 July 1893. Photo from the Sydney Mail, 22 July 1893, and courtesy of the Mitchell Library, N.S.W.

(below) members of the Cosme communist colony in Paraguay (which seceded from New Australia) with Mary Cameron, later Gilmore, fifth from left. Photo from the Dame Mary Gilmore collection, National Library of Australia, and reproduced courtesy of the Library.



Dedication

Dedicated to all those Comrades who, despite all costs, disillusionments, and betrayals — "in storm or stress or calm" — have never faltered in the fight, but have ever held aloft the red flag of Working Class Emancipation and pressed forward towards Freedom's goal.



Ernie and Mabel Lane.

Ernest Henry Lane was born at Bristol, England, on 26 December 1869 and came to Australia with his brother Frank in 1884. Within a few years the rest of his family also emigrated to Australia.

Arriving penniless he soon found a job on a dairy farm and spent the first year or so of his new life delivering milk around Brisbane at four o'clock in the morning, every morning, for a few paltry shillings a week. He was only fifteen years old. At this early age he became interested in the workers' struggle and brother William cemented his interest. Allied to this interest was his love of music and poetry and his written work contains many quotations from the classical poets.

Before settling down in Australia he went to North America and worked on cattle ranches. Back in Australia he was restless and had a variety of jobs. Among these he went to Western Queensland as offsider to a shearers' cook and became involved in the shearers' strikes of the 1890s, so ably helped by his brother William.

In these years he helped form the Social Democratic Vanguard which was the foremost Socialist organisation in Australia in its time. The literature distributed by this organisation made Queensland the foremost state in the battle of the unions for better wages and conditions.

He married Mabel Gray and had three children born in Brisbane. The youngest, Alice, was born in the Argentine in South America at the time when William Lane founded the Cosme colony in Paraguay. He helped with the Australian side of the venture but did not have enough money to take the family. It was 1902 before he and the family went to Cosme and the story is told that Mrs Lane took in a star boarder to help raise the money. He stayed for two years and achieved the ambition of his life to live and work in a socialist colony. The colony failed and in 1904 he went to friends in the Argentine and worked in a meatworks for a few years till he saved enough money to go to England and then back to Australia.

After the big strikes of 1912 the 'Daily Standard' newspaper was formed and Ernie joined as a journalist reporting on industrial affairs and wrote under the name "Jack Cade". In the war years of 1914/18 he came under the wrath of the censor who did not spare the blue pencil to censor news the public should have heard. It was almost a daily occurance to have blank spaces in his articles that had been censored. He was a leading figure in the anti–conscription fight and the result justified all his hard work.

The shearers in the Australian Workers Union never forgot him and returned him to high office each year. Probably his proudest moment was when he pursuaded the A.W.U. to grant a sum of money for the purchase of working class literature and he flooded the union with the best selection of working class literature in the world. He became a prominent figure at the highest A.W.U. and Labor Party conferences in Australia. In 1918 Jack Crampton, a member of Queensland's Legislative Council (and one who voted to abolish this upper house), paid this tribute to him:

> No man has tried harder to live the life of the industrial socialist than "Jack Cade" (Ernie Lane). Determination, basicness and self sacrifice have won for him the esteem of the students of big unionism and honesty of purpose has won for him the respect of the 'crafties'. He was an extraordinary cementing and linking up influence. Those who knew him learned to love him, and that nothing finer can be said. Before the stagnant pool the true industrialist is mute. Beside flowing, rippling brook he is filled with inspiration and hope. Where is the man who today denies our resemblance to the stagnant pool? Where is the man who today can say that stagnation is not akin to retrogression?

Ernie Lane was my father–in–law and his conduct of life has been an inspiration to me for the last sixty years.

Clarrie Beckingham
Brisbane, May 1992.

Introduction

I feel honoured to have been selected to write an Introduction to the timely reprint of the memoirs of one who made a significant contribution to the Labour Movement, a contribution for which he has received inadequate recognition. I do so as a member of a family which was very close indeed to the family of Lane during many eventful years in our history.

Among my earliest recollections are of lively political discussions at the Lanes' home, 'Cosme', on the banks of the Brisbane river at Highgate Hill, which was an 'open house' for activists of the Labour Movement literally from all over the world.

E. H. Lane's reminiscences are essentially an outstanding example of the oral history that has now become quite a vogue, and rightly so, for the reporting of happenings by the actual participants in them has a special, unmatched authenticity.

The Lane family lived in the turbulent period of the stirring of Australia's nationhood, marked by a striving for a more humane society than the Old World of oppression and cruelty, a struggle given meaning and inspiration by agitators, orators and poets like Henry Lawson, Francis Adams, Ted Brady and others, with most of whom Ernest Lane had a personal association.

But how to achieve it, this new community of justice and equality? The Lane brothers, William, John and Ernest, saw the solution in the application, writ large, of mateship born in the great open spaces of the New World; in co–operation instead of acquisitiveness, in the abolition of antagonistic classes, in the ending of the exploitation of man by man – in short in socialism.

In *Dawn to Dusk* Ernest Lane gives a graphic account, pungent but warm, of the activities of the early socialists in spreading the gospel. In a pattern of trial and error enthusiastic groups stepped upon the stage and faded out with rather disconcerting frequency, but their message lived on and gathered increasing support until it became part and parcel of the accepted ideology of the Labour Movement.

In characteristic rhetorical and discursive style Ernie provides a ball–to–ball report on some of the crucial watersheds in our history, in all of which he played a leading role:

- The courageous, if misguided, attempt in the 1890s to carve a communist society out of the jungles of South America, a New Australia, designed to act as a beacon for the rest of the world.
- The bitter general strike in Queensland in 1912.
- The trials and tribulations of the strike's meritorious progeny, the Labour Daily Standard, in which Lane himself was the most dynamic figure writing under the pseudonym, pregnant with historical import, of Jack Cade.
- The fight for free speech against conscription and state tyranny during the First World War.
- The impact of the world shattering Russian revolution of 1917.
- The working out in 1921 by the Australian Labor Party and the Trade Union Movement of the mechanism for the implementation of a socialisation objective.
- The moves to form a One Big Union of the working class, leading at length to the dialectical compromise of the Australasian Council of Trade Unions.

The very personification of socialist idealism, Lane waged a consistent campaign for the education in sociology and political economy within the Movement, being personally responsible for the formation of many agencies. And he

ideals through thick and thin, and optimism regarding their eventual triumph, for are they not based on historic truth?

Do we not agree with Lane that socialism is still the only answer to the evils of capitalism — its exploitation of man by man, its inherent anarchy of production with alternating booms and busts, its inequality and endemic social injustice?

Edgar Ross
Brisbane, February 1992.

(Edgar Ross could be said to have been born with a socialist spoon in his mouth, his father being active in the formation of the first socialist organisations in Queensland, in association with E.H. Lane, in the early years of this century.

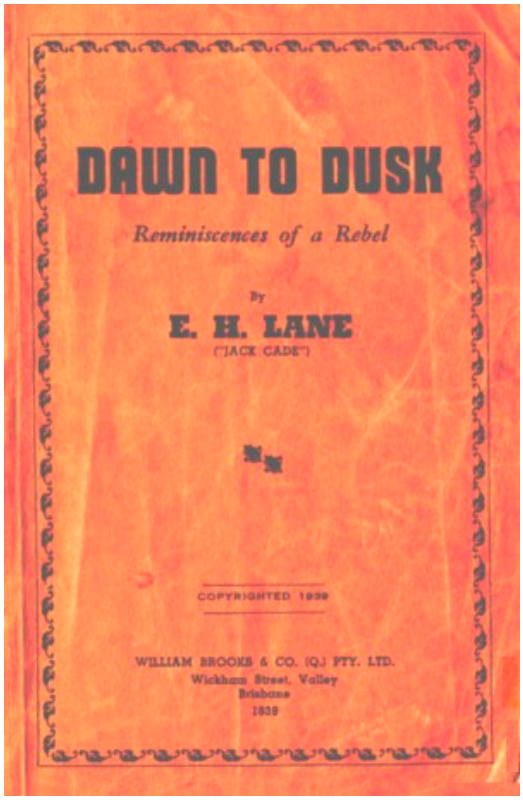
For forty years Edgar worked as a journalist for the miner's union, first as associate editor of Barrier Daily Truth at Broken Hill, then as editor of the union's weekly journal the national Common Cause.

Active throughout as a union publicist, spokesman and organiser, he represented the mining group on the executive of the N.S.W. Labor Council, of which he was a delegate for thirty years.

His major published work is A History of the Miner's Federation (1970–84)

Edgar Ross was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1929 to 1966 and was an early member of the Socialist Party of Australia.)

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FOREWORD

It is with a feeling of great pleasure that I accede to the request of the author to write a foreword to this book. My intimate acquaintance with him goes back to a day during the General Strike of 1912, when he and I were assigned for duty together issuing food coupons to strikers. Since that stirring period in the Labour Movement, there has developed between us a close friendship, in the course of which I have had related to me many of the happenings that are recorded in this book. Some of them I knew from my own knowledge, through my association with them as a delegate to the Q.C.E. and other representative gatherings. I have often expressed the view that it would be a great pity if Comrade Lane did not commit his reminiscences to writing; and I am pleased that he has done so.

I know that it is not in any spirit of caprice or spite that he has indulged in parts of his book, in criticism of some of Labour's past leaders or Labour's policy. He is incapable of any such action. His own feelings are sufficient guarantee that criticism is levelled only where it has been earned; and that the purpose of it is intended to provide the Movement with warnings of some of the factors that have been responsible for sapping working class organisations of their militant outlook and fighting spirit.

To many persons books of reminiscences seem to lack purpose and use. But it often occurs that reminiscences of persons who were actually associated with the events recorded in official histories, explain why some of those events took the course they did; and, therefore, reminiscences become a very necessary supplement to the official histories of Labour in this State.

The record of "Ernie" Lane's reminiscences should be regarded as a valuable contribution to Australian working class literature. His association with the Movement goes back to the time when Labour was struggling for existence and recognition in this country, and when its organisations did not enjoy the liberties of speech, assembly and organisation that they established for themselves later in the course of their growth and development of

influence. He and other members of his family assisted in directing the policy and activity of the Movement in this country towards achieving industrial solidarity and political representation and influence in the affairs of the land.

He has seen those early dreams and hopes of Labour realised. The Movement developed strength, influence and power. It has gained the liberties it fought for in the early days, and which were considered necessary to its proper growth and development. It achieved political strength sufficient to become the Government of the Nation and of its States. It has contributed a great deal to the improvement of industrial and social conditions of the people; and it has been responsible for most of the humanitarian legislation that is on our Statute Books. Its representatives have displayed great capacity in high executive positions; and from being regarded as outlaws and being imprisoned as strike-leaders and agitators, they have advanced to a state of being considered eligible to hob-nob with princes and kings.

"Ernie" Lane has witnessed the change taking place in Labour's status and influence; has lived through the period of it; has helped to make it possible. And with the advancement of Labour's position and power he has witnessed the gradual abandonment of every principle that Labour's pioneers held sacred and thought vital to the real advancement of the Working Class Movement. He has seen the policy of the official Labour Movement in this State change colour from the deep red of Socialism to the palest pink of Liberalism. He has seen men who have been raised to positions of trusted leadership in the Movement use those positions to advance their own careers and fortunes rather than those of the class whom they claimed to represent; and, sometimes, desert the workers' cause to enter the ranks of Labour's enemies.

Gone now is the fervid faith, the high hope, the enduring enthusiasm, and the strong spirit of struggle that characterised the early Labour Movement that the name of Lane will be associated with always in this State. In its place there has been erected an "official," Labour Movement that is numerically stronger; in which membership imposes no sacrifice or danger; which places greater value on tactics of political expediency than on faith in principle; that has abandoned the policy of the class struggle for one of class collaboration; and

that by its listlessness and lack of fighting spirit is endangering even the retention of the liberties of speech, assembly, and organisation that were fought for by, and established through the sacrifice of, the Lanes and other pioneers of the Labour Movement here.

Yet, throughout it all, “Ernie” Lane’s rebel spirit has not wavered. His belief in the justice of the working class cause is as strong now as in the early days of his association with the Movement. He has not abandoned the hope that the workers’ cause will triumph to the stage that economic exploitation of labour in the interest of profit will be completely eliminated, and that the social and cultural progress of the working class will not be regulated by the rate of profit being earned by a rapacious capitalist class. He has not given way to despair, or professed disillusionment as an excuse for seeking personal advancement by abandoning his early beliefs or embracing other political creeds. He has remained the rebel because his beliefs do not arise from instinct alone, but from honest conviction, a complete knowledge of the economics of Socialism, and a proper understanding of the requirements of the working class.

If, in his book, there creeps in occasionally a note of pessimism or disappointment, it is because his own gentle and kindly nature, and his own honesty and sincerity, cause him to believe that those same qualities should be possessed by all humans particularly those who are placed in positions of trust and influence in the Labour Movement, and he can find no excuse for those in whom that trust has been misplaced; and also because he knows that “official” Labour policy is not conducted according to the will of the majority of the rank-and-file, whose wishes are suppressed in the ruthless grind of machine politics.

To those who will not tolerate that suppression and who are still fighting the real battle of Labour and they are an ever-growing band in these days of economic stress and political struggle the book will provide inspiration to continue the fight. They may not find in the book any practical contribution to the immediate vital economic and social problems that confront the Labour movement; and they may not agree with many of the opinions and conclusions of the author. But they will absorb from it some of the militant Socialist spirit

that is embodied in its author and in many of his early friends and associates who are mentioned by him. They will learn from this record of Labour's struggles in this State, that if their Movement at the moment does not possess the Socialist spirit that was breathed into it by the pioneers, it is because that Movement has been diverted from its real mission, and has been allowed to become the playground of careerists and opportunists, who have used it to serve their own needs, and not those of the workers.

The real Labour Movement is still a rebel movement; it is still fighting against all those injustices and inequities that are sanctioned by the accepted scheme of "law and order" within our community; it is still strongly opposed to the system that allows a privileged possessing class to exist alongside a dispossessed class that is waging a continual struggle with suffering and want; it still believes that the class struggle is a reality in the existing social order; it is still organised to carry on that struggle on behalf of the oppressed and exploited working class until they are freed from oppression and exploitation.

That Labour Movement will arise again on the pressing economic and social needs of the workers to carry out Labour's real mission, and to achieve the objective of the organised working class.

T. MORONEY, State Secretary,
Australian Railways Union.

DAWN TO DUSK
Reminiscences of a Rebel

PREFACE



These reminiscences of an active life closely associated with various phases of the Australian Labour Movement, are not in any sense a history of that movement. I have not had either records, data – or inclination to write such.

Even as an autobiography these memoirs are incomplete, lacking many details and incidents which might well be included. But in many respects this record is of interest as indicative of some of the unseen currents and shallows of the movement that have been responsible for much of the disaster and shipwrecks that have marked the track of the workers towards their goal.

These memoirs are at least an honest endeavour to give a true replica of the background and foundations of my beliefs – in the supreme rightness and inevitability of Communism as the one and only road whereby the workers – the mass of the people – can free themselves from exploitation. Despite the buffetings of Fate, almost continual betrayal and treacheries, I have never faltered in this faith – have never in the slightest measure doubted its truth and glorious destiny, and it is from this angle alone that I have approached and met all the problems of human existence which we all have to face.

Thus as a confirmed Communist, admitting no other solution whereby to solve the evils of capitalist society, I have applied that standard of ethics and economics to those individuals and organisations who presume to act and

speak on behalf of the disinherited toilers. If my judgment of men as disclosed in these memoirs appears harsh or intolerant, it is solely the fault of the condemned who have wittingly or unwittingly followed false gods – and grossly betrayed their trust. In the crucible of life which immutably tests men's souls they have proved dross, lacking that fidelity to principle and ideals without which man is a poor puppet and plaything of fate.

To clear away any misunderstanding, I specially desire to emphasise the fact that the Australian Labour Party – or any other party for that matter – is NOT the Labour Movement. The A.L.P. is just a section of the movement, and, as its deplorable later history shows only too plainly, a very mediocre and futile section. But with an effrontery typical of Labour politicians, Labour Party representatives unblushingly designate the A.L.P. as the Labour Movement, with themselves as the impeccable high priests. It would indeed be a hopeless tragedy if the A.L.P. claim was a bona fide one, for then the future would be a blank insofar as the welfare of the workers is concerned.

In these discursive memoirs, I have omitted to pay well deserved tribute to many friends and comrades who it has been my good fortune to know and associate with. With faith unshaken they have never faltered, never chosen the line of least resistance which often leads to material comfort and advancement. I hope these gallant marchers in the Army of the Night will forgive me this apparent non-recognition of their worth. To those Labourites who are either in the camp of the enemy or in such close contact as to render it impossible to define their line of demarcation, who I have not honourably (?) mentioned – well – they can consider themselves fortunate that they also have not been pilloried and placed in the rogues gallery with their perhaps more prominent colleagues.

In my judgment and comments on those who have falsified their erstwhile pledges and ideals I have "set down naught in malice." They by their own acts of betrayal and treachery have left themselves naked, not to their enemies, but to the scorn and righteous resentment of all who regard the Labour Movement as something far nobler than a profession and means to secure personal aggrandisement and popular applause.

The charge that Utopian idealism is outside the realms of practical politics leaves me unperturbed. It has been truly said “That a map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing.”

“Where there is no vision – there the people perish.” I have been a dreamer – a visionary – seeing in the future that society wherein all the dreams of’ Labour, of the poor oppressed ones of the earth, will come true. “There has never been a great invention that did not begin in a dream, just as there never has been a great truth that did not begin as a heresy. And if we look back over history we find that the sublime moments, with men and nations, are those in which they break free from the anchorage of the past, and set sail towards the unknown seas on a new and spiritual voyage of discovery.”

I believe that the day is not far distant when the dreamers of the world will reap their reward. Then will the blind leaders of the blind who to-day slander and disavow Communism as a danger and disruptive force be utterly discredited. Like the misleaders berated by Omar Khayyam, their words to scorn will be scattered, and their mouths stopped with dust.

With Heine I have found that “Life is a comedy to those who think – and a tragedy to those who feel.” And it is because I have felt the woes and sufferings of the common people, contemned, mercilessly exploited under the jungle law of capitalist society, that I have rebelled and ever challenged this debased system and its apologists.

It was at the repeated urgings of many active participators in the Labour Movement of today that I resolved to write these reminiscences. I have sought the approval of none, probably have disappointed some who anticipated a more detailed and effective revelation of Labour’s ills. But at least I have been honest and as frank as possible. Unlike many autobiographies, every incident – every word in this passing record of my life are actual facts and truths. (The half century covered in this period has gone beyond recall, and still the show goes on).

It is now the great privilege and duty of the younger generation to so shape their lives – their activities – to carry on the fight for human emancipation, for the triumphant establishment of the Communist State, which to me and to countless others has ever been the flaming gaol of our life's pilgrimage.

It should be clearly understood that my Communist faith and ideals are not necessarily those of any party or even individuals, but entirely my own point of view. Neither are these memoirs propaganda only insofar as they record events of a not uneventful life. They can in short be truly designated – a human document - nothing more, but certainly nothing less.

E. H. Lane, "Cosme," Highgate Hill, Brisbane, September, 1938.

PART I
Childhood and Youth

Chapter I. Early Influences

It is a far cry from the old worn-out beliefs of the conservativism and reactionary political policies of 50 years ago, to the virile working class movement that is today insistently smashing down the gates of capitalist imperialism and exploitation. Yet with countless others I have travelled that road, and, in the journeying, have had many and varied experiences.

To record this pilgrimage, which may be of interest and value, also throw a badly needed light on some dark and nauseous corners of the Australian Labour Movement as misinterpreted by many of its so-called leaders, is the principal motive of these memoirs. Since my first participation, in early youth, in the working class movement, I have undeviatingly adhered to the Socialist or Communist philosophy, and from that angle and none other herewith review and comment upon the outstanding epochs and events of the past 50 years.

Consequently there is of necessity a scathing and uncompromising condemnation of those who, for place and power or other ignoble motives, have debased the Labour movement and sold the pass to the enemy. There can be no toleration for this “legion of the lost” that has brought the workers to their present parlous and humiliating position, but only righteous scorn and contempt.

It was suggested to me by the late Vic. Smith, bohemian and book lover, that in imitation of Frank Harris I should write a book entitled “Men I have Known.” I replied that if I wrote such a book I would term it “Men I Thought I Knew."’ But bitter experience has taught me and others, and I know them now, and the knowing is a revelation of betrayal of principle and unscrupulousness that leaves one aghast.

Reverting to my childhood and early training, unlike some, I have no Chartist or rebel ancestors or traditional progressive background. The youngest

of five brothers, William was the eldest, I was steeped to the neck in idolatrous worship of Church and State, British infallibility, and justice, and shuddered with childish horror at the mere thought of radicalism and Atheism, the two bogies of those days. Our father had emerged from a peasant environment in Ireland to that of a humble member of the petty bourgeoise, and that was the orbit round which the whole family revolved in glamourous abasement. Disraeli and Queen Victoria were our god and goddess, while Gladstone and John Morley symbolised all that was evil and destructive. Socialism, to us and millions of others, in the seventies of last century, was utterly unknown. Though very young I was precocious, due chiefly to father being an active Tory politician, strongly supported by my eldest brother Will, and at seven or eight years of age was primed with political wisdom (?) obviously extremely conservative. My greatest delight was to get a talk started on England's history and naval and military heroes. I knew no others. I once said I would rather have a talk on great (?) men than a piece of cake.

Our mother died when I was nine years of age and six years later a move was made to Australia. My brother Frank, 16 years of age, and I were the first of the Lane family to arrive in Brisbane in 1884. We landed penniless and without a friend. I was engaged for 12 months by Andrew Wagner, a milk farmer at Nundah, then known as German Station, at 7/6 per week.

For twelve months I had to start work at 1.30 a.m. Sundays and holidays included. But the experience was not altogether wasted.

The following year my brothers Will and John arrived in Brisbane, and to my horror I discovered that Will had evolved into a radical or worse. When he had left England for America some years before he had given me as a parting gift a Church of England prayer book in the fly leaf of which he had written "Fear God and Honour the King." That was the very foundation of our material and spiritual life. I reminded him of this. He had forgotten, and I said sadly "Don't you believe that now?" He laughed and replied "No! And you won't some day, when you know better." Shocked, I repudiated this blasphemous prophecy, which, however, was fulfilled to the uttermost in the course of two years, when I was seventeen years of age.

So in 1886 I had shed my swaddling clothes and became a passionate rebel against all those sacred things that in my earlier years had been held inviolate and unassailable. Undoubtedly my brother Will's influence hastened this dramatic change of heart and outlook, but my own experiences, reading, and temperament would undoubtedly have quickly shown me the evils and fallacies of my childish beliefs and compelled me become a Socialist, or rather Communist.

Temperament is one of the most potent factors in the make-up and making of a rebel, and lacking the rebel temperament is a serious handicap to the revolutionary who with a thorough knowledge of the economic basis strives to impart Promethean fire to his agitational work.

Of course, the rebel temperament alone is unstable as water and shifting as sand. It leads to anarchism and other vague and vain strivings to find a way out of the present slough of universal misery. But, plus a sound understanding of the materialist foundations of society, the born rebel is the cream of the working class movement.

In relating my emergence from darkness to light, from the soul destroying philosophy of capitalist individualism to the inspiring humanitarianism of Communism, one or two points may be noted.

Although at first I had little knowledge of the sound economic basis of the Socialist theory, having read very little at that time, its ethical appeal to me was overwhelming in its intensity. There was born within me an instinctive and passionate love for the workers of all lands, a scorn of the cowardly expediences which have wrecked countless brave endeavours. Happily, through weal and woe, down the long, often heart-breaking years, this passion for my fellows has never deserted me and has been a dear source of comfort when all else has failed. While the purely ethical phase of the Socialist movement does not meet with much enthusiasm from the Marxian dogmatist, is even regarded as "suspect," I am absolutely convinced that it is the corner stone of any bona-fide Socialist or Communist Society. Such a society must axiomatically be based on a solid economic foundation. The Communist

theory unquestionably supplies that, but the ethics or religion of Communism is an integral part of the whole and any attempt to establish a Communist Society without a proper realisation of this position will inevitably fall.

My own personal experiences serves to emphasise this very fixed opinion on this subject, and although I have no desire to further dilate on this important phase of the working class movement, I would reaffirm this declaration. No Communist State could live on a purely ethical basis, neither, just as surely, could it do so lacking that spiritual realisation of Communistic ethics.

I must confess that largely through life I have been guided by my emotions and that hard materialism has not appealed to me or given me that courage and inspiration so essential in fights during times of crisis. Some of the harder headed and less temperamental comrades may condemn this attitude, or question its wisdom. I can, however, say without fear of denial, that this emotionalism has never played me false. It has never lead me wandering up blind alleys to betray the workers into a defeatist position. Under all and every circumstance it has brought me to the true haven, and has ever strengthened, not weakened, my attachment to the workers and their dearest ideals. Based fundamentally on a sound economic background, emotion, temperament, ethics, call it what one will, will never lead one to betray or desert the workers cause. Can as much be said for the undeviating materialist leader?

*** * ***

With an irrepressible love of poetry from my earliest youth, I have naturally looked to the poets at this stage of development. Nor did I search in vain, but discovered a wealth of inspiration that has never-ending solace in life's darkest hours. Burns, Byron, Walt Whitman, William Morris, Swinburne's earlier poems – and Shelley. How I devoured their revolutionary thoughts and aspirations, and indeed felt comradeship with all the great ones of the earth.

I ascribe to this poetic exaltation the enthusiasm and inflexibility of purpose that has ever made it impossible for me to abandon or betray the Communist path I so passionately pursued in my youth. No other path, however tempting or seemingly fair, has caused me to stray, and today, for all who have eyes to

see, the end of the road is in sight. Therefore in sketching the foundation and background of my life, this record would be sadly incomplete if I did not, with deep thankfulness, remember and note my unpayable debt to humanities poets. Neither is it too much to assume that there are countless other good comrades, who have fought, and are still fighting, the good fight, who have found similar strength and inspiration through life's journey.

Of all these seers and prophets of the Future's Day, when "All will be better than well" – Shelley was the greatest – and the best beloved. I have more to relate of him later on.

My reading in regard to economics during my embryonic existence was scant, chiefly because books of a radical character were rare. At the present time there is a superabundance of Communistic and radical literature. Of the making of books there is no end, so that it is impossible for anyone to read and keep pace with the ever increasing number. In the early eighties of the last century the publication of a worthwhile book of a revolution nature was hailed as a heaven-sent gift and eagerly procured and diligently digested.

Outside of the poets mentioned, Morrison Davidson's "Old Order and the New," "Gospel of the Poor," "New Book of Kings," with Morris's "Dream of John Bull" and "News from Nowhere" and "Story of an African Farm" and "Dreams" by Olive Schriner, provided me with much enlightenment and joy. These, and a few other radical books, were the highlights that served to keep all those who ever engaged in the Labour movement in touch with the growing progressive thought that was emerging from the long dark night of ignorance and despair. Thus did I, like many others, find the light and embark upon a lifelong crusade against the capitalist exploiter.

The outstanding feature of this period of my development was the influence and magnetic personality of my brother Will. As far as I was concerned all else in life was completely over-shadowed, and with many other I sat enraptured at his feet and eagerly drank from the cup of inspiration which poured from his soul.

Lloyd Ross, in his recently published book, “William Lane and the Australian Labour Movement,” brilliantly and truthfully records Will’s amazing work and influence during this period.

I could add but little to that invaluable history of Will’s genius in the moulding of a rejuvenated Labour movement that swept a continent, and brought hope to many thousands of weary searchers for a new world.

It is impossible for the present generation to more than dimly vizualise the power, beauty, and uplifting influence that W. Lane exercised over the minds – and destinies – of men and women throughout Australia. The time was indeed ripe for a new faith whereby to point the way out of a brutal and soul damning system of society. Will gave that message, translating it into language and deeds that spurred men into action.

When he died in 1917, his death evoked grief and appreciation of his life work from those who never forgot his work and self sacrifice for the workers he loved so dearly.

I received many touching letters of condolence of which the following from a life-long battler in the Labour movement is typical, giving some indication of the love and comradeship Will had created in the hearts of many who had never personally known him:

“I used to read his work in the “Boomerang” And they were grand and inspiring. Ah! Those were the days to live in, and there is only a few of us who have kept true and never wavered. Your dear brother was a great man and one of the greatest journalists who ever struck Australia. But that was not all. His writing breathed of life and soul and lifted one right out of the mud and made one look up and see that there was such a thing as a blue sky overhead. I can remember how he used to lift my weary sad soul out of the mire of selfishness and self- pity, so that I began to live a man’s life without whimpering and stand on my feet up to anyone. Vale William Lane!”

As a brother of the man whose name was ringing throughout Queensland and also in the other States, I received a full share of reflected glory. This was

all I was entitled to, as my part in agitation or any sort of work relating to the working class movement was practically nil. There was little opportunity in Brisbane in the middle eighties of the last century for one to become associated with any radical organisation (none existed) or the few craft unions and waterside and seamen's unions, unless working in these occupations. I worked in a grocery store and it was undreamt of that a shop assistants' union was in the realms of possibility. So, although seized with a hot revolt against the established order of things, my rebellion was of a somewhat vague and indeterminate character, obviously lacking the knowledge and experience that came quickly in later years. I was only seventeen years of age and I was content to adore Will and enthusiastically agree to all his growing revolutionary pronouncements.

1 well remember a forgotten page of Labour history in Brisbane (1887). My brother started a "Bellamey" society. "Looking Backward" was just then in the boom. We met regularly in the closed-in balcony of George Marchant's hop beer factory in Bowen Street, and there were about a dozen of us used to attend. Mr. Marchant became a very wealthy man and has devoted his money to charitable institutions, with a special regard for crippled children.

Another remembrance of that period is Francis Adams, the poet, and his wife who were close friends of my brother. Heated arguments sometimes arose on various aspects of revolutionary thought and I found myself actually closely in sympathy with the extreme rebelliousness of Francis Adams, who was impatient of Will's more demure methods. I still retain a very loving remembrance of Adams, who, young as I was, had a magnetic appeal to my then unformed and unbalanced mind.

At the age of nineteen I felt the urge of travel and with a severe attack of wanderlust went to Sydney. It was then that I first met A. G. Yewen, a remarkable and intriguing personality who had been closely associated with the early history of the British Socialist movement. A stonemason by trade, Yewen was quickly repudiated by his family when he became an active member of the Social Democratic Federation. A personal friend of William Morris, Yewen assisted him to form the Socialist League (1884) in a

breakaway from the S.D.F., whose high priest was H. M. Hyndman, on account of the growing parliamentarianism of that body. Owing to ill health Yewen was ordered to go to Australia. He had a letter to W. Lane in Brisbane and Will sent him up to Umbiram, Darling Downs, where my brother John was school teacher. Yewen stayed with John for six months and in improved health, went to Sydney. There he threw himself into the work of the Australian Socialist League, of which McNamara was secretary.

Socialism in those days was indeed a maligned and hated creed, and its few expounders and adherents were subject to every form of social ostracism and persecution, which it is hard for the present generation to realise. To be branded as a Socialist was to incur untold penalties, victimisation, and scorn. The old Socialist rooms in the back premises of a shop on Brickfield Hill were, it must be admitted, redolent of the untidiness and squalor with which it was always credited by its enemies. “Mac” and Yewen used to sleep on a mattress on the floor, where I joined them on occasions. There was a very good lot of Socialist and Radical papers from all parts of the world, and as there were German, Austrian, French and Italian members, the League was often of an international character.

Yewen was a widely read man and his Socialist dogma and practice was of an intense character. Over a period of years, on many occasions he literally starved in propagating the truth of Socialism. In 1891 he became sub-editor of the Queensland Worker, under W. Lane as editor. Two years later he returned to Sydney, and with two other enthusiasts they sold and mortgaged their entire worldly possessions to establish a Socialist weekly paper, with the particular object of securing the election of W. M. Hughes, M.H.R., to the New South Wales Parliament. Hughes was an avowed Socialist and largely through Yewen’s paper was elected as a Labour member. However, as soon as he was elected, this chameleon of politics repudiated his Socialist principles – and friends – and viciously kicked away the ladder whereby he had clambered into parliament.

This brutal betrayal of principles and friends alike had a devastating effect on Yewen. He told me that the Hughes experience had altered his whole

outlook on life. He (Yewen) was now convinced that, owing to the perfidy and unreliability of Labour representatives, no permanent progress on those lines could be made. The movement, he said, would evolve in the course of time and irrevocable events, and was not worth anyone's personal sacrifice, nor would such sacrifice be of any advantage to the cause.

So one of the results of Billy Hughes' renegadism was the loss for all time to Australian Labour of A. G. Yewen, a man who had proved his worth by many searing tests. It always appeared amazing to me that a man of Yewen's intensity could thus abandon the cause he had so unselfishly devoted his life to.

But he did, and until he died, some years ago, never took the slightest activity, and very little interest, in the Labour movement. However, whenever he happened to meet Hughes in the streets of Sydney, Yewen would stop him and say in a loud tone to Hughes for public hearing: "Hughes, you rat!"

After a hard struggle Yewen secured a job as sub-editor of the "Stock and Station" journal, and although at that time he did not know a sheep from a lamb, within a few years he was recognised as one of the greatest wool authorities with regard to compilation and finance, in Australia. He was appointed editor of "Dalgety's Review" and wrote the weekly wool column article in the "Sydney Morning Herald" for years, as well as the Smithfield market reports.

Yewen, shortly after abandoning the Labour Movement, married, and purchased a large block of land right on the headland at Newport, where he built a delightful stone house. Whenever Mrs. Lane and I visited Sydney we always spent our Week-ends at Yewens and enjoyed their warm hospitality; but Socialism was not one of our topics.

Chapter II.
Revolutionary Period.

One of the most epochal events in all Labour history, the trial, conviction and execution and life imprisonment of the so-called “Chicago Anarchists,” at the latter end of 1886, deeply stirred me and profoundly accelerated my rapidly growing revolutionaryism.

There have been many famous, or rather infamous trials of working class leaders, whereat in desperate endeavours the capitalist class by “frame-ups” and other devious methods have crucified those who have dared to challenge the power of the workers’ exploiters. With the possible exception of the trial of Dimitrov and his comrades in Berlin on a charge of burning the Reichstag, the trial of the eight Chicago “anarchists” is the most dramatic in all Labour history. Arising from the nation-wide strike for an eight-hour day in which the workers were apparently going to win, a bomb was thrown at an open air meeting at Chicago. Several police were killed and the most “dangerous of the workers” were charged with murder. Like the Tom Mooney “frame-up” there was no bona-fide evidence to show that any of the eight men charged had any knowledge or connection whatever with the outrage. But their doom was sealed before the trial began. Five were condemned to be hanged, three to life imprisonment. After their conviction these martyrs in speeches from the dock, with the shadow of death over them, placed the whole capitalist system in the dock, and with burning words gloried in their agitational work and defied their blood-thirsty persecutors.

These speeches have an immortal place in working-class history. After a lapse of over 40 years their message – an echo from the grave – still rings true, irrefutable in their scathing exposure of capitalist society. One of them said: “There will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today.” Standing on the scaffold, Parsons said: “Let me speak, Oh men of America, will you let me speak Sheriff! Let the voice of the people be heard. Oh –“but the hangman immediately silenced him. In his speech from the dock Parsons, for eight hours and a half, analysed the

capitalist system and gave a brilliant exposition of Socialism which will stand for all time. The three who escaped the hangman were pardoned in 1893 by Governor Altgeld, who, in the face of the bitterest opposition, of the capitalists and their press, bravely declared that the Chicago “anarchists” had been the victims of a judicial outrage.

The passage of years, the ever-changing kaleidoscope of world affairs, inevitably brings forgetfulness of the dead past. But there are some events, some deeds that must, and will, be remembered for all time. That of the Chicago martyrs of 1886, their heroic stand in a world then indifferent and bitterly hostile to all revolutionary changes, has earned for them a proud niche in the Pantheon of Humanity.

A vivid, gripping record of this epoch in the development of the working-class fight against capitalist domination is contained in Frank Harris’s novel of revolt and passion, “The Bomb.” It is the most powerful product of his prolific and trenchant pen. He truly says, in the preface, that the cause for which the Chicago martyrs died, though hopeless to-day, must sooner or later be victorious, if humanity is to grow in pity and love.

1 have dwelt on this event in working class history because it became for years the rallying centre for the revolutionary Socialist movement – a shrine where one found inspiration and hope for a better realisation of the immorality of capitalism and the inevitability of Socialism.

With the Paris Communists of 1871, the Chicago Martyrs were a beam of light to many weary souls in these far off days.

From that starting point I became a convinced revolutionary and have found no reason since to change my attitude. To the contrary, my experience of men and life makes it impossible to visualise any honest, intelligent, individual repudiating revolution. It was in a speech of one of the Chicago Martyrs, Fielden, that I first read that great poem “Revolution,” by Freiligrath. It embodied all my restless aspirations, my searchings for expression and solace. This inspiring poem covers the whole gamut of revolutionary thought, action,

and ultimate. To me nothing as fine has been written on this pre-eminent phase of working-class progress.

It has never yet failed to bring me hope, exaltation, and certainty of ultimate victory. As one of the earliest factors guiding my life, then, and all through the years down to the present day, no memoir of my life would be complete without it. Here it is:

REVOLUTION.
By Ferdinand Freiligrath.

And though ye caught your noble prey within your hangman's sordid thrall,
And though your captive was led forth beneath your city's rampart wall;
And though the grass lies o'er her green, where at the morning's early red,
The peasant girl brings funeral wreaths – I tell ye still – she is not dead!

And though from off the lofty brow ye cut the ringlets flowing long,
And though ye've chained her 'mid the thieves' and murderers' hideous throng,
And though ye gave her felon fare-bade felon garb her livery be,
And though ye set the oakum task – I tell ye all – she still is free!

And though compelled to banishment, ye hunt her down through distant lands,
And though she seeks a foreign hearth, and silent 'mid its ashes stands;
And though she bathes her wounded feet where foreign streams seek foreign seas,
Yet – yet – she never more will hang her harp on Babel's willow tree!

Ah no! She strikes it stronger yet, and bids its loud defiance swell,
And, as she mocked your scaffold erst, she mocks your banishment as well,
She sings a song that starts ye up astounded from your slumbrous seat,
Until your hearts, your craven hearts, your traitor hearts, with terror beat!

No song of plaint, no song of sighs for those who perished unsubdued,
Nor yet a song of irony at wrong's fantastic interlude
Your "Beggar's Opera" that ye try to drag out through its lingering scenes,
Moth-eaten though the purple be that decks your tinsel kings and queens.

Ah, no! The song those waters hear is not of sorrow or dismay –
'tis triumph's song – courageous song – the paeans of the Future's day –
The Future – distant now no more – her prophet voice is sounding free,
As well as once your Godhead spake: – "I was, I am, and I shall be!"

"Yea, yet shall be, and once again before my people I shall go,
Shall plant my foot upon your necks, and lay your thrones and kingdoms low!
Shall free the slave, and right the wrong, with sword unsheathed and flag unfurled,
And strong with outstretched arm of might cry
Freedom's birth to all the world!

Ye see me only in your cells; ye see me only in the grave;
Ye see me only wandering lone beside the exile's sullen wave –
Ye fools! Do I not live where ye have tried full oft to pierce in vain?
Rests not a nook for me to dwell in every heart and every brain?

"In every brow that boldly thinks, erect with manhood's honest pride –
Does not each bosom shelter me that beats with honour's generous tide?
Not every workshop, brooding woe? Not every hut that harbours grief?
Ha! Am I not the Breath of Life that pants and struggles for relief?

"Day dawns apace; yet once again before my people I shall go,
Shall plant my foot upon your necks, and lay your crowns and kingships low!
It is no boast – it is no threat – thus history's iron law decrees
The day grows hot, O Babylon! 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!"

About this time I met Henry Lawson, who was then having a hard struggle to eke out an existence. A member of the Social Democratic Federation in London, G. Chandler, where he had known Yewen, was a painter, and through him, Lawson, Yewen and W. A. Holman, also struggling for an existence, secured a few painting jobs round Sydney. It was mostly sub-contract work at the munificent wage of sixpence per hour.

Lawson had inspiringly written "Faces in the Street," a revolutionary poem that thrilled every rebel and marked this poet of the common people of Australia as a vital force in the fierce battle of life which was to rage fiercer

than ever. His mother, Mrs. Louisa Lawson, was a woman of strong personality, and, as an uncompromising advocate of women's rights, was a dour pioneer of the feminist movement in Australia, then in its infancy.

While her son was of a dreamy, gentle nature, Mrs. Lawson was particularly fitted to lead a hard and bitter fight against an indifferent or hostile public who regarded women as chattels and rightly subject to man.

After experiencing the hellish search for employment which is one of the inevitable prices the workers have to pay for the luxury of living in a capitalist society, I obtained a job at a store at the Glebe. The wages were low and the hours long. Three months later I went to Newcastle in the course of my desire to adventure to other parts. I worked my way on a sailing ship to San Francisco, and exhilarating joys of a sailor's life were rapidly dissipated. The romance of the sea exists only in the pages of books, and the beauty of the white sails that has inspired countless writers, is far removed from the hardship and monotony of the sailor's life.

Leaving 'Frisco, I worked on a wheat ranch in the Sacramento Valley, on a fruit ranch in the foothills of the Coast range, and then took a long hop to Texas, where, after the usual heartbreaking search I got a job on a cattle ranch. While there I received the tragic news of the death by drowning in the Brisbane River of my elder brother, Jim. The shock upset all my pre-arranged plans to go to Europe before returning to Australia, and I decided to return to Brisbane. Staying at El Paso at a boarding house overnight I had a young fellow as room-mate. Retiring to our room early we chatted for a couple of hours until it was time to go to bed. I thought, "Well, I had better keep my money (50 dollars) under the pillow or my room-mate might rob me." Instantly I called myself a contemptible cad for suspecting such evil from an innocent man, and asked myself how I would like him to be thinking the same of me. So as a penance I deliberately left the money in my trousers pocket and dropped them on the floor between the two beds and went to sleep. I awoke at daybreak to find that my friend and my money were gone.

I relate this incident as indicative of my attitude towards my fellows. It involves a phase of life that we all have to face. In our social relationships and contact with people, one must follow one or other of two policies. Either accept the bona-fides of the other fellow, giving him or her the credit of being as decent and honest as yourself, or regard every man as a rogue – until you find them to be innocent. Well, I have always followed the former course. I have through life accepted people on their face value and shall continue to do so. True, as in the related instance, I have often been deceived and disillusioned, but far better to meet this result than to suspiciously regard every unknown as a scoundrel and a potential criminal.

So here I was stranded penniless and 1200 miles from my destination, " 'Frisco," or rather California, where I intended to work for a mouth prior to leaving for Sydney. In a desperate position I determined to "beat my way" on the trains and carry out my plan to be back in Australia within two months. So I set out on this new and wild adventure. I have many times thanked whatever gods there be for that robbery which compelled me to have a most interesting experience which I should never otherwise have had. Across the Arizona desert, to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles in Southern California on the top of wagons, on the brake beam under trucks, even on an engine over one section, it was an adventure well worth encountering. I developed during that journey a resourcefulness and pertinacity that amazed me and brought me to a triumphant journey's end in quick time. Utterly fatigued for want of sleep, I was fortunate enough to at once strike a job driving horses on a travelling hay-press. Stayed a month, went to 'Frisco and secured a job on the Zealundia, one of the mail boats running between 'Frisco and Sydney. On arrival at Auckland, August 1, 1890, we found the great maritime strike in full swing.

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Two or three years previously the Sydney Waterside Workers and Seamen's Unions had, by direct action, compelled the owners of the Sydney – 'Frisco mail steamers, (Sprecles, an American company), to discharge their Chinese crews and employ members of the Californian Seamen's Union. On the way over to Sydney from Auckland, the seamen on the Zealundia decided that on

arrival in Sydney they could not scab on the Australian unionists by unloading the cargo. The boat berthed at Wooloomooloo and the men refused to “turn to” and work the cargo. The captain immediately sent for the military to take action and as I walked off the wharf, as I was not signed on, three of the “ringleaders” of the seamen were marched off to Victoria Barracks or Darlinghurst gaol under a military escort with fixed bayonets. Thus was I welcomed back to Australia!

As I was proceeding to the Socialist League rooms in George Street, the first lot of “scab” wool was on its way from Darling Harbour railway station to Circular Quay via George Street. It was an historic event and Sydney seethed with excitement and dread. The lorries loaded with bales of wool were heavily guarded by mounted police, with special constables riding on the lorries and on the tops of the bales. Many thousands of angry workers demonstrated against this blatant show of force and the feeling ran high. The first lorry in the procession was challengingly driven by Lamb, one of the most bitter squatters fighting the unions. On the way to Circular Quay stones were thrown and at the corner of George and Market Streets the police arrested a man and rushed him into a waiting cab. In a minute the crowd had smashed the cab to splinters and the police were fleeing in terror. The hostility of the crowd was accentuated and became alarmingly threatening when the wool arrived at the Quay. The Riot Act was read by a magistrate standing on the gangway of a wool store, but had no effect in dispersing the people. The mounted troopers then furiously charged and by this means law and order triumphed and another defeat administered to the workers.

The failure of the maritime and shearers’ strikes brought in their train a stern realisation to the defeated workers of the power and callousness of organised employerdom. With the unrestricted support of all the State governments, the entire machinery of the law was eagerly placed at the disposal of the squatters and shipping companies to crush the unions and teach the workers a lesson.

Scabbery was exalted by the blatant capitalist press as the sacred duty of every freedom loving Australian worker. To Queensland, where the fight

raged most fiercely, shiploads of “scabs” were brought from Victoria and Tasmania. Military and police were used to protect the “right” of employers to do as they desired with their ill-gotten gains. Union officials were arrested, oft-times chained like convicts and viciously sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

Such was the treatment gleefully meted out to the workers of Australia throughout the nineties, when, with a newly-awakened determination to obtain a place in the sun, unionists united their forces and vainly attempted to break through the ring of steel that surrounded them. The stark reality of the unceasing and inevitable conflict between capitalism and labour was, in the strikes of the nineties, brought into the full knowledge of all who dared to face the truth.

Today, that inescapable battle of the two divergent forces of capitalist society still rages as bitterly as in the historic nineties. Neither Arbitration Courts nor subservient Labour politicians can alter that fact one iota, or turn from its course the rapidly approaching climax of a revolutionary change in the whole economic system.

* * *

Living in that period of storm and stress, of capitalist brutality and scorn of the workers, I came seized with a burning hatred and detestation of the evil system that has remained unabated through all the long years. It is this knowledge, is undying hatred, that makes me intolerant and impatient with those Labour leaders who, forgetting or ignoring the history and wrongs of the workers, have betrayed their trust. These supporters and apologists for the capitalist system might, with advantage, delve into the history of the Labour movement. Then they might (though this is extremely doubtful) gather a gleam of light and inspiration to shame them into some action in the interests of the workers.

The aftermath of the strikes resulted in unemployment and all-round gloom. I was unable to secure any permanent work in Brisbane and in May, 1891, returned to Sydney. Prior to that, on Saturday afternoon, A. G. Yewen and

Henry Lawson, who were both employed on the “Boomerang,” then owned by Gresley Lukin, father of Judge Lukin, and I used to “hike” into the hills round Brisbane. It was on one of these walks that Lawson read the “Cambaroora Star,” which he had just written. One Saturday we walked to Mount Cootha. Yewen and I desired to wait and see the sunset, but Lawson, the poet, strongly objected as it would mean missing the bus at the foot of the hill and a long walk back to Brisbane. As Yewen and Lawson were boarding at Spring Hill they would be too late to get any tea. However Yewen and I were obdurate, and Lawson, with a very bad grace, had to submit and do without his tea. But it was a glorious sunset.

On April 7th, 1891, the foundation stone of the Old Trades Hall, Turbot Street, was laid by the Chief Justice, Sir Charles Lilley. Annis Montague, from the Montague-Turner Opera Company, sang the “Marseillaise” the then international revolutionary song of the world’s workers. Defeated, but not subdued, in the strikes, the Brisbane workers rallied to this function, with hopeful hearts that the future would see the ultimate victory of the working class.

Despite the fact that unionism and all appertaining to the Labour movement was anathema to the Government, and to employers generally, Sir Charles Lilley and Annis Montague gladly identified themselves with this workers function. It would be very difficult to conceive later operatic prima donnas, Melba, Florence Austral, or High Court judges, Detheridge, Lukin, Beeby holding out the hand of fellowship to the workers and participating in laying the foundation stone of even an emasculated Trade Union Building.

The Trade Union leaders often met at my borther Will’s house and it was there that I first met Dave Bowman, whose winning smile and genial personality I never forgot.

W. P. Colborne, secretary of the Printing Industry Union, Queensland Branch, with others also came under the magnetic influence of Will and with enlarged vision, helped to lay the foundation of a newer and better unionism.

Colborne was one of the first Labour candidates for Parliament (the Valley electorate), but under a property franchise was badly defeated.

With the shearers' and maritime strikes raging and almost a civil war prevailing, Will was threatened with all the dire penalties of an outraged capitalist society. The Brisbane "Daily Telegraph'' howled for his arrest as the head and front of the whole strike activities. So when he left home in the morning to go to the "Worker" office, we never knew whether he would be a free man to return at night. During this period I taught Will chess and he was seized with the fever and became a chess fiend. I, with my brothers John and Frank, were inveterate chess devotees. Acting as a necessary relaxation from the serious responsibilities he bore, Will found chess playing with me during the midnight and early morning hours entertaining and soothing.

At the Ballarat Interstate Trade Union Congress, the Australian Labour Federation Scheme as drafted by my brother, was the outstanding feature of the conference. It was adopted, but, unfortunately for the welfare of the Australian Workers, was never put into operation. If it had been, the whole of the unions throughout the Commonwealth would have been consolidated and had a basis and revolutionary outlook altogether absent in most unions today.

The delegates from Queensland and New South Wales formed the left wing of the congress, in contrast to the Victorian, South Australian and Tasmanian representatives. It was the custom in those days to toast "The Queen." At the Ballarat social function it was arranged that Charlie McDonald, who was known in Queensland as the "Fire Eater," should jump up and propose "Not the Queen, but the People!" When the tense moment arrived, H. Trenwith, Labour member of the old conservative school, rose to toast "the Queen." McDonald, with one foot on his chair. the other on the table, lifted up his glass, trembling with excitement, and shouted, "Comrades, not the People, but the Queen!" His comrades looked at him aghast and called him harsh names. It was half a minute before McDonald realised the error he had made. He quickly rectified it and the toasts of "The People" was drunk enthusiastically. It was an historic congress in which the ill-starred toast had its worthy part.

Chapter III.
Sydney Activities.

On returning to Sydney, I met E. J. Brady, who was then secretary of the Australian Socialist League which was the centre of the revolutionary movement in Australia. We were both young (21 years of age), overflowing with enthusiasm and ideals of human emancipation and brotherhood, and a deep friendship was formed, which still remains. Brady, with a charming and magnetic personality, attracted me and I cherished an almost idolatriness for him which left a lasting impression.

With the real poetic fire, Brady wrote at that time some of the finest revolutionary poems ever written in Australia – not excepting Lawson. At varying times they appeared in the Sydney "Bulletin," "Sunday Times" and "Truth," but have never been published in book form.

Brady's family and social circle, all bourgeoise, had repudiated and ostracised him because he was a Socialist. Refusing to be sworn in as a special constable during the strike, he was immediately "sacked" from Dalgety's. Such was the common fate in those days of any who dared to champion the cause of the workers.

Brady and I roomed together in a back street in Wooloomooloo where we quoted poetry to each other and dreamt wonderful dreams of the future triumph of the workers over their age-long oppressors.

Alas! The dreams of my youth – where are they? and echo answers "Where?" but still some at least of the dreams are taking shape and the dreams of yesterday are becoming the realities of today. Boyle O'Reilly said truly, "The dreamer lives forever, but the toiler dies in a day. And the dreamer ever striving to make his dreams come true never ceases to toll inspired with the belief that out of the dreaming emerges the substantial.

As a result of the industrial turmoil a revolutionary situation undoubtedly existed in Eastern Australia at this period. Some of us, of course, anticipated its early triumph, but the time was not yet. Sydney then, as now was the centre

of this revolutionary urge, although the activities and results in Queensland due to the enthusiasm and genius of my brother Will, placed that State in the forefront of Socialist thought. But there was already being born in the revolutionary movement of Sydney that creeping paralysis of moderation that in all countries alike, betrayed, destroyed or hindered all bona fide working-class progress. Without going back 40 or 50 years, recent events have blazingly revealed how the moderatists could be more truthfully termed defeatists, and have consciously or unconsciously played the game of Labour's enemies.

So a fight for control of the Socialist League arose, resulting in a victory for the "moderates," whose chief champions were J.D. Fitzgerald, a kid glove socialist, who shortly afterwards was elected as a Labour member to parliament, and S. A. Rosa, previously one of the outstanding revolutionaries. Rosa, years later, became editor of Sydney "Truth," and later of the "Labour Daily."

Brady and the left wing of the Socialist League, resigned, and although as the years went by the League carried on good Socialist propaganda work, it never reverted to its revolutionary policy of the hectic strike days.

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An outstanding figure in the Australian revolutionary movement at this time, J. A. Andrews, philosophical anarchist, poet and rebel, was a regular talker in Sydney Domain on Sundays. Clothed in an overcoat to cover his sometimes shirtless body and tattered clothes, Andrews would proceed to the Domain. Tying a long pole with a small black flag attached to an overhead tree, he would deliver a two or three hours' exposition of the tenets of philosophic anarchy, to the proverbial crowd of two men and a dog. Much more is known now by people of the principles of anarchy, but Andrews obviously spoke right over the heads of the crowd who never understood him.

Andrews was a man of exceptional ability, He published a book of poems, "The Temple of Death," and was a fair linguist. With true anarchist fervour, he issued irregularly a little paper, "Revolt," printed by type he cut out of wood.

While his anarchial doctrine did not appeal to me, his rebellious activities most certainly did, and I, with one or two other kindred spirits on occasions prowled the streets and parks of Sydney in the early hours of the morning posting up anarchist mottoes and slogans.

Another anarchist, an Austrian, Joe Shellengberg was a fine character and was one of the who assisted to sow the seed of revolt against the capitalist system. Shellengberg had a selection at Smithfield, then a farming district, which the rendezvous of many good rebels. On one there, a local vineyard was explored and E. J. Brady was overcome by the wine and lay down on a stretcher by the window to sleep. However, he took part in a barricade revolution in his dreams, as was natural, when with a shout of “Fire!” he flung his arms up and smashed the window. Andrews, with primitive faith, gathered sprays of gum trees to cover Brady’s body. Andrews died in a hospital in Melbourne some years later, lovingly remembered by all those who had the pleasure of his comradeship.

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Disillusionment and disappointment are the inescapable lot of all who set out with brave ideals, and, of course, Brady and I encountered them. A resultant reaction affected him, and he ceased to take any part in the Labour movement. This was a bitter thing to me who had idolised him, and we drifted apart although I remained in Sydney for two years.

Thirty years later I received a letter from Brady saying that he had been thinking of the days of our youth when we both had the same ideals, and urging me to reply and tell him how life had fared with me and if I still retained the faith of my youth.

Over a gulf of years, this voice from the past from my old comrade stirred me, and I wrote a necessarily brief resume of a vanished thirty years. Brady’s reply to me I here quote (inter alia):

“Your letter was a mental tonic, such as I have not enjoyed for years. It is delightful to know you again, to hear the matured voice of youth, grown into

growling, obdurate, but delightful-refreshingly-consistent middle age. Your cynicism is but the ripeness of the fruit of life's experience. Your faith in your faith redeems the whole movement. You are biblical-patriarchal -a prophet, too, I fancy. Man alive! You should thank your gods they left one rose blooming in the garden of your griefs – consistency. And further, old comrade, you are still in the ranks! Think of it! With armour dinted by many blows, bearing the marks of countless wounds, you are crying your war cry still, while a sardonic philosophy has led men like myself to nowhere in particular."

After recalling many of the experiences of the hectic days of our youth – "Of the days when the world was wide and hopes were high" – Brady wrote: "I am a glad man today to be reminding you of those things long buried in the past. And we have lived to see Ireland a nation once again! To see the Romanoffs, Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs tumbled from their thrones! To hear Eugene Debbs still talking! And we can still go back to Nature and find peace."

This voice from the past! – This loving greeting from my dear old mate, what a rush of memories it invoked! What ghosts of the Past! And despite many heart-breaking experiences and disappointments, it was good to feel that life was not in vain – that the dawn of a brighter day for suffering humanity was appreciably nearer. Yes, it was worth while and one always had compensations that no-one – nothing – could rob one of! Nature with all her varying moods! Music with its surging uplift, art in all its inspiring forms – and the love of good comrades, home, and all that implies.

With a pagan love of the beautiful, in the darkest hours – when the eternal struggle for existence – when the hopeless outlook became almost overwhelming, I never failed to find solace and surcease from pain from Nature's glory. The soft mantle of night with all its beauty swept into forgetfulness the sordidness of a callous world.

"*Oh, holy night! From thee I learned to bear*
What man has borne before;

Thou layest thy fingers on the lips of care
Till they complain no more."

This refuge from the toil and turmoil – from the big or petty trials that are the common lot, has never failed me. With Byron I felt that Nature's appeal was, and still is, irresistible, and is indeed the greatest gift given to man.

"*There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, there is rapture in thpe lonely shore,*
There's society where none intrude by the deep sea and music in its roar;
I love not man the less but Nature more,
In these our interviews from which I steal from all I may be or have been before,
To mingle with the universe and feel,
What I can ne'er express but cannot all conceal."

And today, in the eventide of life, I can in the quietude and beauty of our gully embowered in trees, "the world forgetting – by the world forgot" – find that peace which is Nature's greatest boon. This digression on the part that Nature has played in my life, its beneficient influence, arose from the resurrection of the past through Brady's letter. It could perhaps more appropriately have been expounded earlier in these memoirs as from the beginning, when I emerged from childhood, nature, an intense heart – catching love of its beauties has been an integral, passionate part of my life. And it has all been to the good.

Brady came to Queensland shortly afterwards and we renewed a comradeship that had been born in the most critical and exciting period of our lives. He has since re–entered the ranks of Labour's army and contributed many articles, under a nom-de-plume to the "Labour Call," Melbourne. Brady is the only instance I can recall of anyone, after an absence of 35 years, returning to the passion of his youth and taking up the fight again.

A vivid recollection of this period in Sydney (1891) is that of the New South Wales Parliamentary elections. Following the defeat of the unions in the big maritime and shearers' strikes, the workers turned to political action to curb the arrogance and brutality of the employing classes. What an election!

Suffering the bitterness of defeat made inevitable by the gross partisanship of the capitalist government, the workers of Sydney rose in their righteous wrath and gave no quarter to their triumphant enemies. The election meetings of the anti-Labour candidates were scenes of the wildest disorder. It was impossible for the speakers to get a hearing and fierce riots invariably resulted which the police were helpless to subdue. A meeting held at West Sydney was typical of the workers' indignation and determination to express their detestation of the government and its representatives. Dan O'Connor, one of the Ministers, was the sitting member and candidate. Dan was famous throughout Australia for his penchant for receiving distinguished visitors with extravagant language and obsequious welcome. He had a long white beard and was quite an imposing figure when dressed in his black evening suit. Just previous to the elections, Dan had "received" Sarah Bernhardt on her arrival in Sydney. As soon as the meeting started pandemonium broke loose, and in a few minutes Dan was white from head to foot, smothered with flour thrown in small bags by the infuriated audience. He was a pitiable yet humorous spectacle. A wag in the crowd shouted, "What would Sarah say if she saw you now, Dan?" and the crowd hilariously yelled with delight. They were getting some of own back. Eggs were also a popular missile showered at the speakers. One of these hit the eye of a reporter from the "Sydney Morning Herald" who had made himself particularly obnoxious to the workers during the campaign by his reports. The reporter doubled up and fled from the platform amid derisive cheers. Dan, with courage worthier of a better occasion, shouted to the audience that he would make them hear him if he stopped there all night. "No you won't, Dan," the crowd retorted. And he did not. They sang with great gusto, "We'll hang Dan O'Connor to a lamp-post in the street," and finally Dan gave up the hopeless fight and left under a strong police escort.

West Sydney had four members at that time. On nomination day, the platform erected in front of the Sydney Town Hall collapsed. No-one was seriously hurt and the function was then held on the stone balustrade overlooking Druitt Street. It was an unforgettable and moving sight. About 15,000 workers packed the street, men and women who had suffered exploitation and degradation at the hands of the four anti-Labour candidates

and the class they represented. With the searing memory of the recent strikes burnt into their hearts these workers determined to silence for one day at least the voice of their enemy. And they carried out their determination most thoroughly. Directly the nominators of the Tory candidate attempted to speak, the crowd sang, jeered and rendered futile any speechifying. When the Labour nominators spoke complete silence prevailed, broken only by wild cheers and shouts of welcome. Many fine things were spoken on that memorable occasion and at long last it seemed that the workers were to come into their own in the near future. How these hopes have been shattered, largely through the betrayal of workers representatives, history, alas, has recorded.

George Black, one of the Labour candidates, especially, gave a thrilling speech. Inspired by the faith and enthusiasm of that wonderful crowd of the dispossessed and down-trodden, Black foretold the early triumph of the workers. He told them that he, too, had been in the gutter, had gone through the bitter mill that was the lot of every worker. That he was one of the working-class and would never leave or forget them. I saw men as well as women weeping in that crowd while Black was speaking, and looking back one wonders what evil power or influence seduces the workers representatives from their fellows, throwing the workers to the wolves.

West Sydney triumphantly elected the four Labour representatives, 18 Labourites being elected for Sydney, altogether. Although George Black for many years remained true to the class to which he belonged, eventually he, too, succumbed to the call of Labour’s enemies and joined the ranks of deserters.

To the generation of today it is impossible to visualise the actual position existing in Australia in the early nineties of the last century. There was undoubtedly a revolutionary situation existing, its extent none could gauge. We of the rebel army quite sanely thought it was wider spread and deeper than it was. As a result we thought we could sense a drastic change in the whole system of society. Fired with this belief many impossible schemes of hastening the overthrow were seriously discussed and often bright hopes entertained of at least some material results. But the time was not yet, and today those

enrolled in the army of the night are still desperately fighting to materialise the dreams we had 45 years ago.

I have made very little reference to the work and influence of my brother Will throughout this eventful period. That he was the outstanding figure in Australian Labour at this time no one will deny, and the chief actions and policies of the various sections of the industrial and political movements were directly interlocked with Will's activities. But Will's work has been fully covered in the biography of Lloyd Ross's, rendering any emphasis on it by me superfluous.

As a brother of Will Lane, I was always welcomed with open arms by the active spirits in the New South Wales Labour movement, and the reflected glory of Will surrounded me like a halo. Naturally I was very proud of this relationship, but I was myself only a "Jimmy Higgins" of the Socialist movement, a hewer of wood and drawer of water. Strike protests, unemployed demonstrations, I was in the thick of them all - one of the rank and file – but steeped with a burning and inextinguishable urge to press ever forward towards the goal of human freedom.

It was most significant and fitting that my first excursion into the (then to me) charmed circle of press publicity was inspired by Shelley. I had "discovered" Shelley and drank deeply at the fount of his revolutionary outpourings. This supreme poet of revolt was an inspiration to me as thousands of others. Throughout my life and to the present time Shelley has been with me not only as a great revolutionary poet, but as a dearest friend and comrade.

My brother Will, also a great lover of Shelley, and who had rightly criticised Bobby Burns by saying, "To think that he (Burns) who could have done so much, did so little," said to me, "Why should you prefer Shelley, because he sings as a gentleman?" I retorted, "I don't worship Shelley because of that, and it is all the more honour to him that as a gentleman he steps down from his high estate to champion and voice the wrongs of the poor and friendless. Anyway, why should anyone give preference to Burns because he

was a ploughman, and because of his class and personal knowledge could and should have devoted far more of his genius to voice the peoples' cause instead of an outpouring of drinking songs that mean nothing in comparison with other phases of life."

The centenary of the birth of Shelley was marked in Sydney by a meeting at the School of Arts, presided over by Edmund Barton, K.C., Attorney-General of the N.S.W. Tory Government. Associated with him at this audacious "celebration" were other "intellectuals," members of bourgeoise society. At this period strikes were frequent, with a major one at Broken Hill. As Attorney-General, Barton ruthlessly used all the brutal forces of the capitalist state to bludgeon and terrorise the revolting workers into submission. Arrests, imprisonment and starvation were mercilessly applied and the cry of the oppressed ones were stifled in the orthodox anti-Labour manner. And these people who battened and fattened on the sorrows of the common people had the brazen effrontery to meet and hypocritically extol the poet of humanity who had devoted his life and genius to the cause of the masses. Scorned and hated by the Bartons and his coterie of the day, Shelley was hounded from his native country, pursued by the venom and slander of his and the workers' enemies. The author of that great triology of protest and revolt against the system of society that ground the faces of the poor, and savagely suppressed all freedom, "Queen Mab," "Revolt of Island," and "Prometheus Unbound," as well as "Men of England," "The Mosque of Anarchy'' and many other similar revolutionary poems was butchered to tickle the corroding appetites of bourgeoise intellectuals!

The sordid hypocrisy and indecency of this violation of the memory and life of Shelley roused within me a white heat of resentment. I wrote a passionate letter of protest to the Sydney "Daily Telegraph." Needless to add it was not published. I thereupon took an article on the subject to the editor of the "Workman," a Trade Union weekly printed by Higgs and Townsend, the former later to become editor of the Queensland "Worker," and Labour Parliamentarian. The editor, a young man, Fox, published it and asked me to send along any further articles. I had earlier in life imbibed the Byronic

fountain, so I wrote an article on that poet, stressing his radical poems commencing the quotation:

> "Yet freedom yet – thy banner torn but flying Streams like the
> thunderstorm against the wind;
> Though broken now thy voice – and dying,
> The louder still the tempest leaves behind."

I was immensely elated and sent the articles to my brother John, school-teaching at Umbiram, on the Darling Downs. He evidently saw that I had some literary talent and urged me to go and stay with him and write and send my copy to the Sydney "Bulletin" until it was accepted and I got recognition as a writer.

The "Bulletin" was at that time encouraging young writers and was the means of discovering a number of same. Not having any confidence in my literary ability, also disinclined to leave Sydney and its revolutionary activities to be buried in the bush, I did not entertain the proposition.

Some time afterwards Will was in Sydney and I told him of John's proposal. In a flash – though not to my dismay – he said most emphatically, "You can't write!" I meekly and readily replied, "I know I can't." In the light of my later years' literary effusions this little episode is interesting and humorous. Truly a prophet or an embryo writer has no honour in his own family circle.

PART II
Conflict and Propaganda

Chapter IV.
A Bitter Fight.

The bitter conflict between the unions and the organised employees, now fully awakened to the serious danger threatening their hitherto unchallenged supremacy, continued to rage throughout Australia. Strike followed strike in which the real meaning of the class war became revealed for all who had eyes to see in all its stark reality. We of the rebel army, hoping against hope, with many defeats and disappointments, dimly foresaw the ultimate triumph of the workers and incessantly toiled in what proved to be a hopeless task to instil into the minds and hearts of the workers that revolutionary determination that alone can dethrone King Midas.

Unemployed and strike demonstrations were often held at the Queen's Statue between Macquarie Street and Hyde Park, and attempts to march on Parliament House were invariably repulsed by strong bodies of police. In these melees many exciting incidents arose in which the revolutionary banners of the demonstrators were the centre of fierce fights for possession or capture.

Sadly beginning to realise that there was no possibility of a widespread working-class revolt, fretting impatiently and alas! impotently, at the brutal dominance of the capitalist, their press and Parliament, our thoughts turned to secret conspiratorial action. A small group was formed with somewhat indefinite plans regarding the most effectual means to adopt to shake the thrones of the mighty.

The group included an escapee from Italy, Sousa who held a high position as draughtsman in the New South Wales Land Department. After he had fled from Italy as a "dangerous" revolutionary, Sousa was elected one of the workers' representatives to the Italian Parliament. Another enthusiastic member of the group, was Mrs. Rose Summerfield a young widow who had achieved some fame as a radical writer and Freethought lecturer. Ralph Baynham, a revolutionary anarchist, Larry Petrie, organiser for the Australian Workers' Union and myself.

We generally met at Mrs. Summerfield's home at Waverley and endeavoured to evolve means to counter the growing ascendancy of employerdom. But, alas for the fond hopes we cherished. Like many other desperate efforts in the world of radicalism, our scheming and ideals never fructified, and in the course of a short time became dissipated and vanished.

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I had at this time secured a job in a grocery store, working hours from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. (one night off at 6 p.m.). Saturday until 11.30 p.m., £1 week and found! These were the general conditions of shopworkers in the 80's and 90's, in most cases, the hours were even longer.

There was no union, no protection for the unfortunate shop assistants from the rapacity and exploitation of the employers, while an indifferent public callously abetted the imposition of slavish hours. Not only in Sydney but in Brisbane, Melbourne and all the towns in the Commonwealth, similar conditions prevailed. On Sundays, bathing in the baths at Coogee, Bondi or Manly was my greatest recreation, as surfing was then unthought of in Australia.

Although the Australian Workers' Union was powerful organisation in 1891, there was not any branch in Sydney. So W. G. Spence, one of the founders of the A.W.U. and its general president, decided to open a Sydney branch. An office was taken in Castlereagh Street between the Protestant Hall and McNamara's bookshop opposite the City Fire Station. He appointed Larry Petrie secretary-organiser, and Mrs. Summerfield woman organiser. The office, a long, narrow frontage, was partitioned into four parts, Larry and I sleeping on stretchers in the back division.

The appointment of Petrie as organiser for the A.W.U. always seems to me one of the most humorous incidents in the history of that organisation. The A.W.U. of the nineties was a very different union to that it has degenerated into today, but it was not revolutionary, and shaped its policy on orthodox political and industrial lines. I have known many rebels – but Petrie was in the super-class. Boasting of French ancestry on his father's side, Larry had a

supreme contempt for the stolid British worker, who – according to him - was born, lived, and died a slave, while the French – the Parisian workers – shocked a startled world with the Paris Commune, and blazed the trail of human freedom. So Petrie, in the Domain, on street corners, and all the time, passionately called on the Sydney workers to take up arms, revolt and man the barricades. He had only one arm, having lost the other through fighting a big "scab" in one of the shearing sheds. On the slightest – or no – provocation, Petrie with flashing eyes and bristling black moustache, would sing "The Marseillaise" then the workers' one revolutionary song. When he came to the chorus, "To arms, to arms!" he wildly waved his arm, to the delight of the cynical crowd. The police regarded Petrie as a joke and good naturedly allowed him to give expression to his revolutionary outpourings. They misjudged him badly, as later events showed. This wild rebel was appointed A.W.U. organiser in Sydney! Shades of Jack Bailey, Grayndler, Blakeley and all the other respectable revolutionary A.W.U. officials!

W. G. Spence I got to know very well and retain a deep respect for his many good qualities. Not a revolutionary, Spence had a steadfastness of purpose, a tenacity that resulted in a life work on behalf of tile toilers when hard pioneering had to be selfishly done. Of a placid temperament, Spence steered the ship of A.W.U. through many a stormy sea and it was one of life's tragedies that, as an honest, if mistaken conscriptionist, he was driven from the Labour movement he had done so much to build.

Spence always carried an umbrella, evidently prepared for all emergencies, and in the A.W.U. office in Sydney used to smilingly listen to Petrie fulminating against the whole capitalist system and vowing vengeance on all and sundry. But Spence never to my knowledge rebuked Larry or attempted to stifle his revolutionary proclivities.

With a great deal of similar interests in common, Petrie and I became great mates. He was a lovable character and generous to an unbelievable extent. He had, of course, a great admiration for my brother Will, and I well remember an argument between them on the merits and demerits of the French and English. Will, like all rebels in those days, had a high, opinion of the French, on

account of the Paris Commune, as the leaders of the world revolutionary movement, but he got rather fed up of Petrie's continued adulation of the French as against the British workers. "Oh, you make me tired!" said Will, "You are for everlastingly praising the French workers, but what have they done after all more than any other workers? They are still as great slaves as the British and seem just as likely to remain so. Anyway, if you believe so much in revolution, why don't you put it into practice and not talk so much about it, and go down George Street and build a little barricade of your own?"

Larry was furious. He exclaimed, "I will – I, will! Within a year I will be in gaol!" And he was, too.

In pursuance of our revolutionary aspirations and ideals, Petrie and I invested in a multigraph and in the quietness of our "bedroom" in the A.W.U. office, wrote and multigraphed leaflets and appeals to the workers, generally strikers, to take their courage in their hands and storm the capitalist strongholds. With a naive faith in the power of such appeals, at the dead of night and in the early morning we sallied forth to paste these calls to arms on the Post Office and buildings of all kinds and in the Domain. Probably it was all wasted labour, or perhaps some of the seed fell on responsive soil. Who knows? Yet the dawn we saw back in the early 90's has not broken – but there are surely signs.

"*Mine eyes hath seen the glory of the coming of the Lord-*
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword,
For Truth is marching on!

I have seen him mid the watchfires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded him an altar mid the evening dews and dumps,
I have read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps,
For Truth is marching on!

I have read His righteous sentence writ in rows of burnished steel,
As ye deal with my contemners, so with ye my grace shall deal!

Let the hero born of woman crush the serpent with his heel,
For Truth is marching on!

He hath sounded forth the trumpet that shall never sound retreat,
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment seat,
Oh! Be swift my soul to meet Him – be jubilant, my feet!
For Truth is marching on!

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me,
As He died to make men holy, let us die to set men free,
For Truth is marching on!"

These inspiring lines (Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic") was a great favourite of my brother Will, and obviously it deeply appealed to me. Looking back I see that this and other similar poems were the common talk wherever a few choice spirits met and earnestly discussed the dramatic events that were pressing us on all sides. These songs of the mighty masters had the power both to inspire and bring solace to our oft-times weary souls. In the present days of working-class enlightenment, and a proud hierarchy of Labour leaders which has led Labour out of the wilderness into a hell of nothingness, poems and sentiments of any kind are apparently taboo, and most certainly are never spoken of or regarded as one of the precious birthrights of the age long oppressed. But in the days "when the world was wide" – when the foundational principles of the working-class movement were its Alpha and Omega, the songs of revolt served to inspire and comfort. Before the lust for individual power and privilege had corrupted the official Labour movement, there was an unfailing place for such poems in the hearts of the workers.

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One of the closest associates of my brother Will and I was Arthur Rae, who, with his quaint humour – and unfailing philosophy often lifted the more sombre outlook from our horizon. One night we were discussing "The Workingman's Paradise," which had just been published. The incident of Nellie walking with Ned the shearer through Hyde Park at midnight and

explaining what Socialism stood for was criticised by Rae. They (Nellie and Ned) passed a dissolute prostitute asleep on a seat. Nellie stooped and kissed her saying, “That is Socialism.” “Ah! Will,” said Rae, “You didn’t complete the picture. When the prostitute woke up she wouldn’t know that she had been kissed by a girl. Nellie should have left half a crown in her hand – that would have been practical Socialism!”

During the early 90’s, during the strikes and their bitter aftermath of suffering and humiliation, a revolutionary situation undoubtedly existed in Australia. All things seemed possible, and it is little wonder that the thoughts of those in the vanguard turned towards revolutionary methods. My brother Will as one who had borne the brunt of the desperate battle that had swept through Queensland in particular, was caught in this wave of revolt. He planned to get into direct communication with the French Communists in Paris with the intention of forming a militant international organisation. Other plans of a revolutionary character were also advanced and discussed amongst a chosen few. I was very close to Will, in his complete confidence. It was agreed that I should get a job as a seaman on one of the Orient boats, pursuant with getting into personal touch with the Communists in Paris, also with regard to other plans. I left my job in the grocery to await an opportunity of shipping on the boat. However, difficulties arose and this intended line of action did not eventuate. Always searching for a policy that would bring into being the Socialist State, my brother then devoted his genius and enthusiasm to the founding of a Communist colony. The “New Australia” campaign became the centre point of a fierce controversy throughout Australia. Condemned with scorn by the capitalist press, many workers questioned the wisdom of the enterprise.

Will would say: “It is easy enough to talk Communism but let those who believe it to be the only right way of living go and practice it and thus prove to the world that Communism is a practicable system of society.” So, like a modern Peter the Hermit, Will travelled the length and breadth of the land preaching the gospel of Communism and enrolling recruits for the New Australia colony in Paraguay.

It was not merely an isolated Communist settlement in the depths of a Paraguayan forest that Will was visioning, but something far more ambitious and far-reaching. Talking to me of what the future might hold, he foresaw New Australia within 30 years from its establishment, a powerful Communist State, with a disciplined army of many thousands of Communists. “The world, then,” he exclaimed, “will be ripe for Communism. The workers in all lands will be ready to revolt and only awaiting the match that will set ablaze the crumbling world of capitalism. What is there to prevent us – Communists who are living proof of our Communist faith – coming forth and starting the world revolution that must inevitably come. We will write the future history of humanity on the rocks of the Andes!”

A soul and mind-gripping dream! – but, alas, like countless other dreams, doomed to be smashed to atoms. Nevertheless who dare say that such dreamers and dreams are not the very savour of life – that without their visions the people would never emerge from the slough of exploitation and degradation.

Many years later, in 1922, after Will Lane was dead, a delegate from Soviet Russia, Herscovici, visited Brisbane in order to establish a section of the Workers’ International Relief Organisation which he had formed in Germany, France and other countries. I became very intimate with him and he was intensely interested in the “New Australia” and “Cosme” colonies. His knowledge of Australian working-class history was amazing and gave one an indication of how the Soviet Government closely studies the development of the Labour movement in all countries. I said to Herscovici one day: “I suppose ‘Cosme’ was a failure?” His face lit up and he replied: “No, it was not a failure; it is such so-called failures that has made our success in Russia possible.”

Talking of my brother Will, I remarked that Will’s life was a tragedy and that he had lived 30 or 40 years before his time. I said, “Do you know who Will was like? He was like Lenin.” Herscovici smiled and nodded, and pulled out a bulky pocket book, an extract from Will’s writings, side by side with a part of Lenin’s “Revolution and the State,” written in 1918, and across the gulf

of 30 years the same imperishable Communist doctrine – indeed, Communist policy was voiced by the two men who had done so much to bring hope, light and happiness to the hearts of millions.

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The sailing of the Royal Tar with the first contingent for New Australia from Sydney in 1895 marked a definite change in my life. I had decided to go to Paraguay, and there live the Communist life I dreamed of. Not having the necessary £60 to go, I had to remain and battle along. About this time Larry Petrie, who had been caravaning out west with a tinsmithing outfit with two mates, returned to Sydney and stayed with me. There was a strike on the coasting steamers and the ship owners had succeeded in manning some of the vessels with scabs. Larry considered that scabs were the lowest things in the world and vowed he would travel on one of the scab boats and blow it and the scabs up. Deaf to all reasoning, Larry duly boarded the Aramac, bound for Brisbane, and, sure enough, when off Cape Moreton, an explosion occurred which did a considerable amount of damage. Petrie was arrested and eventually committed for trial, charged with attempted murder. When I heard of Petrie's fate with Arthur Rae and one or two other friends, we raised some money for his defence. Marshall Lyle, who had defended Deeming, was a fellow member with Petrie of an anarchist club in Melbourne. I wrote to Lyle and asked him to instruct the defence of Petrie in Brisbane. He readily consented, stating that he knew Larry "wouldn't hurt a fly!"

The police undoubtedly had a sound case against Petrie, but they lacked evidence as to where he obtained the explosives. So they got a man in Sydney, who had an unenviable goal and social record, to go to Brisbane and give evidence that Petrie had first tried to buy the explosive from him and later broke into a quarry tool house and stole it. Quite accidentally, Arthur Rae was informed of this man's departure for Brisbane. Larry was lodged in Boggo Road Gaol. We reserved his defence getting together the proofs of this police frame-up. Not daring to face the public exposure of these police methods of getting perjured evidence, although there was enough bona fide evidence to

hang Petrie, Byrne, the Attorney-General filed a no True Bill and Petrie was discharged.

I never saw him again, having left Sydney when he returned. He managed to get across to Paraguay and joined “Cosme” colony. As an anarchist it was obviously impossible for Petrie to submit to even such a democratic body as a committee elected by the colonists, and eventually he left and obtained a job on the Paraguayan railways. Shortly afterwards he was killed in an accident at work.

Leaving Sydney with three others we prospected for gold in the ranges on the Upper Clarence River district, but with only small success. From there I walked to Ipswich, where my brother Frank was living.

On the release of the 12 1891 union prisoners, who had been sentenced to three years’ imprisonment in connection with the shearers’ strike, a big welcome demonstration was arranged by the unions. It was held in the old Centennial Hall, then the largest public hall in Brisbane. I was present, and it was there I met Mabel Gray and Florrie Collings. Very shortly afterwards I married the former, and a life-long attachment with mutual ideals and interests has been the happy result.

Chapter V.
Formation of Socialist League.

After some months off-siding for a hawker in the Clermont district I returned to Brisbane (1894) and obtained work in a store at West End. There was not any Socialist organization in Queensland at this period. The departure of Will Lane had apparently resulted in a slump in Socialist propaganda work, and there was an apathy which was in marked contrast to the previous fever of action and thought. At the suggestion of a Sydney comrade, Beasley, who stayed with us while on a business visit to Brisbane, I decided to attempt to form a Socialist League. I approached John Bond, Labour candidate, with H. Turley, for South Brisbane, who agreed to assist. He brought along two young men, E. Holliday and R. S. Ross, who became enthusiastic members of the new organisation. We devoted most of our energies to arranging street corner

meetings and were always on the watch for any socialist speakers who might visit Brisbane. A defunct Socialist League had left a large supply of Social Democratic Federation pamphlets, which were handed on to the new League.

W. A. Holman, later Premier of New South Wales, came to Brisbane on a short visit and stayed with us. I arranged a meeting to hear him lecture at the Old Trades Hall. About 40 were present and Holman gave a brilliant lecture on Socialism. At this time he was not in Parliament, and was having a struggle to make ends meet. The development of Holman and his subsequent political history are well known.

After he betrayed the workers I never associated with Holman, but when he became the darling of the jingoes during the war and addressed an overflowing meeting of reactionaries at the Exhibition Building, Brisbane, I went to hear him. I wondered if he remembered his first meeting in Brisbane and contrasted it with this later triumph (?). He was a better and a happier man in his youth with his ideals unsullied and unsmirched soul than in later years when he degenerated into a political hack on sale to the highest bidder.

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Ted Holliday, “Bob” Ross, and I were the most active members of the Socialist League. Like the Three Musketeers we were inseparable, and with youthful enthusiasm did our utmost to keep alive and promulgate the communist theory and ideals that had been preached so blazingly by my brother Will.

The Queensland Labour Party was a very different party to what it developed into as years passed. Many of the Labour political and industrial representatives had received their baptism of fire in the fierce and bitter conflicts that had raged in the late 80’s and early 90’s. They were largely imbued with the Socialist viewpoint which had been so vividly hammered into the workers of Queensland by Will. But the emasculating influence of political life and ambitions which had arisen in reaction to the heavy defeats of the workers on the industrial field, even then was beginning to sap the foundations of the revolutionary working class movement. Very quickly after the departure

of Will for New Australia, organised Labour made a very definite move to the right, and it needs no perspicacity to note that it has, with small variation, been going right-wards ever since.

Thus the Socialist propaganda of the Socialist League did not appeal to those officials and workers representatives who were following the easier road of orthodox progress as a movement worth working for, and it was left to a few of the rank and file to carry on this essential work of any virile working-class movement.

An early member of the League was J. Collings, Senior, father of the Senator, J. S. Collings, and a man who until he died devoted his life to the Labour Movement. Prior to the entry of Socialism into the economic and social realm, the school Freethought, today known as rationalism, claimed the support of Mr. Collings with many later joined the Labour Movement.

Wallace Nelson was the high priest of the Freethought organisation in Brisbane and lectured every Sunday evening at the Theatre Royal. A man of remarkable versatility, Nelson lectured on every subject imaginable and with a broad Scotch accent and a wealth of humour attracted most of the radicals to his meetings. Andy Dawson, leader of the Queensland Labour Party, lived next door to Nelson at West End. I lived a few doors away and was often an interested listener to wordy arguments between Dawson and Nelson who were great friends.

As a strong individualist, the Labour Party with its definite Socialist basis was strongly criticised by Nelson, and an interesting political development arose which, however, never attained any success and gradually faded away. An attempt was made to form a third political party, midway between the old Tory party and the Labour party. A weekly paper, “The Chronicle,” was published, edited by R. Cruicshank. Sir Charles Lilley, Nelson and Ryot Maughan were the principal sponsors of this effort to solve the political situation but it failed to attract either the workers or the liberal section of employers or intellectuals and died unregretted and unsung. Nelson and Ryot Maughan eventually saw the light and became Labour members of Parliament.

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In the meantime the New Australia settlement in Paraguay had met disaster. My brother Will found it impossible to continue as chairman and left with 40 or 50 others to form a new colony wherein it was hoped that the Communism which was the sole motive for New Australia, would find expression and permanent success. Of course, the capitalist press of Australia hailed with glee this breakdown of New Australia as a tragic proof that Communism was a mad impossibility and that capitalism alone could supply the needs of mankind.

Prior to the split in New Australia, one of Will Lane's "straight, tall, western men," George Whelan (he was over six feet in height) had been sent back to Queensland to organise members for New Australia. When the split came, George became stranded in Brisbane with only one desire - to get back to Paraguay to the New Colony "Cosme" Will and his adherents had started. George stayed with us and was a very fine character. Wallace Nelson lectured one Sunday night on "New Australia" and in the course of his lecture showed a partiality for the New Australians as against Will Lane. The revolting members against Will Lane on New Australia were known as the "rebels." Whelan was at this lecture and was furious at Nelson's humourous and irresponsible review of the situation. After the lecture the usual crowd assembled outside on the footpath to discuss the lecture. Whelan waited for Nelson to appear, then in most forcible language told Nelson what he (Whelan) thought of the lecture. It was the first and only occasion on which I have seen Nelson talked down. Most voluble, with a loud voice and dramatic gestures, Nelson always held the floor against all comers until he met Whelan. Towering over Nelson, who was about five feet in height, Whelan poured the vials of his contempt and wrath down Nelson's throat before an astounded audience of Nelson's disciples. He made several attempts to reply to Whelan but failed miserably. At last, exasperated beyond endurance, Nelson shouted "Well, if there were many more like you in New Australia I would have been a rebel, too!" and then he fled.

Whelan got over to "Cosme" only to leave. A communist with extreme opinions regarding a communist colony having any trading or connection with

the outside world, Whelan found that even on “Cosme” certain concessions had to be made, such as the purchase of clothing and other necessaries which the colony wanted. Whelan’s communism could not be reconciled to this policy and he returned to Australia and I have never heard of him again. What a tragic figure – one, of many who with the noblest ideals find only disillusionment in their life-long search for their El Dorado, which, unhappily, exists only in their fevered dreams.

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During many years activity in the political Labour Movement I had some interesting and exciting experiences. I recall one such in connection with a parliamentary by-election for South Brisbane in 1899. Harry Turley, in after years a Labour Senator and President of the Senate was the Labour candidate. At that time I was working at the Fiveways, Woolloongabba, as a shop assistant for the firm of J. & T. Heaslop, dyed in the wool Tories and bitterly anti-Labour. After working there for twelve months I took a week’s holiday, at my own expense, of course. Mrs. Lane and I visited a friend at Manly and I returned on the Friday before polling day to scrutineer for Turley at the central polling booth in Stanley Street, where Birt’s Cold Stores now are.

In those days all the campaign and polling work for Labour candidates was given freely – a real labour of love. It would have been a deep insult to offer any of the Labour workers one penny for their services. What a damning contrast to the position existing in Queensland Labour in politics today when practically every service or task is and has to be paid for.

The voting was extremely close, the total vote polled in Brisbane resulted in a tie. Notwithstanding the strong protests of the Labour Committee, the Tory Government had opened a polling booth for the South Brisbane election at Rockhampton, confidently anticipating an anti-labour vote from a few South Brisbane electors there.

When the Brisbane tie voting was announced, the Tory candidate, Jones, was overwhelmed with congratulation by his friends, which included my employers. We had to wait half an hour for a telegram with the Rockhampton

vote. The Returning Officer opened it to the amazement and grief of the anti-Labourites – the voting was Turley 5 and Jones 2, thus electing Turley.

There was an excited crowd of some thousands surging round the polling booth and when Turley got in the street he was raised by enthusiastic workers and an attempt made to carry him in triumph to, the Municipal Market allotment just down the street. To his great credit Turley, who was a big powerful man, fiercely fought against this mob worship, his clothes being torn in the struggle. When at last he was able to address the crowd he told them that he strongly resented this hero worship or being carried on men's shoulders. He pointed out that if he ever did anything that those same people disagreed with they would just as enthusiastically hound him down to the gutter.

When I returned to work the following Monday morning, I was handed a brief note which contained the "order of the sack" – instant dismissal! No reason given. In this manner were Labour Party workers treated in the early days, but these and other penalties incurred were cheerfully borne because the Labour Party then was at least honest and gave promise of a creditable future.

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I left Brisbane for nearly 12 months to work as "offsider" to a shearer's cook, Fred Bilby, who had been on "Cosme" and was returning there where his wife and family still lived. There was a difficulty in getting a suitable secretary for the Socialist League when I left Brisbane, and within a few months it had disappeared. My experience and observations clearly show that the existence of any radical organisation which had to rely on the voluntary work of its adherents depends on securing a good secretary. The work entailed in such organisations demands close, constant, and enthusiastic attention. If this is not given then it is only a short time before the organisation becomes effete and useless or disappears altogether. Such was the fate of the Socialist League and all efforts to resuscitate it, which I and old Mr. Collings tried on my return to Brisbane, failed.

The discovery of Omar Khayyam by Bob Ross and myself still remains a landmark in my memory We were naturally enraptured with the beauty and

philosophy of the Rubayiat and wanted to spread the good tidings. Not having the money to buy copies of Omar, I got it from the School of Arts Library, and Bob, who was compiling and editing "The Queensland Sportsman," a paper published by his brother A. G. Ross, set up and printed about 30 copies. We were thus enabled to supply unfinancial lovers of poetry with that crown of glory of the Persian tentmaker.

In the Argentine, a decade later, I met a kindred spirit who had been at Johannesburg when Omar Khayyam was first given to the public. He also felt that others should share his joy - and having the money – he purchased a dozen copies of the Rubayiat to give to his friends.

After the lapse of 40 years old Omar still has the power to thrill me and I find consolation and beauty in his and Edward Fitzgerald's garland of gems.

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A unique personality I met about this time was Chris. Cassimir, a half-caste Mauritian, his mother a Mauritian, father French. With a University education, Cassimir in Melbourne had conducted a private school for a living. A Marxian student, he became a revolutionary Socialist, and with true revolutionary zeal spoke on the Yarra bank and in the public streets. The sequel was obvious. His pupils were indignantly withdrawn from his "pernicious" influence and Cassimar was "up against it." Someone sent him to me and he became a part of our household. He had many of the coloured races' characteristics with the fire and gift of expression of the French. When speaking, or rather expounding, revolutionary principles at our home, he would say, "Mrs. Lane, do you mind if I stand on a chair? I can speak so much better when I have room to talk." We would laughingly agree, and it was a sight for the gods to see and hear Cassimir throwing his thunderbolts at the capitalist system and prophesying the early triumph of the workers.

The International Congress was to meet at Paris the following year, and Cassimir used to often say, "Ah, comrade, if you and I could only go to that congress, wouldn't it be glorious!" I agreed with him, but we never went. Cassimir, despite his education, did not hesitate when he could not find any

work in Brisbane to go to the fish market, buy fish and sell it in a basket from door to door. The Australian referenda campaign and the question of Federation was on and Cassimir, who was against the Federal Constitution, was engaged by the anti-Federalists to speak in Brisbane. Returning to Sydney, he became a part producer of a municipal Socialist paper and then later I heard he went to New Zealand.

Chapter VI.
Social Democratic Vanguard Work.

One day the then editor of the "Queensland Worker," Frank Kenna, who had some fame as a poet, said he wanted to see me. He told me that a Clermont man, Sam Tanser, had sent along an article, "Socialism, Communism, and Anarchy," with £5, which he wanted to be handed over to any Socialist propaganda organisation that might be in existence, after paying the costs of a reprint of his article. Kenna said he knew I was interested in Socialist propaganda, and suggested that we convene a meeting at the Trades Hall to form a Socialist organisation. I agreed and a meeting was convened. About 35 attended, including Albert Hinchcliffe, secretary of the Australian Labour Federation, and manager of the "Worker," and Charlie Seymour, secretary of the Seamen's Union.

The need for a Socialist organisation was fully recognised, and it was decided to call it the Social Democratic Vanguard, with a subscription of 2/6 per annum. As no one would take the position of secretary, I accepted that office, although there were others present, Hinchcliffe, Seymour and others who had the time and facilities for the job. Kenna and I drafted a manifesto, setting forth the objects of the Vanguard and we got widespread publicity through the "Worker" and other Queensland Labour papers. The response to our appeal for support and co-operation to carry on undiluted Socialist propaganda was most encouraging. From all parts of Queensland correspondence and subscriptions, not infrequently donations of 5/-, 10/- and £1 arrived, enabling the Vanguard to accomplish much desired work. The experience gained through the old Socialist League was invaluable. Concentrating on the free distribution of Socialist literature, principally pamphlets obtained through various sources, supplemented occasionally by original productions of members, we scattered broadcast the Socialist Doctrine. One of our earliest efforts in this direction was a booklet by Bob Ross, "Let There Be Light," a fine basic resume of reason for and work of the Vanguard. With enthusiastic members all over the State, who acted as

distributors in their districts of Vanguard literature, the seed thus sown must have borne good fruit and materially assisted to lay the foundation of a militant Labour movement which, despite the wiles of the politician and opportunist, has to this day kept the banner of genuine working-class economics and ideals unsmirched and unconquerable.

Kenna quickly tired of his Socialist activities, sought the easier path of politics, and was elected Labour Member for Bowen. He went even further on the downward track and ratted on the Labour party before he died.

But a prime example of abandonment of principle, so characteristic unhappily of many erstwhile stalwarts, was found in Sam Tanser Clermont, the man who indirectly was responsible for the birth of the Vanguard. He visited Brisbane and was duly enrolled as one of its most valued members. Twenty-five years later there appeared in the columns of the Brisbane "Courier, a column letter from Sam Tanser Clermont, denouncing in the most approved Tory manner Socialism and everything appertaining to Labour, with a corresponding adulation of capitalism as the supreme benefit to the masses! Truly the vagaries and inconsistencies of man are astounding and often incapable of understanding.

There have been many Socialist and working class organisations in Australia covering a long period of years, and the Vanguard can justly claim to have held pride of place in the ranks of these spearheads of working class progress. We had a virile group in Brisbane which with undeviating purpose, devoted its enthusiasm' to Vanguard Work. The active members of this group included Dr. I. J. Jensen, J. Dooley (destined or doomed to become Labour Premier of New South Wales), H. E. Boot (editor of the "Worker"), J. Collings, senior (his irrepressible son, "Joe," came in later), and others who, in later years, became lost or forgotten. But the outstanding workers were Bob Ross, Ted Holliday, Hugo Kunze, Tom (T.L.) Jones, Andy Anderson, and myself, and we were bound together in a comradeship that retained its savour until death intervened and broke the magic circle.

Ted Holliday, a brilliant shorthand clerk with a unique gift of wit, humour and sarcasm, was a tower of strength with a lion's courage and a love for the battle against reaction and prejudice. Rather below average height, Mrs. Lane dubbed him "half-Holliday" and Ted keenly appreciated the joke. A few years later, prior to an intended visit to England, he decided to undergo a minor operation in Brisbane. He was literally cut to pieces, butchered by ignorant, experimenting medicos, and was dead in a few hours.

Bob Ross is well known to the Labour movement of Australia and New Zealand, as journalist, writer, speaker, and agitator. In the Vanguard days Ross gave indication of the outstanding figure he was to become. Then as always a tireless worker, the amount of work he devoted to the Vanguard was astonishing. One of the most loveable characters, "Bob" joyously found full vent for his comradely qualities and passion for Socialism in the Vanguard.

Mary and Jennie Lloyd, Lottie Crooks who later married Andy Anderson, Mrs. J. Collings Senior, Mrs. Lane and other women, were active members and gave splendid service to the social side of the organisation.

Born in Saxony, from whence he had fled on account of his illegal Socialist activities, Hugo Kunze was one of the immortals with regard to his devotion to the working class and his fidelity to the highest ideals of the movement. He undertook the onerous duty of dispatching all the literature and it was indeed a labour of love.

Tom Jones, as a lover of literature, took charge of a book depot the Vanguard started, and under his guidance the foundations of a most valuable adjunct to any Socialist organisation were laid. Tom, with Holliday, Ross, Kunze and I were inseparable, and found mutual interests and delights apart from the Vanguard.

Andy Anderson was the greatest Marxist amongst us. With an unshakable materialist outlook, Andy was always reliable and never side-tracked by sophistication of any description. After a lapse of 40 years Andy is one of the very few unscarred by the bludgeons of life and still an active Communist.

Perhaps the most unique personage in the Vanguard melange was Robert Beattie, better known as “Adam Tramp.” With anarchial beliefs Adam became attached to the Vanguard and acted as caretaker at the rooms which we had at the back of premises in Queen Street, close to Allan and Stark’s. Adam was a wanderer typical of the worker who had no illusions about life and its sordidness under capitalist society. Although he hated writing, Adam had a literary gift insofar as he wrote many sketches of his varied experience with a philosophic outlook that was as original as it was intriguing. His contributions under the nom-de-plume of “Adam Tramp” were for a long time an attractive feature of the Queensland “Worker.” After Adam had been in the Vanguard some time I remembered having met him somewhere before. It was in Sydney, when he accompanied J. Andrews and I one night pasting up revolutionary slogans on buildings in the city.

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At this period the “Clarion,” Robert Blatchford’s paper, came to Brisbane. To us Vanguard enthusiasts it was a delight and had considerable effect on our propaganda efforts. In imitation of the “Clarion” we conducted a full page “Round Table” in the Queensland “Worker” once a month. It comprised short sketches, poems, and various other forms of socialist thought contributed by Vanguard members. It was an attractive feature and was typical of the all-round excellence and variety of the Vanguard.

It was also our ambition to raise enough money to equip a van stocked with literature to tour the country. Good progress was made with the project and over £200 was raised by various means. H. Boote an artist of exceptional gifts, donated a beautiful picture which we raffled. Unhappily after the Vanguard had fallen away from grace, and came under the generalship of “Joe” Collings, a satellite of the Labour Party, the van project was put in the lumber room.

One of the most effective methods we used to propagate Vanguard activities and ideals was the publication in the various Labour newspapers throughout Queensland of regular Vanguard articles. One was published every week in the Queensland “Worker.” The supplying of these articles entailed considerable

work and responsibility, but with an earnest and brainy group the Vanguard columns were kept going. The principal writers were Ross, Holliday, Adam Tramp, Tom Jones, Dr. Jensen, Joe Collings, Kunze, and myself.

The Vanguard and its association, its fine comradeship and selflessness remains one of the happiest memories of my life. I feel gratified to have been associated so closely with such a band of comrades, and am certain that the propaganda work of the Vanguard was not wasted, that it supplied a great need and brought light and comfort to many heartsore workers.

When my brother John came to Brisbane in 1902 on his Cosme organisation tour, the Vanguard arranged his lectures. He found real comrades and Communists in the Vanguard, and he said that the Vanguard was nearer to Cosme than any other part of the world he had visited.

When the history of the Labour movement is written, and a clear view is seen of the road along which the workers have travelled, the pioneering and unselfish work carried on by the members of the Queensland Democratic Vanguard will be gratefully recognised and full appreciation accorded to those who, without hope or thought of reward, blazed the Socialist track.

As secretary of the Vanguard, I was, by correspondence, in direct touch with most of the rebels scattered throughout Queensland. From Victoria, New South Wales and Westralia also, support and enquiries came from kindred spirits. Within the Vanguard was thus created that close comradeship – that natural understanding and common purpose which is the essential need of all working class organisations. The Vanguard was permeated with this bond which bound its members into a communism of fellowship which was the inspiration of its intense propaganda.

The Vanguard is today only a memory, not even known by many of those who are the leaders (?) of the Queensland official Labour Movement. And where are those who, in the late 90's of the last century, so optimistically formed the vanguard of militant labour - of Communism? Many have fallen by the wayside, disappointed at the slow progress made, disillusioned and

betrayed by selfish time-servers. Others have died and few remain faithful to the Vanguard ideals until the end.

But I feel that the pioneering work of the Social Democratic Vanguard has not been in vain - that it materially helped to inculcate into the minds of the workers of Queensland these everlasting truths that, despite reactionary Tory and recalcitrant Labourite alike, will yet triumph over all obstacles.

The history of the Vanguard is a tragic one. Sacrificed on the bloody altar of political expediency under the destructive leadership and influence of "Joe" Collings, now Labour Senator, the Vanguard degenerated into a political mutual admiration society, eventually to sink in the slough of complete bankruptcy, financially and morally. The ranks of the Vanguard, in Brisbane, were seriously depleted when almost simultaneously I went to Cosme, Bob Ross to Broken Hill, Ted Holliday, Adam Tramp and a few other stalwarts leaving Brisbane and the Vanguard for various reasons. This gave Joe Collings a standing and opportunity for dominance which otherwise he would not have attained. On my departure Andy Anderson was appointed secretary. When the Kidston-Morgan coalition was agreed to, although the Vanguard was not a political organisation, Collings, with his flair for questionable things, moved a motion in support of the coalition.

A Socialist propaganda organisation supporting a Liberal-Labour political party. Comment on such an outrageous anomaly is unnecessary! Yet Joe succeeded in getting the Vanguard to endorse this policy which eventually destroyed it. Anderson, Hugo Kunze, and others, honest members, thereupon resigned and the Vanguard was practically left to the tender mercies of the political coterie whose high priest was Joe Collings. This flamboyant individual has taken a leading part in a number of reactionary working class movements, commencing with his apostasy at the boot strike in 1894 when as secretary to the Boot Manufacturers Association, he shepherded scabs from the Southern States on the Brisbane wharf. But it is questionable if any of his working class activities have been more discreditable than his betrayal of the Vanguard to a time-serving and power-seeking Labour Party. Yet with such a

record, Joe Collings attained the high (?) position of leader of the Labour Party in the Senate!

Chapter VII.
Cosme Experiences

At long last I embarked on what I believed was the last phase of my life – Cosme. It seemed to me to be a fitting climax to any passionate faith in Communism and the practicability of a Communist Society to displace Capitalism. I had been in an unique position to be fully aware of the dramatic events that had led up to the split in New Australia and the inner life of Cosme colony. I was living in Sydney during the gathering together of the New Australians who sailed in the "Royal Tar" and thus became personally friendly with them. In the later developments of New Australia and Cosme, a number of those who had sailed in the "Royal Tar" for Paraguay, for various reasons returned temporarily or permanently to Queensland. They all seemed to drift to our home in Brisbane and, of course, recounted their experiences. One such returned Cosme-ite, Peter Pindar, was particularly interesting and enlightening with regard to the inside life on Cosme. Of a cynical trend of mind, also a single Taxer, not a Communist, Peter's Cosme experiences did not tend to make him very enthusiastic about the Communist life. I dubbed his outlook as P. Pindar's philosophy, viz., always look for the selfish motive in every human action, even the apparently most unselfish.

Night after night, month after month, Pindar retailed to Mrs. Lane and myself, with cynical insight into the weaknesses of poor human nature, all the happenings and "peculiarities" of Cosme. His brother Jack, with Peter's greatest friend, Joe Sims, had been expelled from Cosme at the instigation of Will Lane for breaking the constitution of Cosme, or rather its Communist intent. But it was not on account of his brother's expulsion, that Peter had also left Cosme, but because of the expulsion of Sims. "If," said Peter, "Joe Sims is not good enough to live on Cosme, then I certainly am not."

Before I left Australia to go to Cosme my brother, Will, had left, a broken-hearted, disillusioned man.

Peter used to say “I will never help you to go to Cosme, but I will give you the money to return to Australia, as I know you won’t stay.” But it was all useless. I was determined to go to Cosme, more than confident that it would fulfil all my fondest dreams and aspirations. But Pindar was right after all.

On our way over to South America, my wife and I, we had three children at this time, we went via Auckland and stayed two weeks with Will, who was then editor of the “Auckland Herald.” When I had last seen him, he was on the “Royal Tar,” sailing through Sydney Heads. With what glorious hopes he and I were then thrilled with regarding the speedy establishment of a powerful Communist colony, shedding an imperishable shaft of light across a despairing world. And now that fond dream had been shattered, and Will, who had staked all his genius and love of the workers to that great adventure, was a broken man. The memories I recalled at Auckland were indeed poignant, while Will and I never discussed Cosme, although I was going there. Surely it was one of the most ironical and cruel jests of Fate that this cup of bitterness should be given me to drink. Without any surcease of the heartache – the insuppressible cry of why should this agony be thrust upon us – I still had faith in the future of Cosme as a land mark and guiding post to Communism.

My wife told me afterwards that Annie Lane, Will’s wife, wanted to know what was the matter with me. “One would think,” she said, “that Ernie was going to a funeral instead of to the place he has been dreaming of for years.” But it was the torturous memory of the past when I had known Will in his days of faith and enthusiasm, setting a continent ablaze with his message of Communist faith and the predominant rights of the workers over their exploiters. And now, just a writer of beautiful prose and sweet nothings!

When Mrs. Will Lane came to the wharf to see us set forth to South America, she said “I won’t say goodbye. You will come back again.” I never imagined that this was a true prophecy. Mrs. Lane and I returned to Queensland but we never saw Will and his wife again.

Arriving in Buenos Ayres we were met by Jack Pindar and his wife whom we had known so well in Queensland prior to their departure for Cosme. Jack

was in charge of a sawmill about thirty miles from Buenos Ayres and again it seemed the irony of fate that the man who had been expelled from Cosme by Will Lane, who had now also left, would be welcoming the brother on his way to Cosme. Life, however, is full of such ironies and many strange and sometimes scurvy tricks are played on us helpless mortals through life.

On our arrival at Cosme we soon settled down to the new life. My wife, a natural Communist who had lived Communism all her life, long before - and after - Cosme, encountered no difficulties, and on the score of Communism neither of us found any heartburnings or disappointments in adapting ourselves to the new environment. From that point of view, neither of us have any regrets regarding our life on Cosme, and it was not because of Cosme's Communism that we ultimately left, but because of the lack of Communistic beliefs and practice of the majority of Cosme-ites.

One of the recent arrivals on Cosme, whom we had left in Brisbane, was Adam Tramp. He had worked his passage to Valparaiso and walked over the Andes to Cosme. He had not been accepted as a member because it was obviously impossible for him as a confirmed anarchist to submit to any form of government of compulsion, even a committee elected by the full vote of a communist community.

However, Adam, who was well known to Cosme-ites by reputation as a good rebel against capitalist society, was warmly welcomed, and for a considerable time was content to enjoy the freedom of life and thought denied to him in a capitalist world. He entered fully into the social life and was adored by the kiddies. But the virus of his anarchist beliefs soon began to jaundice his views of Cosme. He fretted at the control exercised by any governing body and openly expressed his contempt for the constitution which he said "ought to be thrown on the rubbish heap." Typical of his primitive outlook, he decided to make a boat, take it to the river and depart – back to the conditions of slavery he so bitterly hated. Instead of arranging to have a proper boat made of sawn timber at the colony sawmill, which was quite a matter of common occurrence at Cosme, Adam got a huge log taken to the back of his hut and there in his spare time commenced to cut and burn it out into a canoe! It was

never completed, and probably remains to this day, a tragic memorial to the futility of anarchial philosophy.

Adam departed cursing Cosme, got a job as night-watchman protecting the capitalists' property at the railway town, Supacay. He eventually drifted back to Australia and some years later those of us who knew and esteemed Adam were shocked to hear that he had cut his throat in Westralia.

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The career and fate of Adam Tramp raises the whole question of the place of the anarchist in the Communist State. The experiences in Cosme of anarchists, of which Adam was only one example, clearly indicated that there is no abiding resting place for undeviating anarchists in Communist society where discipline and order are inevitable and imperative. The philosophy of anarchism attracts the idealists and rightly claims as its devotees some of the most courageous and self-sacrificing men and women. History records such figures as Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Peter Kropotkin, and many other anarchists who gladly gave their all in the service of the working class. But in a Communist Society, fighting for its very existence against all the powerful forces of reaction, the anarchist rebel is a menace of the most dangerous character. The Soviet Government with its grim realism fully realised this position and had to fight and suppress the anarchists in Russia to save the Revolution from internal destruction.

The Cosme position was similar, though on a much smaller and somewhat different scale. There were one or two anarchists who, unlike Adam Tramp, did not leave Cosme, but remained to bitterly sow the seeds of discontent in the minds of new-comers, who, if they had been allowed to settle down without this anarchial propaganda being implemented into them, would have made good colonists. One of the causes of the failure of Cosme was the presence and agitation of the anarchial element. Soviet Russia did not make the fatal mistake of tolerating the promulgation of anarchy, and events have proved the wisdom of their policy, drastic and regrettable as it undoubtedly was.

It is difficult to clearly explain many things in relation to Cosme which are necessary for a full comprehension of the position that prevailed there. Some probably expect that I shall recount a detailed history of Cosme and why it failed. This record of my experiences is not and could not possibly be a history of Cosme and all its manifold activities and peculiarities. I was not there long enough to competently write such a history, which deserves a place to itself. I can only say that despite the bitterness of disillusionment and apparent failure, Cosme retains both for Mrs. Lane and myself very many cherished memories and we do not regret our Cosme and South American experiences.

With all its faults and failures Cosme gave and brought to its members precious things that are not with us or any one else here, nor ever can be until the Communist state is established. “Women and Children first!” That was axiomatic on Cosme, an integral part of the daily life, a sacred trust and principle that to my knowledge was never questioned even by the most disgruntled. This primary care for the women and children, the sick and helpless, which was an endearing tie to Cosme, finds similar expression in Soviet Russia alone of all the countries. It is only possible under Communism, and on Cosme it brought right home to even the most unthinking, something of what the world might be once it was relieved of the incubus of a callous profit-making system.

The development of Cosme-ites in singing, drama, and other phases of social cultural life was remarkable and showed how, removed from the restrictions and struggle for existence which are inseparable in capitalist society, the latent talent possessed by the common people can bud and blossom like the rose.

Many other phases of life on Cosme appealed to all of us who, hating the hypocrisies and tyrannies of the old world, desired a fuller and more humane way of living. We found in Cosme and Communism, balm for scabs and wounds – promise for a new, happier world.

These reflections and notes on Cosme do not in any way cover the why and wherefore, the many varying causes that contributed to the failure of Cosme as

a Communist colony. They only touch the fringe of Cosme history which requires a separate volume. Lloyd Ross in his book, William Lane and the Australian Labour Movement supplies a record which gives a fuller and more truthful account of Cosme, its high ideals, heroism and tragedy, than any other publication.

* * *

But no reference to Cosme would be complete without recognition of the work that John Lane so ungrudgingly gave for the ten years of its existence. After Will left in 1896, John accepted the responsible position of chairman in addition to his duties as school teacher, storekeeper, editor, printer and publisher of the "Cosme Monthly Journal." In 1901 he was sent as an organiser to Australia and paid his passage with the collections from his meetings. With amazing fortitude, he toured Eastern Australia on a bike, with a magic lantern. Lloyd Ross states; "This journey of John Lane's during a drought would produce a heroic tale of endurance and inspiration. John had not the magnetic personality of Will, but he had more lasting qualities and a quiet determination that enabled him to remain, throughout his life, true to his Communist faith. His tolerance of the mistakes of others made it possible for him to ignore most of the petty foibles that frequently annoyed Will. But even John gave up in the end."

Today (1938) John is still in the Vanguard of Communist and revolutionary thought and has kept pace with the ever rapidly changing tempo and march of world events.

With regard to my own reactions to the Cosme position, in 1904, when John, Will Bennet, and I, with our wives, decided to leave Cosme, I cannot add anything of value, after a lapse of 34 years, to what I then wrote in a letter to my dear old mate Bob Ross. In that letter I said inter alia: "John and myself are leaving Cosme. Why? Briefly, the non-Communism of the members, the departure of them from the spirit of the communism of the place, and the intention of members to run the colony on purely material lines – dropping the ethics of Cosme entirely. Well, neither John nor I came to Cosme to make a

living or to live our lives under false colours, consequently, the only honourable course for us, or any likeminded, to pursue, was to leave. There are indeed two other courses possible, viz., to stop and fight for our Communism and the ideals of Cosme, or stay and abide by the altered conditions. The latter is obviously impossible for us. The former suicidal. The colony is too small in numbers to successfully weather such difficulties as internal strife would arouse, and even if successful, we know that no good would result. There are roughly three parties in Cosme, viz., the Communist element, (2) co-operators, non-Communist (3) A middle one, no definite Communistic ideals, simply led – willingly when the selfish side of human nature is appealed to, unwillingly when ethical precepts are the guiding lights. As long as John and others, to use a vulgarism, kept them – the middle party – up to scratch, Communism on the surface, was adhered to, or at least, tolerated. But John, rightly, I think, resolved to let them pursue their own line of action – result veiled and open departure from the written communistic idea. There is no departure from the written constitution of Cosme, probably because at present any other system of labour sharing is impossible here, but the whole trend is towards pure co-operation on wholly material lines. The dropping of the "Monthly" then even "The Quarterly" is a fair example of the general feeling here. You know, Bob, what great ideas I and John, too, had regarding the propaganda that was to emanate from Cosme, and now a cursed "Annual" repudiating the very principles that brought me here and that made John and others cheerfully devote the best years of their life to. This matter of Cosme literature alone would, I think, have eventually decided me to leave. John's departure will be a great blow to Cosme, as apart from his identification with Cosme, there is no one to take his place here in a dozen different ways. John is one of the most doggedly persistent of men, indeed his greatest characteristic, and he acknowledges defeat! This speaks more than volumes. None outside, few even in Cosme, will ever know what he has given to Cosme, cheerfully, time, enthusiasm, all that is the best of man; nothing was too great for him to sacrifice, not even his own family duties. John is not given to heroics, but he told me that his decision to abandon Cosme had wrung his heart strings. Neither of us have lost our firm belief in Communism as the one righteous life for every human being to live, rather our experience here strengthens our

desire for, and belief in, the all-embodying vigourousness, practicability, and humanity of Communism. What we do recognise, however, is only that Cosme has failed to attract true Communists, who alone can make Communism possible. I am afraid, Bob, that the time is not yet, and we shall never see our dreams of a just and human society realised."

My Cosme experience was a bitter-sweet one which I did not regret but which was often agonising. Though disillusioned in many respects with regard to the operations of Communism, my Communist faith remained unshaken, even unperturbed. Indeed, this close-up view of Communism brought into realisation those principles and aspects of Communism which, amid the sordid selfishness of the capitalist world, are unseen, or unheeded. But at the time, it was a heart-breaking wrench to leave the land of our dreams and hopes, to face once again the horrors and uncertainties of the outside world. When we were repassing through the boundary gate on our way by bullock carretta (Paraguayan waggon) to the railway station 20 miles away it was indeed with sad hearts, and Dorothy, our girl, six years of age, cried bitterly, saying, "I don't want to leave home!" This cry found a responsive echo in the hearts of Mrs. Lane and myself, but tragically, Cosme to us, could be a home no longer and we had perforce to abandon the dream of years – shattered and dissipated.

Thus ended one of the most vital phases of my life which carried with it many, many precious yet poignant memories, of Will, of youthful dreams and enthusiasms that deserved a brighter fate.

> "But ah! to think that spring should vanish with the rose –
> That youth's sweet scented manuscript should close!
> The nightingale that in the branches sang
> Ah! Whence and whither flown again! Who knows?"

With head "bloody but unbowed" I thanked, and still thank, whatever gods there be that Cosme, with all its shattering delusions, did not crush my faith or sap the source of my beliefs in working class ultimate supremacy. That I still retained, the ideals of my youth – still determined that when in the years to come the opportunity again came I would once more be in the fight with

undimmed vision and undeterred activity. Life, apart from the eternal fight of the robbed masses against their robbers, to me would have been desolate and meaningless indeed, and gladly I record that I have been spared that tragic fate.

On leaving Cosme, John, leaving his wife and four children in the Argentine, Mrs. Lane working as a housekeeper in an American house near Buenos Ayres, worked his passage to Bombay on a cattle boat, thence to Brisbane, where he re-entered the service of the Educational Department as a teacher. I had written to Jack Pindar, who was engineer at a sawmill on one of the islands forming the delta of the Parana River near Buenos Ayres, and he got me a job at the mill. Mrs. Lane and all of us lived with the Pindars, who were real friends in need. The work was hard and poorly paid, so some months later, through the good offices of an old Cosmeite, Bert Bottril, who was now timekeeper at the La Plata meat works, I secured a job at these works as wool room clerk.

These meat works, since absorbed in the Swift monopoly, were situated at Puerto La Plata, six miles from La Plata, the capital of Buenos Ayres Province. Later I was transferred to charge of the butchers' shop where I remained until I left to return to Brisbane.

In the Argentine I soon found that the line of demarcation between the rank and file of the workers and the employers was most definitely defined. There was an impassable gulf separating the peons, as the workers are so aptly termed in that country, from their exploiters, and their henchmen, managers, foremen, clerks, and all other understrappers which brought the class war into high relief. There was no camouflage or peurile talk of an identity of interests or collaboration of classes. The class war incessantly raged, naked and unashamed. Bitter strikes were of common occurrence with no quarter from either side. Although poorly organised, the peons in times of strike, showed a unity and solidarity that forced one to contrast it with the petty sectionalism so often too evident amongst the workers in Australia, Britain, and other more advanced countries. In strikes, the scabs had a most unhappy time, and had to work and live under police and military protection.

While at the meatworks, I saw an illuminating example of how the revolting workers (peons) were treated and defeated by their exploiters.

The nine-hour day, six days a week, was in operation at La Plata works. The peons, about 1,000 employed, struck for an eight-hour day. The company refused absolutely to make any concession and decided for all time not to again employ the strikers. As strikes were no kid glove affairs, it would have been impossible to recruit local scabs. So the works were closed until the arrival direct from Southern Europe of emigrants to take the place of the strikers. The dock and works had an iron fence right round the whole premises, and with armed mounted police on guard, the ignorant and helpless strikebreakers were landed from the vessel straight into the works, where they were fed and accommodated, removed from all possible persuasion, or force by the strikers. These unfortunate tools of capitalist exploitation were recruited from the slum proletariat of Italy, Spain, Greece, and other Southern European countries and were typical of their type. Speaking a dozen different languages, clad in a conglomeration of rags and outlandish costumes, the conditions they lived under at the works were probably the best they had ever enjoyed. Plenty of food and warm shelter plus a wage that seemed a goldmine to those starvlings they were willing, ignorant slaves to their allotted place in the scheme to crush revolting workers. Of course, the strike was broken, and the former employees ruthlessly victimised. The manager of the works at that time was Mr. Manning, who had previously been manager of the Q.M.E. works at Pinkenba, Brisbane.

The Britishers and Australians who occupy managerial or other higher positions in the Argentine are generally a most objectionable type, whose sole god is money with all its accompanying snobbery, and who scorn the peons or any who are outside the vicious circle which surrounds them.

An interesting sidelight into the ofttimes unexpected vagaries of the human mind occurred in my experience, while at the meat works. Naturally, it was the custom in a foreign community for the English speaking section to exchange and lend books. The cashier, a Mr. Ferguson, born in the Argentine of Scotch parentage and an intimate member of the superior (?) caste I have described,

borrowed from me a couple of Henry Lawson's books. These were part of a number presented to me by the S. D. Vanguard in Brisbane on my departure to Cosme. When Ferguson returned me Lawson's books he said that he never enjoyed any books better as he could tell that Lawson had lived the life he had written of. Pleasantly surprised at this deep appreciation of Lawson coming from such a source, I thought I would lend him my brother Will's book "The Workingman's Paradise," a revolutionary story dealing with the big shearers' strike in Australia. Will wrote it under the pen name of "John Miller." So I lent it to Ferguson, remarking that while he would not agree with its philosophy he would appreciate its record of a phase of Australian life.

Two days later he returned it to me and to my amazement, said, "It is the greatest book I have ever read. Do you know what is the finest passage in the book? You remember the police court scene where the magistrate is questioning a witness? The magistrate insisted that the witness was mates to a man he had travelled with, eaten with, and worked with. The witness said, 'Yes, that is so, but we weren't mates. Mates is them that has but one puss (purse)!'

Ferguson knew nothing about Socialism or the Labour Movement. All his training, environment, prejudices were opposed to anything of a radical or working class nature, yet with unhesitating insight he proclaimed the very fundamental truth of extreme Communism. When I told him my brother had written the book he was pleased and interested. Unhappily, after a short illness, Ferguson died a few months later.

Mrs. Lane and I found very few congenial friends at La Plata, but there was one exception, Mr. R. Gibson. After some months I discovered to my delight that he was a lover of Shelley, Omar Khayyam and chess. So until we left the works, every Saturday evening Gibson came to tea and spent the evening playing chess and talking. He was one of the finest characters I have had the good fortune to meet. Most unselfish and a natural Communist. Our kiddies adored him. Born in the North of Ireland, he had gone to Johannesburg where he was working in a good position prior to the Boer War. When the war broke out he joined one of the mounted South African corps raised to fight the Boers.

All his sympathies were with the Boers, but he said there were only two choices to anyone in South Africa at that time, to fight with either the Boers or the British. Gibson said he had lacked the courage to entail the deadly risk attached to a Britisher fighting for the Boers. He said his father in Belfast had never forgiven him. He, Gibson, thinking that he might be killed in the war, made a will leaving some shares and property he had to his father and sister. The letter was returned to him unopened! He said he now never wrote to anyone, nor could we induce him to keep in touch with us when we returned to Australia, so we have never heard of him since.

On landing in London on our way back to Brisbane, by a strange chance we had rooms at Bromley, Kent, just outside London, two doors from the house Peter Kropotkin lived in. Kropotkin to me, Bob Ross, Ted Holliday and T. L. Jones, in the old Vanguard days, had been a veritable beacon of light, an inspiration and a glory that had captured our imaginations. His revolutionary activities, sacrifice of his wealth and caste in the service of the people, his writings, had endeared him to us. In those far off days, revolutionaries and writers of the Kropotkin type were scarce, and consequently were more deeply appreciated than today when there is an embarassment of riches in this direction.

So it was with eager anticipation that one evening Mrs. Lane and I introduced ourselves to Kropotkin, his wife and daughter. We had a few hours' intensely interesting talk. Kropotkin – the man who had defied and scorned czardom and all its evil works! Who, in his "Memoirs of a Revolutionist" depicted in fascinating manner the trials, escapades and glory of the revolutionary, with his flowing white beard, was indeed a splash of vivid colour in one's experiences.

Although of course I knew that Kropotkin was an anarchist, I was surprised at his extreme anarchist outlook on the revolutionary movement. He upbraided us for leaving Cosme, affirming that it was only through the establishment of Communist colonies throughout the world that capitalist society could be supplanted by the Socialist State. His belief in the power and possibilities of such Communistic colonies, especially in view of the break down of Cosme

and other similar ventures was pathetic in its simplicity. One listened amazed to hear Kropotkin, with his super brain, enthusiasm, and revolutionary ardour, placing his entire faith in the triumph of Communism on the feeble and futile foundation of isolated and ignored settlements.

How out of touch he was, even at this period of 1907, with the Russian revolutionary movement, was apparent to me when I asked him if he was attending a conference of Russian revolutionaries then sitting in London at which Lenin was present. Kropotkin replied with a very definite no, and his manner made me not pursue the matter further. He had an intense detestation of State Socialism as exemplified in Germany and said it would have to be destroyed before any real Socialism or Communism could be built. Events proved that his prophesy was fairly correct, although "German" Socialism failed from other reasons than those outlined by Kropotkin.

One of the tragedies of the revolutionary movement is that anarchists such as Kropotkin can find no place in the Communist State. This is the fault of anarchism – not of Communism. The Cosme experience of anarchists such as Petrie and Adam Tramp, who had devoted their lives to the working class, indicate the irreconcilability of the two theories. Marx had the same fight with the anarchists though in a different manner, as had to be fought three quarters of a century later, and that divergence of thought however regrettable, had to be faced and fought whoever may go down in the struggle. Kropotkin, when I met him, was a daily visitor to the British Museum, compiling his monumental "History of the French Revolution." Many histories of that epochal period of the world's progress have been written, but Kropotkin's challenges comparison as a faithful and illuminating record of the worker's part therein. It was indeed pitiable that the man who wrote such a history with his burning sympathy and understanding of the French worker's ideals, should through perverse adherence to anarchial dogma, be inescapably precluded from participating in the Russian revolution.

On our return to Brisbane I found that there had been a noticeable break in the ranks of the Social Democratic Vanguard, both in personnel and activities. The old comradeship and enthusiasm which had made the Vanguard such a

living force in the promulgation of Socialist thoughts and principles had vanished. The organisation had degenerated into a decadent mutual admiration political club of which “Joe” Collings was secretary and misguiding influence. I believed that the Vanguard could be revived and its original pioneering work be continued if I took up the secretaryship. I agreed to accept this position and had typed a hundred copies of a letter to be despatched to old Vanguard members in all parts of the State. H. Boote, editor of the “Worker” and one of the old Vanguard members, advised me not to proceed. He said that if I did I would be met with correspondence from all quarters insistently demanding explanation of neglect and non-acknowledgment of correspondence and orders for books. Boote stated that as editor of the “Worker” he had received a number of complaints and anxious enquiries as to what had happened to the Vanguard and the secretary. In the face of this discreditable position, I declined to take up the secretaryship. Within a few weeks the affairs of the Vanguard were wound up, with an unpaid debt for books, unhonoured and unregretted.

I secured a job at Foggitt Jones’ and settled down to make a fresh start in the hurly burly of working class agitation. Many changes had taken place during my absence from Australia. There was evident a slackening in the activities of the movement in Queensland along the straight Communist lines that had been so inspiringly laid down by Will Lane. True, some of the leaders of the workers’ industrial and political movement still retained a somewhat faltering faith in the earlier ideals. But the glare of political action - and advancement – with its material advantages, was rapidly thrusting into the background the more strenuous and less remunerative policy that had prevailed in the 90’s. Also a new generation had arisen who were far removed from the intensity and turmoil of a decade past. They had been untouched by the magnetic fire of Will’s genius and Communist teachings, and readily pursued the easier pathway of orthodox Labourism.

Chapter VIII
In The Firing Line Again

It was then that I became associated with the Amalgamated Workers' Association which later in 1913 amalgamated with the Australian Workers Union, the present A.W.U. The Amalgamated Workers' Association comprised workers engaged in the sugar industry, mining, general bush work, and later extended its membership to include other classes of casual work also mechanics and tradesmen working in the north and out back. Arbitration Courts had not yet appeared on the industrial horizon to seduce the workers and sap the very foundations of militant class-conscious unionism. The strength of unionism was conditioned then, as now, by the determination of unionists to force their demands irrespective of the restrictions of an arbitrary tribunal. The A.W.A. in many a hard fought battle had established a reputation for militancy second to none, and was popularly known as the "fighting A.W.A."

Naturally I was attracted to such an organisation and confident that here was a wide field for the propagation of virile working-class policy based on an uncompromising recognition of the class war. W. McCormack (since to be Premier of Queensland) was General Secretary, and E. G. Theodore, recently elected Labour member for Chillagoe, Vice-President. The head office of the union was at Chillagoe. A branch was formed at Brisbane largely through the efforts of W. R. (Jack) Crampton, later Alderman in the Brisbane City Council.

There had been many changes in the personnel and outlook of the unions in Brisbane during my absence in South America, and many of the prominent men now active in the movement were previously unknown to me. Crampton was organiser for the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union, (Queensland Branch), Jack Gilday being secretary. As a speaker and organiser, Crampton was outstanding and with a sound knowledge of economics, was an invaluable propagandist. The A.M.I.E.U., in common with the A.W.A., was a militant union, and, largely due to the unceasing work carried on by "Jack"

Crampton, became one of the bulwarks of progressive unionism in this State. The solid working class character of the A.W.A. appealed to Crampton, as therein he found receptive field for his revolutionary fervour and flair for Socialist propaganda. At all and any opportunity, Crampton would propound the gospel of Socialism and industrial unionism. I well remember a smoko of the Meat Industry Union held in the old Centennial Hall, Adelaide Street. There was an attendance of several hundred members and, of course, the beer flowed freely. In a short time, although the crowd were quite orderly for such a function, falling bottles, glasses, laughter and talk created a miniature bedlam. There was the usual toast list, and Crampton, undeterred by the row or the indifference and inattention of his audience, delivered a long impassioned speech on the wrongs of the workers and the way of redemption. It was typical of the man in those far off days, and recalls vividly to my mind the fine missionary work on the industrial – field that Crampton unquestionably has done in his younger days. When the big sugar strike took place in 1909, Crampton was “borrowed” from the A.M.I.E.U. by the A.W.A. to take charge of the Mackay district, the centre of the fight, of the strike. This strike proved an historical one. Scabs were brought by steamer from the southern states, and a state of bitter warfare existed, resulting eventually in a victory for the union.

I was elected chairman of the Brisbane branch of the A.W.A., W. Bertram, then secretary of the Storemen and Packers Union, having resigned. Moir was then a militant and with Crampton and myself, we were successful in getting firmly established a live branch of the A.W.A. with a large membership throughout the metropolitan area.

The Meat Industry Employees’ Union and the A.W.A. consistently pursued a militant policy in the never-ending struggle for the betterment of working conditions. With the possible exception of the Waterside Workers and Seamen’s Unions, other Queensland unions evidenced a growing sectionalism and indifference to the welfare of union activities in any wider sphere than a narrow sectionalism. The enthusiasm for virile working class action which had been such a driving force during the stirring eighties and early nineties of the last century, had become a sadly diminished factor.

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In New South Wales a bitter fight was being waged at Broken Hill resulting in the arrest and trial of Tom Mann and several other "agitators" on various charges of sedition. The venue of the trial was shifted to Albury where the notorious union-hating Judge Pring gave full vent to his spleen and class hatred of the workers. Mann and several others were fortunate enough to be acquitted but bound over, but Walter Stokes and John May were sentenced to two and three years imprisonment respectively.

Another stormy petrel of the Australian Labour Movement, Harry Holland, at the invitation of the Broken Hill Socialist group arrived there in February, 1910, and did some very fine work.

I knew Holland well and his revolutionary activities, particularly in Sydney where he edited and printed the "Socialist Review." Australia has had many good rebels who have devoted their lives to the working class, but no man ever sacrificed more than Holland. For years, with a spirit of determination which all the bludgeonings of fate could not suppress or silence, unheeding all consequences, he never faltered in his fiery crusade, not only against the capitalist class and system, but with no less fervour against Labour politicians and union officials who in their pursuit of place and power sabotaged and betrayed the workers. Holland thus aroused the bitterest hostility and persecution of all Labour reactionaries throughout Australia who have ever regarded him as their greatest menace.

It is therefore not surprising to note that to these degenerates at Broken Hill Holland was a very unwelcome visitor. George Dale in the "Industrial History of Broken Hill" says: "The moderates on the official combined committee took strong exception to his coming and repeatedly refused him the right to speak from the official platform. The matter was daily discussed, but each time the result was the same – a majority against Holland. However, Holland did splendid service on the street corners and at other places. When he held a street meeting the crowd soon left the official mob without an audience. This did not last long, as the refusal to allow Holland to speak from the Trades Hall

was well known to the police, and his speeches being usually founded upon fundamentals, the police soon swooped down upon this brilliant little orator and charged him with seditious utterances. He was arrested, committed and taken to Albury where at the conclusion of the other trials he was sentenced by Judge Pring to two years in the Albury Goal."

Holland conducted his own defence and put up a good case against overwhelming odds, against a judge full of venom, who had put every possible obstacle in Holland's way, also a jury made up of graziers, farmers and big business men.

Here is the statement which led to Holland's arrest: "He advised the workers to in future put the concentrated force of dynamite into their industrial organisations." The police cut out all the words except dynamite and attempted to connect them with the blowing up of an ice-cart which took place some time before Holland reached Broken Hill.

Release committees were formed in various centres throughout the Commonwealth with the principal object of obtaining the release of the Broken Hill prisoners. I took the position of secretary of such a committee formed in Brisbane and arranged a series of open air meetings at the Fiveways, Annerley Road, Market (now King George) Square, and other centres.

We received practically no assistance from A. Hinchcliffe and other officials who were in a position to effectively do this work, and upon me rested the responsibility of securing speakers for the meetings. The response from the workers of Brisbane was not encouraging, but depressing. The prejudice against Holland because he had dared to criticise the holy Australian Labour Party was astounding – and pathetic. Some unionists actually refused to sign the petition to release workers suffering vicious strike sentences because they detested Holland.

The apathy of Brisbane workers was deplorable as the following glaringly shows. A well advertised meeting was held at the old Foresters' Hall Brunswick Street. The speakers included Dave Bowman, leader of the Labour

Party, Lennon, acting Governor, and other well-known Labour leaders. It was a fine night, and outside of the speakers and committee there was an audience of one dozen.

The movement here still lacks many essentials of a bona fide working class, but it certainly has advanced from the soulless apathy prevailing in those days.

Soon afterwards the Broken Hill prisoners were released, Holland a few months after the others. In his case the release was a political move, as the Premier of New South Wales, having to face a general election, thought Holland's release would curry favour with a certain section of the workers.

Holland continued his revolutionary activities in the face of unceasing persecution, prosecution and hardship of every description. Broken in health and finances, many years later he went to New Zealand and became leader of the N.Z. Parliamentary Party. It was a queer and unexpected change of life for such a man as Holland. But for many weary years he had bravely carried on without flinching, a heart breaking fight. Who, shall condemn him or speak harshly because he sought a comparative haven of rest – a less strenuous part in the working class fight? A beautiful memorial has been erected by the workers of New Zealand to the memory of Harry Holland and the workers of Australia may well remember his faithful service to the cause he loved and join with the New Zealand workers in their tribute to their dead leader.

I was happy to renew my old close friendship with Harry Holland at the 1921 and 1922 All Australian Trade Union Congresses in Melbourne, where he represented the New Zealand workers. We saw a lot of each other and I found that although under strangely altered circumstances, Holland still retained the ideals – even some of the fire – of his stormy younger days.

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Another instance of the reactionary character of the unions in Brisbane at this time was in connection with a visit to Brisbane of Peter Bowling, revolutionary agitator, who had just served several years in gaol as the result of an industrial upheaval in Newcastle. Peter was a rough diamond in many

ways, and was feared and detested by all the respectable unionists and politicians, leaders and rank and file alike.

There was a strong antagonism to Bowling in Brisbane, and it was extremely doubtful what would happen after his arrival. None of the unions or their officials would sponsor a public meeting to hear Bowling, but "Charlie" Seymour, ex-secretary of the Seamen's Union, later editor of the Queensland "Worker," close friend of Will Lane and a solid industrialist, Jack Crampton and I went ahead. We engaged the Centennial Hall and a big crowd rolled up. We could not induce any union officials to come on the platform, so we three held the fort. It was a trying experience for me, as then, as now, I dreaded public speaking. I am not an orator, and it has been only under certain circumstances – or emotion – that I face the ordeal – to me – of public utterance.

Half dreading a hostile reception from the audience, Seymour in the chair opened the meeting, and Bowling had a good hearing and silenced the few antagonistic hecklers.

The future of Peter Bowling – the arch rebel? The war fever caught him in its deadly toils, and he, with many other erstwhile Labour stalwarts, joined the ranks of the jingoes and became a fanatical conscriptionist. So, hailed gleefully by the bitterest enemies of the workers as a true Labour leader, despised by the toilers, Peter Bowling passed into oblivion.

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My association with the A.W.A. caused me to again turn my attention to the urgent need of Socialist propaganda. With an unabated passion for the dissemination of working class literature, I saw in the militant A.W.A. a golden opportunity to most effectively carry out this work on a more satisfactory and sound basis than hitherto. Previous ventures in Queensland in this sphere had always been of a purely voluntary nature, its finances and organisation subject to the vagaries of the individuals, with no permanent or satisfactory source of income. I saw the possibilities of using a powerful, well-established organisation with branches and delegates throughout the State, as

the organised machinery to distribute literature. Just as important too, was the question of finance. If I could only get the constitution of the union amended to include the purchase and distribution to members of socialist and working-class literature, then indeed would be created a propaganda organisation which would materially influence and affect the whole Labour movement of Queensland. I mooted the matter to Crampton, Moir and one or two militant members in Brisbane. They all readily agreed with its advisability, considered I could get it endorsed at the next A.W.A. conference, but were very dubious about succeeding in obtaining any money to put the scheme into operation. Intent on this project I nominated as delegate to the first A.W.A. Annual Conference, to commence at Townsville on January 9th, 1912, and with J. Moir and W. Bertram (who later became Speaker in Parliament), secretary of the A.W.A. Brisbane branch, was elected.

The adoption of the Australian Labour Federation basis of union organisation was in operation only in Queensland. Although it had been endorsed at the Ballarat Interstate Trade Union Congress in 1891, it had never become operative. The Brisbane unions were included in a central organisation on somewhat similar lines to the present Trades and Labour Council, known as the metropolitan district council of the A.L.F. Harry Coyne was Queensland president, Crampton, president, myself vice-president, and Jack Moir, secretary of the Metropolitan District Council, were in these respective positions in 1911. Lewis McDonald, one of the delegates from the Printing Trade Employees Union, was a militant delegate, Albert Hinchcliffe still being secretary of the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labour Party. There was a definite line of cleavage on the council between the militant and moderate section. The militants were in a minority, but having more enthusiasm, brains, and knowledge than the moderates, often snatched or secured a majority vote on various progressive questions.

Chapter IX.
Brisbane General Strike

If the Brisbane workers had been apathetic in the immediate past, the time was rapidly approaching when they would shake themselves free from their inertia and astonish Australia by proclaiming the first and only general strike that has ever occurred in the Commonwealth.

This reversal of form arose from a strike of the Brisbane Tramway Employees Union in January, 1912. The union badge was placed on the prohibited list by the manager, and members who insisted on wearing their badges were sacked. The dispute quickly developed, culminating in a strike of the drivers and conductors. The company procured a number of scabs, and with office workers and inspectors, kept the trams running to some degree. Support of the Tramway Union was unanimous from the unions, meetings convened and proposals for an extension of the strike were freely expressed, growing with ever increasing approval. Conference after conference of the unions were held, still no progress made towards a settlement of the dispute. As president of the A.L.F., Harry Coyne, M.L.A., presided at all the meetings of the combined unions. Still nothing definite was decided upon. Strike resolutions would be carried by large majorities but the delegates with a few exceptions could not pledge their unions to take such drastic action.

At one of these meetings I definitely proposed that a general strike resolution be submitted to all unions for decision, and instructions to their delegates to vote on at a meeting to be held the following Sunday afternoon at the Trades Hall. The chairman (Coyne) said the strike was a very drastic weapon and every other avenue should be explored before adopting the strike. I retorted that we had been exploring every avenue for a long time with absolutely no success and only the strike method was left. The unions had to use it in support of the tramwaymen – of a vital union principle – or throw in

the towel. The resolution was unanimously carried and the fate of the struggle was thus left in the hands of each individual union to decide their policy.

As the A.W.A. Conference commenced at Townsville on the following Monday, January 29th, the Brisbane delegates had to leave Brisbane on Friday – the fateful union meeting was to be held on the Sunday, January 28th. Therefore I could not remain in Brisbane, though I instinctively felt that the Brisbane unions, despite their past indifferent record as militants, would unhesitatingly make history and declare a general strike. Coming out of the Trades Hall on Friday with Theodore I said: 'I wish I was not going to Townsville. What I have been looking for all my life, a general revolt of the workers – is going to come here – and I shall be out of it." Strangely enough, Theodore replied "Oh well, you might do more good at Townsville." I believe he was right, though the good I did he regarded as evil, and used the full force of his unquestionable power to defeat my purpose and work, viz. to help build up a genuine Labour movement.

Moir, acting as secretary to the combined unions Committee, was unable to leave Brisbane to attend the A.W.A. Conference. Bertram, who had political ambitions, and saw in the A.W.A. a passport to Parliament by A.W.A. selection outside of Brisbane, defied an instruction from the Storemen and Packers Union, of which he was paid secretary, and left for Townsville on the eve of the threatened general strike. Rightly indignant at this desertion in the hour of need and crisis, the Storemen and Packers Union dismissed Bertram, but on his return to Brisbane this decision was never carried out and he retained the secretaryship until in the following State elections he was elected Labour member Woolloongabba.

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Prior to the general strike, Brisbane had continuously failed to elect Labour members to Parliament, but the strike aftermath quickly reacted on the political field, the workers rallying to capture several hitherto Tory electorate strongholds. Immediately Bertram was elected he resigned the secretaryship of the Brisbane branch of the A.W.A. Crampton and I were condemning this

abandonment of the A.W.A. to Theodore one day who defended Bertram's action. Crampton thereupon told Theodore that on the ground of loyalty to members of the parliamentary Labour Party, the most immoral and heinous of crimes against the workers were condoned and defended by fellow members. This truism has found full expression since 1912, and while loyalty to the workers, to their self-sacrifice and devotion, is scornfully ignored, this blatant loyalty to each others misdemeanours, such a marked feature amongst Labour politicians, is ever in evidence to justify their own shortcomings – big or little.

Another delegate to the A.W.A. Conference, G. W. Martens, joined us at Bundaberg. Martens was an A.W.A. organiser. In the Vanguard days I had corresponded with him when he had been at Mount Perry. An active member of the Vanguard and a good rebel, Martens and I immediately became the closest of friends and were comrades in many a hard fought combat at A.W.A. and A.W.U. conventions and meetings. With a wide experience in the working class movement, a fluent speaker full of fire and energy, George Martens, with his vitriolic utterances and militant activities, was intensely disliked by the moderates and reactionaries, and for many years was a valued and powerful force in the Queensland working class vanguard. Martens had to face the trials and persecutions that are the inescapable lot of all who have the courage and intelligence to swim against the tide of orthodoxy and reaction. As a paid official of the A.W.U. he was feared and hated by those in high places who regarded him as a serious menace to their power and privileges. Fortunately, Martens had such solid support in the Bundaberg district and elsewhere that he occupied an impregnable position as organiser and later secretary of the central branch of the A.W.U. He was thus immune from any ballot catastrophe or any attempt that might be made by Theodore, Dunstan, and W. J. Riordan to oust him from office. Yet in later years this life long fighter against the corruption and treachery that is the greatest evil of the Labour movement today, abandoned his high ideals and became a valued ally and boon companion of men he had fought and despised for many years. On the appointment of W. J. Dunstan, secretary of the A.W.U. Queensland branch, as member of the Arbitration Court, W. J. Riordan, then president, became secretary, and G. Martens was appointed – and accepted the position of

president. To all of those who knew the reactionary A.W.U. Queensland Executive with Riordan as its high priest, the fact that a militant member had been appointed by this coterie, was quite sufficient to shatter the reputation of such an appointee as a true working class leader. If I had accepted that position under similar circumstances I should rightly deserve the most scathing condemnation from all who regarded me otherwise than as an opportunist or place hunter. So Martens or anyone else, who, for some ignoble reasons, sell their principles and soul for their personal advancement, have no right to complain at the scorn and criticism of their old comrades.

Having once started his downward – probably many would term it upward track – Martens mounted still higher to the summit of Labourite ambitions. Elected to the Federal Parliament, Martens added one more achievement to his credit, that of a sycophantic admirer and follower of fellow politician E. G. Theodore. To realise the true inwardness of this phase of Marten's apostasy, one would have to know – as I know - how Martens hated Theodore. There is no other word to use in this connection. He had a long and bitter experience with Theodore in the A.W.U. and scathingly criticised him. Still Martens is a living example of this phase of life. Prosperity equally as adversity make us live and sleep with some strange bed-fellows, but surely nothing stranger than George Martens, a comrade in arms with Ted Theodore and other like-minded individuals.

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Reverting to the A.W.A. Conference, I had asked Crampton to wire me the result of the historic meeting of the Combined Unions representatives that met at the Trades Hall, Brisbane, Sunday, January 28th, 1912. I received the following wire on Monday morning: "They rose like lions after slumber!"

The fight was on in Brisbane and within a few days the general strike was extended throughout Queensland. The A.W.A. Conference at Townsville was obviously the body that should initiate the strike movement in the northern part of the State. The Brisbane strike committee decided to extend the strike and advised Theodore, who had been elected president of the A.W.A. to call a

strike of all unions from Townsville. We adjourned the conference and called a meeting of all the unions to consider the proposed strike. Anthony Ogden, one of the representatives of the Meat Industry Union, with a number of other delegates, moaned and wailed about being forced into a strike that only concerned Brisbane. However, we managed to skulldrag them to vote for the strike resolution.

An amusing incident was that two days previously, George Martens and I had organised the hairdressers and barbers into the Hairdressers' Union. Alex Skirving, secretary of the union, had asked me to try and get a branch started in Townsville. We were successful, and during the meeting, some of the prospective unionists expressed fear that they might become involved in a strike. I assured them that there was no possibility of such a tragedy. Within 48 hours the general strike was declared and these unhappy recruits to the ranks of unionism had their baptism of fire and were forced to become wicked strikers!

"Bill" McCormack, as secretary of the A.W.A., became general secretary of the strike committee. How he ascended or descended from that high and responsible office at Townsville in 1912, history has recorded. Posterity will judge him as strike leader and Labour Premier, probably to the latter's great disadvantage.

Once the strike was declared, it caught the imagination of the workers of Townsville. Like a bush fire, the enthusiasm spread and one could almost visualise a complete triumph for the workers. Record meetings were held, at one of which, Fred Martyn, then secretary of the Far Northern district of the A.W.A., made an oratorial *bon mot* which for many years has been quoted in A.W.U. circles. Martyn, no one would accuse of being a militant, said in his oratorial flight: "There is no reason why the workers of Townsville should not have a first-class revolution on high-class lines."

McCormack was in his element as a strike leader and evinced unquestionable ability and the necessary verve to conduct a big scale strike. Many exciting incidents occurred. I was with McCormack in the strike

committee rooms the first morning of the strike. A man with bulging eyes rushed in exclaiming “Mac, three cabbies are out on the cab rank – what will we do?” “Do?” replied McCormack, “Why, upset the bastards, but, don’t come and tell me you have done it.”

As the police force had been sadly depleted reinforce the hard-pressed police in Brisbane, detachments of police were hastily rushed from wherever they could be obtained. In the meantime the police had a hard and worrying time.

The weather was blazing hot, and a crowd of strikers would march two or three miles out of the centre of the city. Of course, the police to go with them to prevent possible trouble. On returning to the town, a fresh crowd would march, shouting and demonstrating, in the other direction with the unfortunate police as an unwilling body-guard.

At one of the strike committee meetings it was reported that a train load of frozen meat was be taken early in the morning from Alligator Creek works to the wharf at Townsville for shipment. The committee discussed the best method to checkmate this move.

A delegate, well known in Townsville, solemnly rose and with a stately dramatic gesture and deep tones, said “Comrades, that train will not arrive at the wharf. This is my big responsibility. Leave it to me.” The committee asked no questions and this saviour of the situation marched out of the room to carry out his obligations.

Whatever doubts any of us might have had to the fate of the train load of meat were quickly settled by its safe arrival at the wharf according to the bosses plan. Either the supposed plot or plan, or the responsible delegate had failed, probably the latter, as he did not appear for several days.

Realising that after a week or ten days time that unless the strike was called off, collapse and disaster would inevitably follow, McCormack and I conferred on the question. We both saw the danger of the situation, and it was agreed that McCormack as general secretary of the strike committee, wire to the

Brisbane strike committee chairman, H. Coyne, urging that committee to advise that the strike at Townsville be called off. I also sent a private wire to Charlie Seymour, then editor of the "Worker," on the matter. We learned later, on returning to Brisbane, that Coyne and the strike committee members strenuously opposed the Townsville proposal, but after some hours debate, grudgingly wired the desired instruction. As soon as we got the wire from Brisbane, McCormack called a special meeting of the strike committee and read the Brisbane wire. With that strange perversity of some individuals, the same men we had practically to bludgeon into the strike now wailed just as dolefully because it was to be ended. They accused the A.W.A. of underground engineering and wire-pulling. McCormack in reply said very truly, that it is easy to start a strike, but it often demanded courage and intelligence to know when to call it off, and to do so. However, he said, if the other unions wanted to remain on strike, the A.W.A. would agree and its members would be still on strike while many other unionists would be rushing and crawling back to their jobs. The motion to call the strike off was eventually adopted and the unionists of Townsville had cause to be thankful that this policy had been carried out.

In Brisbane the workers had responded whole-heartedly to the strike call, and the city and country were industrially paralysed. The solidarity displayed was an inspiring example of the workers power and unity, and it was a tragedy that as such it was permitted to end in disintegration and humiliating defeat. This disastrous finish was due to the leadership of men who, "dressed in a little brief authority," could not or would not see the inevitable collapse of a long hopeless fight against impossible odds. Bloated with an erroneous idea of their own importance and intelligence, Harry Coyne, Joe Collings, and other foolish leaders, continued to tell their audiences that the workers were "winning all along the line."

As a display of working class determination to stand and fight together for a vital union principle, the Brisbane general strike was magnificent. Its final collapse after six weeks' fight was a debacle that could have been averted if the leaders had had the "courage and intelligence" to end the strike when it

was definitely seen that the entire forces of the State were arrainged against the workers. If that had been done, the Brisbane general strike would have succeeded in giving a lesson of working class solidarity, discipline and intelligence, that would have always remained to the credit of the workers.

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At the A.W.A. Conference, a keen debate ensued on proposed amendment to the rule that accepted small employers as members of the union. It is interesting to note that McCormack strongly supported the exclusion of all employers while Theodore vigorously opposed it. McCormack said that business men only joined from business reasons. An employer might be a good unionist as long as his interests were not touched, but, as soon as they were, he opposed the unions as bitterly as anyone. He opposed the admission of employers. Publicans, for instance, often joined to get custom, but they would be no help if the wages of those they employed were proposed to be raised. McCormack, continuing, said he was surprised at Mr. Theodore. Just because he (Theodore) was a politician and had votes from some employers who voted Labour, he was willing to sacrifice principle for expediency. Socialists and the employers were absolutely opposed and there could be no community of interests between them. They ought not to compromise.

When in the fullness of time, McCormack became a Labour Minister and a member of the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labour Party, he always insistently advocated the recognition and endorsement of "approved" employers as Labour representatives, although it must be conceded that there is a difference between the status of a union and that of a political Labour Party. The conference compromised by reducing the number of employees an employer member could employ from five to two.

A motion I moved to delete the rule debarring "coloured aliens" from membership evoked strong opposition and was eventually defeated by eight votes to six. I pointed out that the exclusion of coloured workers who were resident in Australia was wrong both morally and materially, and could not be justified by any intelligent working class organisation. Surely after deciding to

admit employers the union would not reject workers who as good unionists desired to join?

It was on this motion that I first came into direct conflict with Theodore and, until he disappeared from the Labour movement, was in constant warfare with his reactionary policies and utterances. Theodore raved like a schoolboy at the bare thought of "prostituting" the Australian Labour Movement "by breaking down the White Australia Policy." I listened in amazement to the puerile, stupid utterances that poured from Theodore's lips in his bitter prejudice against coloured workers.

F. Martyn remarked that he was not opposed to international Socialism, but he had no sympathy with my ideals as they were unworkable.

McCormack agreed that the problem was a serious one and as a matter of self-protection against a large army of potential scabs that the coloured workers should be organised.

Two days later two Japanese warships arrived in Townsville and hundreds of seamen came ashore. The delegates came into contact with them in the afternoon after the conference had adjourned. The Japs. were an interesting study. Clean and strictly sober, they were a marked contrast to British Navy men ashore, who often "paint the town red" and end up with a riot. Many of these Japs. spoke broken English and they intermingled freely with the conference delegates, including Theodore.

One of the Japs. gave me a cigarette and when I proceeded to light it with a match, he ejaculated: "No! No!" and with his lighted cigarette in his mouth held his head up for me to get a light. The next day a large cartoon by Theodore was handed round the conference table depicting the above scene and entitled: "Lane in his celebrated 'Brotherhood of Man' act." I secured the cartoon, a very good one. Some years later when Theodore was acting Premier, a Japanese warship arrived in Brisbane and became the honoured guest of Theodore. A photo of the Jap. officers and Theodore smoking cigars was published in the "Daily Mail." Naturally it recalled the Townsville

incident. George Martens suggested that he take Theodore's cartoon of me to Parliament House and get Harry Ryan, then member for Cook, who was fair cartoonist, to draw a cartoon of Theodore smoking with the Japs., and to circulate the two cartoons round the House.

Ryan apparently agreed, and the cartoon was left with him. But something must have happened. The plan or cartoon never eventuated, neither could Martens nor I ever recover Theodore's Townsville cartoon of me.

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The danger of paid officials on conferences becoming the predominating factor was discussed on a motion to debar all paid officials as delegates. This was defeated, but a motion I moved restricting the number of paid officials eligible to attend conferences as delegates, to one from each district, was carried. This became operative at the next ballot to elect conference delegates and resulted in several paid officials who had been elected having to give place to members of the rank and file.

How necessary such safeguards against the control of Labour organisations by paid officials is manifest to anyone who has taken part in A.W.U. conferences of late years. There the paid officials with their vested interests and natural dislike to anything of a progressive nature have an overwhelming majority and the machine remorselessly steam-rollers every attempt to infuse virility or militancy into the organisation.

On the amalgamation of the A.W.U. and A.W.A. in 1913, the restriction of paid officials as conference delegates was rejected.

Theodore moved the following resolution in relation to the Brisbane General Strike which was carried unanimously: "This conference views with approbation the magnificent stand taken by the Brisbane workers against the tyranny of the employers and the inaction of the Government, and desires to express its entire satisfaction at the success of the general strike principle." £100 was also remitted to Brisbane in aid of the general strike fund.

Chapter X.
A.W.A. Literature Distribution.

I was agreeably surprised that there was practically no opposition to my proposal that the rules be amended to provide for the purchase and distribution to members of Socialist and working class literature. I stressed the need to disseminate such literature as the most effective method to educate members and build up a sound industrial organisation. W. Bertram said money could not be better employed than in this direction. J. Stopford, then an A.W.A. organiser at Mount Morgan, in support said that the movement had nothing to be afraid of. Far better that a union should be small and solid than big and loosely connected. Other delegates also agreed and the resolution was carried unanimously.

After I had pointed out that the resolution would go in the waste paper basket unless money was definitely set aside by the conference to purchase literature, it was agreed to donate £50 from the sugar strike fund art union.

A proposal I submitted that threepence per member per annum be granted to the literature fund was considered too excessive, but a resolution was carried "that it be an instruction to the executive to spend a sum of not less than £100 per annum on literature."

A Literature Committee comprising "Jack" Crampton, E. G. Theodore, J. Moir, W. Bertram and E. H. Lane, was appointed to choose and recommend literature to the executive and to purchase same if such recommendations be endorsed.

As an actual fact, except with the approval of Crampton and Moir, I carried out the functions of that committee. Theodore never interested himself and did not know that the gun was even then loaded to deal a staggering blow to the power and reactionaryism of officials. When the literature a year later was circulated amongst the A.W.U. and A.W.A. members throughout Queensland – then Theodore woke up and the explosion took place.

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Another interesting question dealt with by the conference was a definite scheme of amalgamation with the Meat Industry Employees Union submitted by the A.W.A. This scheme adopted by the conference was a sound one but, of course, was subject to agreement by the M.I.E.U. This apparently was delayed and eventually the scheme was abandoned and the desired amalgamation never materialised.

On my return to Brisbane I drafted a list of pamphlets and booklets published by Kerrs, the American Socialist publishing house, Chicago, and forwarded it to the executive office, Chillagoe, for endorsement. This was given without question, evidently without any knowledge of the revolutionary character of many of the publications in the selected list. There is no doubt that if that had been known, the executive under the urge and guidance of Theodore, would have, without any hesitation, refused to endorse the purchase of such literature. Fortunately this censorship was not exercised on this occasion and after considerable delay a sum of £50 was made available to the literary committee.

As an old shareholder in Kerrs Publishing Coy., I got the full shareholder's and trade discount for the A.W.A. literature ordered. I had been in constant communication with Kerrs in connection with the propaganda work of the old Social Democratic Vanguard, so it was with renewed vigour and pleasure that I again got in touch with them. In constant correspondence with various members of the Kerr company, particularly Mary Marcy of "Work Shop Talks" fame, I found the greatest assistance and results from this source.

The International Labour Movement, particularly the English-speaking section, owes a deep debt of gratitude to Kerrs for the fine pioneering printing and publishing work carried out by them nearly fifty years ago. In these modern days of practically unlimited publication, of an endless stream of pamphlets, treatises, and books on Communism, Socialism and every conceivable phase of economics and working class thought, it is impossible for the newer generation to imagine the place that Kerrs filled as propagandists in

the Labour movement. Through their enterprise and determination was placed in the hands of countless workers the teachings of Marx, Engels and other leaders and founders of the present day working class movement, which otherwise would have remained unknown.

In addition, Kerrs published "The International Socialist Review," a monthly magazine contributed to by the brainiest and most advanced Socialist and working class thinkers from all countries. First published in 1900, this magazine supplied a world view of international affairs and a re-perusal of its earlier numbers provides a startling example of prophecies and criticism of many apparently sound Labour policies and activities in various countries that history has since revealed as correct to the last detail. The Russian situation from 1900 onwards, a critical analysis of the German Social Democratic Party as far back as 1910, were all truthfully detailed and reviewed in this magazine.

An aftermath of the Brisbane General Strike was the introduction into Parliament by the Tory Denham Government of anti-strike legislation under the elusive title of "The Industrial Peace Act." The Labour Party in Parliament was in a hopeless minority and as all anti-working class legislation always commanded a strict line up of Tory members, the passage of the Bill was obviously only a matter of time, and all Labour opposition useless.

The unions considered what action could be taken to counter and prevent the enactment of the pernicious legislation. The Brisbane district council of the A.L.F. decided to convene a conference of all unions and submit a resolution recommending the Parliamentary Labour Party, after opposing the first reading of the Bill, to leave the Legislative Chamber in protest and then immediately tour the State to address meetings and arouse public indignation against the Bill. It was known to be merely waste of time to fight for any modification of the Bill on the floor of the House, and a logical and sensible alternative was the one suggested.

There was a record meeting of union delegates on the Sunday afternoon, and Harry Coyne, as president of the A.L.F., presided. Crampton was out of Brisbane, so I as vice-president, was deputed to move the resolution. Before

the meeting commenced McCormack warned me that the proposal was going to get badly beaten and repudiated by the unions. He was right. After the resolution was formally seconded, the storm broke. Arthur Hall, now Chairman of the Apprenticeship Committee, was the first on his feet. “He was astounded at the audacity of Mr. Lane in moving a resolution dictating to the Labour Party what they should do.” These men, he said, had made the Labour movement and it was outrageous to question their policy or actions. Other speakers followed in the same strain and it was evident that the delegates regarded Labour members as far removed from the rank and file of the unions - sacred and infallible.

Then the chairman, Harry Coyne, seeing the tone of the meeting, rose in his majesty, and said he was very glad to see the attitude adopted with regard to the resolution. If the resolution had been carried, then the charge of the “Courier” and Tory press that the Parliamentary Labour Party was ruled from the Trades Hall would be justified. He (Coyne) considered that this attempt of the unions to lay down a policy for the Labour Party was similar to “the man in the street going to a union conference and dictating its policy!”

And this uncamouflaged repudiation of any rights of the unions to advise or influence Labour politicians by an alleged rank and file industrialist, Harry Coyne, was actually applauded by many delegates! The unions today are far short of what they should be, but they are at least in advance of this slavish adulation of Labour politicians, that was such a pitiable feature in 1912.

In order to avoid a humiliating defeat of the resolution, I withdrew it. The Labour Party opposed the Bill, through all its stages, without any effect whatever, and on the last day left Parliament in a body as a protest.

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This record would not be complete without a more than passing reference to our new home in Brisbane. On deciding to settle in Brisbane, Mrs. Lane took up the onerous task of finding a house. I had resolved that our permanent home would have to have beautiful surroundings with a good view. One evening Mrs. Lane, after searching for months, said she had found the desired

place, overlooking St. Lucia with an enchanting vista of woods, farms, river and mountains. Thus we found our present home “Cosme.” Apart from the outlook, the immediate surroundings of “Cosme” are unique, inasmuch as it is practically in the bush though so close to the centre of the city. Our “gully” is always a sheer delight with its wealth of trees and shrubs and its peaceful solitude. Gum trees, palms, bamboos, tree ferns, mangoes, papaws, poinciana, bougainvillea, poinsettia, and frangipanni, with creepers and a sequestered lawn make “Cosme” a real dream of beauty. With years of enjoyable toil I terraced the gully, thus finding happy surcease from the unending conflict that was the warp and woof of my existence.

When “Jimmy” Stopford was one of the rebel army, he visited “Cosme” once when I was working at the terraces and said: “Oh, well, if I was an employer I would never give you a job; you work too hard at home.”

“Cosme” itself has housed many good comrades, many, alas, now dead, or worse still , betrayed the movement and abandoned their old beliefs in the workers’ cause, which was their greatest glory. Many gatherings at “Cosme” marked a renewed inspiration for those of us who under all circumstances saw in a virile Labour movement the one sound hope of world progress. One of our many friends who found a haven of rest at “Cosme,” wrote in deep appreciation: “I don’t know when I have ever been happier, in the sense of contented, as when visiting your place. It is not only the lawn and the gully – the house itself would appear to take one unto itself and be friendly. Friends are too far apart for one to forget them when once found. Even if I live to be a hundred, which God forbid, I cannot conceive of my ever becoming so rich in memories that I could forget the days and nights of “Cosme.”

Visitors from the southern States particularly appreciated the gripping beauty of “Cosme” and all with artistic love of the beautiful capitulated to its charms.

Wallace Nelson, with true Nelsonian philosophy, said: “I have a beautiful house and home at Mosman (Sydney), but I would willingly give it all for this; and you,” he exclaimed, “are a revolutionary – why, you are a bloody fool! No

revolution would give you anything finer than this – indeed probably it would be taken from you."

What memories arise when thinking of "Cosme!" The comrades to whom it was a centre of attraction, of a "home away from home," even of inspiration. How few are left within that magic circle – George Martens, Gordon Brown, Donald Grant, "Charlie" Collins, Myles Ferricks, Tom Walsh, Adela Pankhurst, Frank Anstey, Harry Holland, Pat Hickey, Bob Ross and countless others. The "Cosme" atmosphere, of course, could not have been possible without the unselfish co-operation of my wife, also of Dorothy, our eldest daughter, when she emerged from childhood.

One of nature's Communists, nothing was too much trouble for Mrs. Lane and the happy result was that "Cosme" radiated comradeship and was a living embodiment of that community of fellowship which is the very basis of the Labour movement. My brother John loves "Cosme" and its quiet beauty, but always conditions his appreciation by saying that "Cosme" is not Brisbane.

If I have over-emphasised "Cosme," it is because it has played a large part in my life since returning from South America. For years it was the actual centre of my activities in the movement and the meeting place of the rebel fraternity, many of whom were either members of the A.W.U. or other unions that engaged in similar militant activities.

So "Cosme" had indeed been a perpetual source of strength and comfort to me when the clouds were darkest and much seemed lost. Today it still retains its dear characteristics, albeit in a somewhat minor key due to, many changes that have arisen in the passage of years.

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At the State elections held in April, a number of Labour members were elected in the metropolitan area as a direct result of the workers reaction after the general strike. This reaction had not yet permeated the outside electorates with the result that the Tory Denham Government received another three years' lease of office. W. McCormack was, however, elected Labour member

for Cairns, which placed his feet on the rungs of the political ladder on which he climbed to the Premiership and other spheres of material prosperity.

On the immediate resignation of McCormack, John Mullan, of Charters Towers (now Attorney-General), was elected general secretary by the executive council of the A.W.A.

Part III.
A.W.U. Amalgamation and Degeneration

Chapter XI.
Swing to the Right.

In compliance with a resolution of the A.W.A. conference at Townsville, Messrs. Theodore and McCormack represented the A.W.A. at the amalgamation conference held in Sydney in June, 1912, at which the following bodies were represented: Australian Workers' Union, Rural Workers' Union, Amalgamated Workers' Association, Australian Carriers' Union and Amalgamated Rabbit Trappers' Union.

The conference agreed that each union should submit the question of amalgamation to a plebiscite vote of the members. The result of the voting was that the unions favoured amalgamation by large majorities, the A.W.A. being almost unanimous on the subject – only 24 votes being recorded against. The membership of the A.W.A. was over 11,000. At the conference in Sydney in June, it was decided that if the amalgamation scheme was carried, a further conference would be held in Sydney the first week in January, 1913, for the purpose of discussing the basis of amalgamation. Messrs. Theodore, McCormack and J. Mullan represented the A.W.A. That conference drafted and adopted a constitution both of the A.W.A. and A.W.U. The ensuing final conferences of the two organisations, held in January, 1913, did not have power to alter that constitution and could only draft by-laws for their own branch.

This merging of the A.W.A. and the A.W.U. into the one organisation, the present A.W.U., was anticipated by the militant members of the A.W.A. to bring about a distinct advance to the whole union movement throughout Australia. We fondly believed that the fighting working class outlook and basis of the A.W.A. would outweigh and submerge in a short time the moderate, even reactionary in some respects, policy of the A.W.U., which had adopted Arbitration Courts as the method whereby to protect and advance the interests of its members. How mistaken we were in our forecast of the

development of the new organisation events since 1913 have shown only too well. Instead of being the spearhead of a progressive and fighting class conscious unionism, the A.W.U. today is the greatest obstacle in the Commonwealth of all genuine working class advancement. For years it has been the buttress and strongest support of effete and treacherous Labour parties and governments. It has vindictively attacked, slandered, and persecuted not only other unions and radical organisations, but has never hesitated to bludgeon and crucify its own members who have dared to challenge the infallibility of the A.W.U. bureaucratic machine. Much more can, and will be said, of the despicable rule of the "great" A.W.U. or, to be precise, the coterie of self-seeking reactionaries who have secured control of that union.

It was impossible for anyone to foresee in 1912-13 this tragic result of an amalgamation which should have been a tower of strength to the whole working class, neither could any opposition to the amalgamation have had the slightest effect in preventing its consummation.

The increasing success of the Labour Party at the elections, with an ever growing prospect of ultimately getting elected as a government was having its corroding effect on the place hunters, with a consequent subservient exaltation of the political as against the industrial side of the movement.

Coinciding with this swing to the right, the Queensland "Worker," then edited by Charlie Seymour, devoted its space and propaganda to the political situation while the industrial was apparently regarded as of secondary importance.

This aroused my resentment and, being elected to the A.W.A. conference to be held at Rockhampton (January, 1913), with "Jock" Moir as delegates from the Southern district, I determined to raise the political policy of the "Worker" at the conference in order to protest and also to find how other delegates regarded the matter.

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The conference dealt with the amalgamation conference, Theodore and McCormack submitting reports. It is of interest to note what the latter said regarding Arbitration Courts. He said (inter alia), "To be frank, he might tell the conference that there was no intention to apply to the Arbitration Court for an award on behalf of the miners because in North Queensland today that trade enjoyed better conditions than they could secure from any Arbitration Court and also because they could secure better conditions by the methods ordinarily employed. That really was the amalgamation's policy in regard to the mining industry. He might tell them, too, that the amalgamation was not going to be governed by the Arbitration Court, not, as one delegate had remarked, 'The time has gone past when the Arbitration Court should be considered at all.'"

McCormack also said that at one of the early amalgamation conferences it was stated that if Arbitration Courts were to be considered in preference to the consolidation of unionists, the A.W.A. could not see its way to go on with it.

His experience of the A.W.A. was that the general feeling was against Arbitration and he had never known a resolution passed favouring the principle of arbitration and conciliation.

The A.W.A. had never recognised the principle of Arbitration Courts, but had always fought its many fights – win or lose – on the solid foundation of the militant unionism of the members. Yet, within two or three years, this essential spirit of the union became absolutely submerged by the moderates of the amalgamation who worshipped at the political shrine and bowed to Arbitration Courts.

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On the grounds of the danger of an "Asiatic invasion," the following motion I moved was defeated: "That this conference condemns the Commonwealth compulsory military scheme as it regards this scheme and all forms of militarism as being inimical to the interests of the working class."

After considerable discussion I had the question recommitted and moved the following resolution, which was carried: "That this conference emphatically

recommends to the Federal Government the immediate alteration of the Federal Defence Act, by an amending clause that will absolutely prohibit at any time the employment of the Federal military forces, arms or accoutrements, against the citizens of the Commonwealth during strikes or internal disturbances. Furthermore, that unless such amending clauses be herewith enacted, this organisation shall use its utmost endeavours to effect a repeal of the Federal Defence Act."

The following resolution I moved was carried but never put into operation: "That it be a recommendation from conference to all branches to voluntarily contribute to a general fund for the purpose of establishing a book-exchange department which will supply branches with books to form the basis of a library that will strengthen the association and educate its members."

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The president, E. G. Theodore, during the discussion on the literature report I submitted, indicated his veiled hostility to the question in inferring that the money voted by the conference to the literature committee was subject to the "state of the finances of the union." F. Martyn regretted that "Australian Labour literature" had been ignored by the committee as he thought a selection from it would have done infinitely more good than "this imported Yankee stuff."

However, the "foreign" literature had only just arrived in Brisbane and had not been circulated. When it was - then the storm broke.

When the "Worker" report came before the conference I moved: "That this conference considers that an immediate change is necessary in the policy of the "Worker" newspaper, insomuch that the present overwhelming prominence in the "Worker" on the political phases as against the industrial is causing serious dissatisfaction amongst A.W.A. members and is detrimental to the best interests of the workers."

I stated that it was desired to know if the delegates, representing members throughout Queensland, were satisfied with the decided political swing in the

"Worker" with a consequent grave neglect of the industrial and more important phase of the movement. The "Worker" had been established as an organ of revolutionary working class thought and was never intended to be used as a panderer to expedient politicians. George Martens seconded the motion.

Theodore, who had vacated the chair to have a free hand in the discussion, was furious. A special "Worker" had arrived that day with a full page cartoon of the One Big Union and page after page of industrial news. It was palpably a special issue to counter the criticism that it was known would take place at the conference. Theodore, waving the "Worker," emphasised its strong industrial character. I interjected that if the "Worker" had been half as good during the year the motion of protest would not have been necessary.

I was surprised at the strong support the motion had from practically all the delegates – with the exception of the executive and secretaries, which included Jack Dash, F. Martyn, J. Mullan and, of course, Theodore and McCormack. It was the outstanding debate of the conference and the political apologists were hopelessly beaten. Seeing how the vote was going to result, McCormack warned the conference that if the motion was carried, it would mean the resignation of Albert Hinchcliffe, manager, Charlie Seymour, editor, and the whole of the "Worker" board.

I said I did not desire to force that position, and if the object of the motion was attained through the discussion then I would withdraw the motion. This was done and the following resolution was moved by H. Ryan, and carried: "That it be an instruction to our delegates on the A.L.F. that this conference desires that greater prominence be given in future in the 'Worker' to the industrial side of the Labour movement."

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The conclusion of this final conference of the A.W.A. if we had known, ended a period of militant unionism, which, with the amalgamation of the A.W.A. and A.W.U., was to suffer an eclipse from which it has never emerged.

Instead of the new organisation blazing the track of a wider and more progressive industrial movement, it became a plastic adherent to the compulsory Arbitration system and the jackal of a reactionary and treacherous Labour Party. Those in control of the amalgamated A.W.U., ever seeking the line of least resistance, built up a powerful organisation, which effectively, to this day, has succeeded by devious methods in crushing or suppressing all efforts of the rank and file members to vitalise its policy and break the chains of arbitration and political expediency that has killed the A.W.U. as a fighting force of Australian Labour.

On my journey back to Brisbane from the Rockhampton conference, I said to Theodore: "The conference is over and the delegates are now scattered all over the State; but I have to return to Brisbane and come into constant contact with men, who, because I have the honesty to attack subservient policies, will regard me as a bitter enemy." Theodore laughed, saying: "Oh, you don't want to worry over little things like that."

Every day I used to go to the Trades Hall in the lunch hour. The following day, Seymour, editor of the "Worker," which was then situated at the Trades Hall, asked me what the conference had done with regard to the "Worker's" policy. I told him, and he remarked that the conference had done the right thing. I do not know what lies he was told in the meantime – or by whom – but the next day he waylaid me in the vestibule of the hall and most viciously accused me of being a coward, "the dirty tool of unscrupulous men," for attacking him "behind his back." I heard him in amazement, but had the good sense not to argue, and simply pointed out that I had not even mentioned him, whatever other delegates might have done and that Theodore had put up the best possible defence of the "Worker's" political policy.

Albert Hinchcliffe stated that, rather than publish in the "Worker" a report of the conference discussion on the "Worker" he would resign!

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Arising from the publication of the A.W.A. conference report, I had my first experience of the unscrupulous censorship that is unhesitatingly exercised by

the A.W.U. bureaucrats and Australian Labour Party “press” committees of conventions on all militant delegates who have the audacity to expose festering sores and attempt the apparently impossible task of keeping the official Labour movement clean and honest.

The “Worker” report of the Rockhampton conference, published in weekly instalments, completely exorcised all reference to the criticism of the “Worker’s” political policy, but emphasised the conference motion appreciating the sound financial position of the paper. Before the official report was bound and issued, I secured a copy and saw that the same inexorable censorship had been applied. I immediately wired to McCormack at Townsville, where he was acting secretary for the A.W.A., asked who was responsible for this gross censorship and demanded that he immediately instruct Hinchcliffe to withhold the publication of the report until it was remedied and a full report inserted.

That wire cost me 7/6, as, foolishly, I did not make it a collect wire. It was three weeks before McCormack replied to my protest and demand. In the meantime, of course, the censored report was issued and only those at the conference ever knew the truth. McCormack said that he “understood” that the general secretary, J. Mullan, was responsible for the deletion in the report.

Since then, I, in common with many other militant delegates, have suffered continuous censorship and suppression in A.W.U. convention reports. Always in a minority, we vainly protested and instead of getting any redress, were invariably sneered at and insulted as “limelighters playing to the gallery.” Needless to say that Grayndler, Blakeley, Barnes, Dunstan, Riordan, and every other moderate or reactionary, always received the fullest publicity in the official reports.

Not having attended many A.L.P. conventions, I have not had the same experience except that at the 1921 Federal A.L.P. convention I was the victim of the severest censorship, almost to the point of complete obliteration, in my attack on and criticism of Theodore and my desperate endeavour to get the Socialisation plank made the first plank of the fighting platform.

With regard to my articles in the "Daily Standard," this applies more particularly to the later years of my connection with the paper, under the tragic editorship of Alick Robertson, vindictive censorship was exercised, ending with total suppression.

The Labour Party, with its comrade in arms, the A.W.U., "tear a passion to tatters" when the Lyon's Government or any other Tory organisation applies censorship – though only to their political or industrial enemies. But these righteous critics of Tory censorship still more ruthlessly employ censorship methods not to their political enemies but to the workers who in many instances have materially helped to build up the Australian Labour Movement.

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It was in 1912 that I first met "Pat" Hickey, one of the outstanding personalities of the New Zealand Labour movement. The historical Waihe miners strike was in full conflict, in which the whole power of the State was placed at the disposal of the mining companies and organised lawlessness, even up to the point of the killing of a striker, backed by the police authorities, held undisputed sway. Hickey was sent to Australia for the purpose of raising funds to assist in the struggle. He visited every State, including Westralia, and spent about seven months in Australia, travelled many thousands of miles, and addressed hundreds of meetings, sometimes as many as six in one day.

Nearly £19,000 was collected in Australia, the unions generously responding to the appeal for help. When Hickey arrived with an enthusiastic letter of introduction to me from our dear, mutual comrade "Bob" Ross, then editing the "Maoriland Worker," I was at first surprisingly disappointed at this seemingly quiet, casual individual, who remarked that "the mosquitoes were a nasty pest." Hickey stayed at "Cosme," and we soon discovered that Pat did not belie his fine reputation as an inspiring worker and leader of a revolutionary working class movement. It was Hickey who, during the revolt of the militant Maoriland unionists against the Arbitration Court, in summing up the issue, said: "Loyalty to your class - or loyalty to the enemies of your class. Whenever that position arises every unionist should stand prepared to

toss every argument (or award) to Hell!" This was translated by the N.Z. capitalist press into the phrase, "To Hell with Arbitration."

Hickey was innately permeated with the wanderlust and in his younger days had sought adventure in Alaska and later worked – and struck – in the Colorado mines, and was an intimate of Big Bill Haywood and Eugene Debs. His labour record even in 1912 was one of which many a man might be proud. One of the founders of that uncompromising union workers' organisation, The New Zealand Federation of Labour, generally known (feared or loved) as the "Red Fed.", Hickey had been the first secretary of the N.Z. Miners' federation and formerly general secretary of the United Federation of Labour.

Sometime sub-editor and acting editor of the "Maoriland Worker," secretary of various important conferences, with widespread activities in all directions, Hickey represented the best type of Labour leader.

Naturally, we became the closest of comrades, closer to me than anyone else, with the exception of Bob Ross, and this deep friendship remained unbroken until the day of his death in Melbourne a few years ago.

There was a close bond and similarity of outlook between the old fighting A.W.A. and the "Red Fed." in their militant policies and detestation of the Arbitration Courts, which served to still further increase our mutual regard, both having a common objective and ideals in respect to the real mission of unionism. A magnetic speaker, persistent organiser and writer of ability, Hickey left his mark wherever he went. Later he returned to Australia and was engaged as organiser by the Victorian branch of the Australian Railways Union afterwards transferring to the Queensland branch. It was at that intermediate period that Frank M. Hyett, A.R.U. general secretary, died suddenly, and Hickey was approached to take up the vacant position. But he declined, and came on to Queensland. I asked him why. With his whimsical smile he replied: "Oh, you know, I don't like stepping into dead men's shoes."

When Hickey was returning to Australia, there was a vacancy on the Queensland "Worker" literary staff, which would have suited Pat, who was

looking for a job. I was a member of the “Worker” board and did my utmost to get Hickey the job. J. Hanlon, the editor, and A. Hinchcliffe, manager, both knew Hickey well – and that, of course, was the cause of their determination not to have a rebel like Hickey at any price. So they schemed and wangled until the “danger” had passed.

A few years previously, when C. Seymour resigned from the editorship, the position was advertised throughout Australasia. Hickey applied in characteristically brief and unassuming manner. Theodore was chairman of the “Worker” board and controlled the situation. Crampton and I, when we heard that Hickey had applied, tried hard to get him the appointment, but obviously Theodore determined to prevent such a menace to “sane” labourism, from entering the sacred premises of the “Worker,” and the present editor, highly recommended by every Labour politician in West Australia, was appointed. He has held the position ever since and has consistently justified his selection as a loyal and unquestioning servant of the reactionary A.W.U. official coterie and the Labour politicians.

Hickey, after occupying the position of A.R.U. organiser for some time, left Queensland to take on the impossible task of raising sufficient money in New Zealand to establish a Labour daily. The project failed, and Hickey commenced a printing business in Auckland. He made a success of this venture, but ultimately abandoned it and settled in Melbourne, where he subsequently died, a comparatively young man.

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The arrival of the pamphlets from Kerrs, U.S.A., in two huge cases in January, 1913, was the beginning of a continuous stream of Socialist and militant working class propaganda which was poured forth to A.W.A. (U.) members throughout the State. Knowing the fate that would await such literature from indifferent or hostile officials if sent in bulk to the various district offices, I obtained a full list of all mining camps, sugar mills, shearing sheds, railway gangs in Queensland and dispatched parcels of the precious literature to each one. It was a big task, but it was indeed a labour of love, and

enthusiastically assisted by two or three comrades who likewise realised the urgency and value of this work, the A.W.U. in Queensland was flooded with this literature.

Included in the literature obtained then and later were the writings of Marx, Engels, Morris, Spargo, Bax, Haywood, Jack London, Kautskey, Kropotkin, Lafargue, Jim Connolly, Mary Marcy, Trautman, Simons, Professor Heron, and many other, of the recognised leading writers and propagandists of the world Labour movement.

Later I managed to literally drag a further amount of money from the executive and remember purchasing 200 copies of "The Truth about the Waihi Strike" and £10's worth of the "International Socialist Review," Kerrs' magnificent monthly magazine. Theodore particularly was hostile to the literature project and did not hesitate to put every possible obstacle in the way of the literature committee getting the money allocated by the A.W.A. conference.

At the Townsville conference I met "Jim" Munro, who was a delegate and an active worker in the A.W.A. though also a member of the Amalgamated Engineering Union. Jim later came to Brisbane and as a member of the literature committee rendered invaluable service in the circulation of the literature. Always an active worker in the Labour movement, Jim has occupied responsible positions in the A.E.U. and was chairman of the Brisbane Labour Day Committee in 1938.

A brother, Jack, now in Westralia, was also an engineer, and a live member of the old A.W.A., closely associated with Theodore and McCormack. After the 1912 general strike Jack at a meeting, made certain recommendations as to how unionists should deal with scabs when forced to work with them. He was arrested, committed for trial and sentenced to six months hard labour in Boggo Road gaol, which he served. A little while ago Mrs. Lane and I had a long letter from him in which he lovingly recalled the old days of virility and enthusiasm, with a special word for the beauty of "Cosme," where he met his future wife.

As there was evidently no intention of the A.W.A. executive to establish a book department as recommended by the conference, I resolved to endeavour to do something in this matter, though as an individual it must obviously be in a very restricted manner. I issued an appeal which as it is of some historic value, is inserted as an addendum at the end of the book.

Chapter XII.
Dearth of Socialist Books.

It is hard for the present generation to realise or even understand the paucity of Socialist and working class books in Queensland particularly, and Australia generally, 25 years ago. There was not a bookseller's shop in Brisbane that stocked, sold, or even knew anything of such books. The dearth or drought was absolute and nobody seemed to care a darn. Practically all such books I had to obtain from America, England, New Zealand, and a few from Andrade, Melbourne.

Despite the many difficulties, happily some fine results accrued from this scheme. The response I received was encouraging and until after the outbreak of the war in 1914 placed the military in the saddle of power, thus automatically banning and gagging all freedom of a working class nature, very many books were purchased and distributed. In some instances I received from small mining or railway camps, £5 orders and from many distant and isolated parts of the State thirsty souls wrote to me with appreciation of this effort to spread the light.

Those far off days of book shortage and difficulties are to-day but a dim memory, unknown even to most workers. To-day Communist, revolutionary, radical books and literature of all descriptions are to be found in every quarter – even often finding pride of place in the windows of Methodist and other religious bookshops, while the Anvil Book Shop staggers one with its wealth of working class publications.

Compared with this welter of books easily and immediately obtainable, my efforts in the direction of book circulation amongst the toilers of Queensland were poor indeed. But I cherish the thought, even belief, that this seed thus sown has borne good fruit, that the labour was not wasted, and that at least some of the Communist thought and activities in Queensland today can be traced in some degree to the books and literature I and a few other comrades succeeded in distributing a quarter of a century ago.

Of all the literature sent out by the literature committee, Paul Lafargue's "Right to be Lazy" perhaps created the liveliest interest. It was an entirely new doctrine, a startlingly fresh outlook on life to the workers in this State who had been taught nothing except the "dignity" of labour, of the right to work and toil from the cradle to the grave. This devil's gospel had never been challenged but unthinkingly accepted as the basis of the workers' lives. Lafargue's brilliant exposition of the new dispensation, of the workers' supreme right to be lazy, for a place in the sun, to discard the old shibboleths regarding eternal toll, came like a burst of sunlight through a black and murky sky. It literally captured the imagination of the A.W.U. members and became a continual topic of debate and acclamation round camp fires, at meetings and conferences alike.

"The Right To Be Lazy"! What a soul comforting thought in this era of degrading and mostly useless or unnecessary toil. And how few workers realise their God-given inherent right to be lazy, to enjoy and revel in life instead of being the soulless machines of an inhuman system of society.

An amusing incident with regard to the right to be lazy occurred at a conference between the mine owners and their employees at a mining centre in North Queensland. Con Ryan, who, at it later period, for a short time was a Labour member of Parliament, as an A.W.A. organiser, represented the men and pointed out that the men were deserving of increased wages because they were such good, hard toilers. "Why!" interjected a mine manager, "I heard you at a street meeting the other night strongly stressing the claim of the doctrine of the right to be lazy!" Ryan was non-plussed for a few seconds, then with ready Irish wit retorted "But that was only propaganda!"

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The "foreign" literature which the committee had now circulated aroused the most bitter opposition of Theodore, H. Coyne, R. Bow, F. Martyn, and other reactionary members of the executive of the now amalgamated A.W.A. and A.W.U., of which W. J. Dunstan, an imported reactionary from South Australia, was general secretary. At a meeting of the Queensland executive, I

and the literature were denounced as enemies and disruptors of the "Labour movement" in general and the great A.W.U. in particular. A deplorable picture was depicted as to how the literature was "undermining" and corrupting the union. Poor Dave Bowman, who was my personal friend, was so worked upon by this tale of horror that he shook his fist and exclaimed: "Who has done this damnable thing!" The executive then made short work of the literature committee and me.

Although I was elected by the recognised highest authority of the union – the annual convention, the executive dissolved the literature committee and branded me as an A.W.U. disloyalist. J. Moir and J. Dash, both members of the executive, came and told me what had happened. I said that personally I did not worry about the action of the executive, but that I strongly resented the insulting of the writers of the literature who were the greatest in the whole Labour movement, and whose boots Theodore was not fit to brush. I said if this literature was undermining the A.W.U., then it was about time it was undermined, but it was not the A.W.U. but the officials and their reactionary policy that the literature was undermining. The executive, I said, was a Star Chamber, who had the brazenness to dictate to the rank and file what they should or should not read. But instead of the members resenting the "corrupting" literature I had received many letters from all parts of Queensland stating that the literature scheme was the finest thing the A.W.U. had ever done and deeply appreciating the "foreign" literature supplied.

I said to McCormack when I next saw him: "I am alone here in Brisbane, and you have apparently crushed me and the literature. But you are too late, Mac! The literature is now throughout the State and will do its work despite the executive."

There was a change in the tone of Theodore and his cronies with regard to the literature after they had come in contact with the rank and file of the members. They found, of course, that the members gladly welcomed the literature and wanted more of it. But though the open hostility of the executive was dropped, the determination to prevent me from operating the literature

never wavered and the outbreak of war upset any concrete effort to again force this matter to the front.

McCormack was always more frank than Theodore in discussions or talks with me. After he had been out-back, he said to me: “You know, Ernie, there is nothing wrong with that literature, but you have made thousands of I.W.W.-ites,” and he laughed. “They all want to put the theories into immediate practice. I was at a meeting in a northern mining centre,” he continued, “where a miner, whom I had worked with years ago gave a very fine speech on industrial unionism. When he had finished I said to him, “Why, what has happened to you; I never heard you speak before in your life.” Taking a number of the “foreign” A.W.A. pamphlets from his pocket he replied, “This is what happened to me; I always had these ideas dimly in my mind, but never heard them expressed until we got this literature.”

So, despite the intense official opposition, the good work was going on and the literature was fulfilling its hoped for mission.

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The line of demarcation between the two schools of thought that existed even in the old fighting A.W.A. became clearer and intensified with the amalgamation and the entry of the Arbitrationist A.W.U. and its reactionary leaders. Contrary to the expectations of the militant section, the majority of the leading old A.W.A. officials with Theodore in the lead, threw their weight in with the reactionary section.

I was defeated in the 1913 ballot for position as delegate to the annual delegate meeting and Australian Convention. The Queensland president and two vice-presidents were in that year elected by the delegate meeting. Theodore was elected president, while the first ballot for vice- president resulted in the election of J. Wilson, a decent, popular northern member of the A.W.A. The other candidates included Albert Hinchcliffe, Dave Bowman, Harry Coyne, M.L.A., “Bill” McCormack, and myself. In the second ballot, all except Bowman and I were eliminated, McCormack only receiving three votes, the others less. In the final ballot, to the amazement and consternation of

the reactionaries, Bowman and I tied, and it was left to the president, Theodore, to give his casting vote. “I declare Bowman elected,” he said. W. J. Riordan who (ye gods!) was one of the militant delegates, interjected, “Of course you would.” Within a month, Wilson, owing to his appointment as Federal Electoral Officer of the Darling Downs, had to resign from the vice-presidency. The executive without any hesitation or qualms of conscience, appointed McCormack vice-president. In the following year (1914), a number of the militants urged me to nominate against Theodore for the position of president. Of course, we knew that no one could beat Theodore, but it was desired that an opportunity should be given to record a vote of protest. I readily agreed as I have never worried about getting defeated in a ballot or a fight. I have been in that position all my life. Theodore was elected, but I received a big minority vote, which represented the fighters of the organisation.

McCormack and Coyne continuously nominated for the position of vice-president, the former being elected. In 1915, they were both nominated and at the last hour of nominations I nominated, as the militants considered that on a split reactionary vote between McCormack and Coyne, a solid militant vote would elect me. When the nominations were published, however, it was seen that Coyne’s name had been withdrawn!

Theodore, in January, 1915, after being re-elected president for that year, resigned from that position, thus leaving it to the annual delegate meeting at Brisbane in January, to elect a president. There was a militant majority of one at that meeting, so their nominee would be elected. I had failed to get elected to the delegate meeting. The militant delegates approached me, urging me to accept nomination. With the greatest reluctance I agreed, feeling that, as there was no one else in sight, it was my duty to do so. I dreaded the crucifixion I should suffer as president at the hands of a reactionary secretary and executive. When I told Jack Crampton he said: “You are a damn fool to take it on,” and tried to persuade me not to. On the Monday morning the election was to take place, Jack Moir, a delegate, and secretary of the Far Northern District of the A.W.U., was waiting at the “Daily Standard” office to see me. He said

that I had quite enough worry as an industrial writer in the "Standard" without adding to it the misery of A.W.U. presidency. "They will murder you," he said, and Jim Riordan has agreed to accept nomination. We want some one who will kick Dunstan down the stairs – out of the office – and Riordan is the man to do it."

I assured Moir that I was only too pleased to give him pride of place in this matter of Riordan or anyone else. Some of the militant delegates resented the intrigue that had apparently taken place in connection with Riordan's nomination and wanted me to go to the ballot, but I persuaded them to let me withdraw. McCormack was the nominee of the reactionaries, but did not nominate as it was known that the militants' nominee would be elected it was rumoured that it was the intention of the delegate meeting to make the position of president a fully paid one.

Moir was asked if this was true. He indignantly denied it point blank. As soon as Riordan as declared elected unopposed, as president, Moir Jumped up and moved that the president be paid a salary of £300 per annum. This resolution was carried but was rejected by the Australian A.W.U. convention in Sydney a few days later. However, this hurdle was easily surmounted because the Queensland president of the A.W.U. was paid a "special organiser's" salary, and that tricky method of paying a president operates to this day.

It is hardly necessary for me to note how faithfully (?) Riordan carried out his mission to fight Dunstan and the reactionaries as president of the A.W.U. Like many other time servers, Riordan forswore his militancy once he had obtained office through its agency. He became the boon companion and well-beloved comrade of Dunstan and commenced his reactionary career.

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These sidelights on the earlier A.W.U. ballots serve to illustrate the true inwardness of the reactionary bunch who have so continuously held sway in the A.W.U. and largely managed to repulse every attempt to clean it up.

One of the results of the amalgamation of the A.W.A. and the A.W.U. was the withdrawal of many of the unions from the Australian Labour Federation on account of a misunderstanding, arising from a letter from Hinchcliffe, that all affiliated unions had to pay the "Worker" a subsidy. This left only the A.W.U. and A.M.I.E.U. subsidising that paper. Consequently the A.L.F. disappeared as an organisation that had originally promised to be a solid and permanent basis of Australian unionism.

With the eclipse of the A.L.F. the Brisbane district Council automatically dissolved and for a considerable time there was no central organisation of the Brisbane unions. This impossible position was rectified by the establishment of the Brisbane Industrial Council, on the usual basis of union representation common to other Trades and Labour Councils. Alex. Skirving, later an M.L.A., and alderman of the Brisbane City Council, was the first president, and George Gavin (Painters' Union) secretary.

At the commencement the Industrial Council was dominated by the moderate unions, but, after the outbreak of the war in 1914 – there was a decided swing to the left, until eventually the militants were in the majority. This was most objectionable to the reactionary minority, who vainly endeavoured to stem the rising tide and viewed with dismay the revolutionary policy of the Council.

One of the stock phrases of the Labour Party, with their close allies, the moderate and reactionary unions, is that "majorities must rule, and minorities must submit to majority decisions and be disciplined." But this basic principle of democracy has been invariably ignored, side-tracked or sabotaged by the blatant moderates when they happen to be a minority. The history of the Brisbane Industrial Council vividly illustrates this dishonest and cowardly method of retarding all progressive movements. Unable to impose their will upon the Council, detesting the courageous anti-war policy of the Council, nearly all the reactionary unions withdrew their affiliations. These unions, included the Carters (now Road Transport Workers), Engine Drivers and Firemen, Clothing Trade, Hairdressers and other smaller unions. These unions found a refuge and comfortable home in the Eight-Hour Committee, which

naturally became treated by members and ministers of the Labour Government as the supreme control union organisation in Queensland and was deliberately used by the politicians to discredit and oppose the militant industrial council.

When, years later, a scheme of amalgamation of the Eight-Hour Committee, Industrial Council, and Trades Hall Board, was practically consummated, a meeting of this amalgamation was convened to inaugurate the now Trades and Labour Council, at which every union in Brisbane, with the exception of the A.W.U., was represented, the election of officers resulted in the election of nominees of the old industrial delegates, to every position with the exception of George Lawson, M.H.R., who just got elected on one of the committees. This triumph of the militants was unbearable to the moderates, and within two months the usual withdrawals from affiliation took place, resulting in the early collapse of the amalgamation.

When the amalgamation was again consummated, there was a change in the attitude of the unions. The moderates secured a decisive victory, the present Trades and Labour Council replaced the Industrial Council – and there was no sabotaging tactics indulged in by the delegates who strictly adhere to majority rule – when it suits them.

The A.W.U. is perhaps the most glaring example of this dishonest method of avoiding the unpleasant duty of majority domination. That organisation has consistently, on many occasions, refused to join or co-operate in any movement where the A.W.U. and its hopelessly reactionary policies are not acceptable. Its persistent refusal to recognise or affiliate with the A.C.T.U. is one of the best known instances of this trait of A.W.U. policy.

*** * ***

In June, 1915, a general meeting of metropolitan members of the A.W.U. was held in the Trades Hall for the purpose of forming a local committee in accordance with the new constitution. I was elected secretary and it was decided to hold monthly meetings. A keen desire was expressed to affiliate with the Brisbane Industrial Council and appoint delegates. W. J. Dunstan, general secretary of the Queensland branch, stated that the matter would be

dealt with by the State executive and he was sure that an unanimous vote in favour of such affiliation would be cast by the executive.

It is interesting to recall that the following resolution was carried unanimously at the next meeting: "That this meeting of the A.W.U. members express their profound indignation at the suggested introduction by a Labour Minister of a miniature Conscription Act and pledge ourselves to join forces with all other trade unionist's to resist this most reactionary proposal."

This resolution was forwarded to Andy Fisher, Prime Minister, W. Watkins, secretary of the Federal Labour Party, and W. J. Finlayson, M.H.R. for Brisbane. The Act referred to was in connection with compulsory registration for military purposes. Finlayson, in his reply stated that he was in complete agreement with our protest and that we could rely on his "consistent antagonism."

The following resolution was also carried and forwarded to Messrs. Frank Anstey and C. McGrath, Ms.H.R.: "That this general meeting of A.W.U. members emphatically endorses the attitude taken up by Messrs. Frank Anstey and C. McGrath in their attacks on the Federal Labour Government, with regard to its abandonment of working class principles and its advocacy of military dominance as opposed to civilian rights."

Those resolutions give some indication of the anti-working class tendencies of the Federal Labour Government 23 years ago, which, unfortunately, have since become even more pronounced.

Advice was received at the next meeting from A.W.U. executive that the request for affiliation with the Industrial Council could not be endorsed. Very hostile speeches were made that the affiliation be proceeded with immediately. But Dunstan, Riordan, and Coy. had had quite enough of the metropolitan members and their revolutionary attitude. With the usual A.W.U. bureaucratic effrontery they decided to effectually sabotage this possible menace to A.W.U. ideas and policy so they cut the Gordian knot by not having any more meetings of the Brisbane local committee.

As the union funds were controlled by the executive, the necessary supplies were cut off and another victory was secured by the authoritative executive.

* * *

During the general strike in 1912 the urgent necessity of a daily Labour paper, owned and controlled by the workers, was realised as never before. A daily strike bulletin was issued and with this foundation, a few months later, the "Daily Standard" was inaugurated in the face of almost insuperable obstacles. Although the paper was made possible by private shareholders, the majority of the shares were taken up by the unions. J. V. McDonald (later elected to the Federal Senate) was editor, Mat. McCabe (Waterside Workers) manager, and "Jack" Crampton a director and industrial editor.

It is difficult for those who only knew the "Standard" in the later years of its existence, when it first came under the baleful editorship and subsequent managership of "Alick" Robertson, to visualise the fine work carried on by that paper in its unswerving advocacy of the Labour cause. It is also interesting to note that the A.W.U. was indifferent in its support of the "Standard," and it was only very begrudgingly and practically under duress that a modest number of shares were taken up. It was the usual A.W.U. policy of declining to be a minor partner in any working class movement where other unions had a predominating control. Many years later the A.W.U. obtained a majority of the shares and thus completely dominated the "Standard" and its policy, resulting in its ultimate extinction.

* * *

Elected as one of the eight delegates to the June, 1916, A.W.U. annual convention, Sydney, Theodore, at the Queensland delegate meeting, intimated that he would be unable to attend and asked me if I, as the next in a ballot of over 40 nominees, would be prepared to go. I replied in the affirmative. Some questions were asked at the delegate meeting (I was not a delegate) regarding what had happened to the literature scheme and a book (?) department that had been started at the "Worker" office and been closed as a financial failure. W. J. Dunstan, general secretary, with an utter disregard for the truth, which has

always been a characteristic feature of A.W.U. officials whenever they get the opportunity to attack the “reds,” gave a most shamefully misleading report on the whole literature distribution question. When I saw the report in the “Daily Standard” the next day I decided to reply as secretary of the A.W.U. literature committee, and exposed the tactics of the Dunstan, Theodore gang. I wrote a letter giving a truthful resume of the matter, but did not mention the underhand trickery used by Theodore and Co. to kill the literature scheme. I took it to Crampton for publication in the “Daily Standard.” He said: "Have you sent a similar letter to the “Worker?” I pointed out that the “Worker” would not publish my exposure of A.W.U. crookedness. Crampton advised me to send the letter, otherwise I would be charged with using the anti-A.W.U. press. So I did. Seymour said he wouldn’t publish it until the delegate meeting had dealt with the letter. I retorted: “You can do what you like, but the letter will be in the ‘Daily Standard.'”

Dunstan was enraged, rushed down to the “Daily Standard” office and stormed at Crampton and the editor at “daring to publish a lying, slanderous attack on the A.W.U.” McDonald, (who did not even know me then), said the A.W.U. had better send a censor to the “Daily Standard” office to decide what should be published. The letter to him (McDonald) seemed a fair presentation of the case, and argued the A.W.U. had its remedy as the columns of the “Standard” were open for them to expose the lies and slanders of Lane. Of course, Dunstan rejected this with scorn. “The A.W.U. did not discuss its business in the daily press.” (But the official report was always published in the “Standard.”) The sequel was that I never heard any more about taking Theodore’s place at the Sydney convention. The position as offered to J. Dash and J. Moir, but it was too barefaced, and they declined, and McLean, Charleville, who had not been in the ballot, was appointed.

*** * ***

There was a virile militant minority of delegates at the first Queensland delegate meeting in 1914 since the amalgamation, who were opposed to the Arbitration system, strenuous advocates of industrial unionism on a definite working class basis who viewed with misgivings the growing dominance of

the politicians. W. J. Riordan was one of the militant delegates and in direct conflict with Theodore, McCormack and their allies, the reactionary officials of the old A.W.U.

For the purpose of talking over the position prevailing in the A.W.U., Riordan, “Jim” Munro, and I, one evening went to the Botanical gardens. Although we were not conspirators, in any sense, so strong was the antagonism of the officials that if we had been seen together, we would have been charged with conspiracy.

One evening during the week that the delegate meeting was sitting, Riordan, Theodore, Munro and I were walking up Queen Street to North Quay. Riordan and Theodore stopped behind and talked very earnestly together at the corner of Queen and George Streets, while Munro and I waited for Riordan at the tram stop. We were puzzled to know what was the subject of their conversation. Tired of waiting, we got our tram, Munro remarking that Riordan would tell us the next day. Neither of us saw him again before he returned to the North, though he had arranged two appointments with us. Some weeks later it was announced in the press that Riordan was the Labour candidate for Bowen.

No one has any objections to workers as Labour candidates except when they are workers who insistently express their belief in the pre-eminence of the unions and who refuse to become more politicians attached to an effete Labour Party.

Chapter XIII.
Militancy Sabotaged.

The growing power of the militant section of the A.W.U. was a constant subject of argument amongst us. In Queen Street one evening, Jack Munro and I and a prominent official of the A.W.U. were together. Munro said to him: “Ah well, you have the whip hand today, but in a very short time we, the militants, will have control of the organisation.” “No, you won’t,” was the reply. “When you become too dangerous, we have a method to stop you. We buy you.” Munro indignantly repudiated this assumption that the militants could be bought. “Every man has his price,” Munro, was told by the other. “I admit,” he said, “that there are some men you can’t buy, but they are so few that they don’t count.”

What a philosophy of corruption to be voiced by a Labour man. Unhappily he spoke truly, and my experience since that day, 25 years ago, bears out this cynical prophecy. With a very, very few honourable exceptions, officials and delegates of the A.W. U., who invariably were elected and trusted by the rank and file, because of their militancy, and strong opposition to the policy of the dominant officials, have “sold out”; heavily bribed and rewarded with positions of varying value. It is a long, tragic list, and it is entirely due to this criminal desertion of the rank and file to become the miserable tools of a corrupt oligarchy, that the A.W.U. today, instead of being a blazing beacon of light has become a byword and reproach to all progressive unionists. There is no question that if the militant officials had not become soulless cogs in the official machine, the history of unionism in Australian would be very different to what it is. The officials could never have obtained such power, but would have been well restrained, or swept out of office.

I have known very many of the A.W.U. officials in Queensland, have been in close association with many, and covering a long period of years only one paid official, to my knowledge, has retained his ideals and never flinched when his principles and courage were tested. That official is Jack Durkin, organiser and later secretary of the Longreach branch of the A.W.U. Durkin,

of course, paid the inevitable price of standing alone against the official regime and was dismissed from office. For years Durkin was hated and persecuted by the,A.W.U. executive, until when he rightly scornfully refused to circulate a scurrilous pamphlet issued by the Queensland executive slandering and attacking the workers opposed to the reactionary A.W.U. policy, Durkin was sacked. He made only one big mistake, and that was when he was foolish enough to try and get redress through the law courts against his treatment.

The story of A.W.U. officials betrayals is a sorry one indeed. Of course, some of the officials never abandoned their principles as there was no necessity to do so as whatever their beliefs were, they always coincided with their reactionary chiefs.

Shortly after I had been "passed" out of the A.W.U., as far as official positions were concerned, I was present at a delegate meeting waiting to get a report for the "Daily Standard." I knew most of the delegates, some of whom had been with me in hard fought fights against the powers that be. In the old days the delegate meeting was a strenuous battle ground wherein was fought to the end the ceaseless conflict between the militants and moderates – and we quite often won.

Today the delegate meeting is a howling farce as there is no militant section and nothing whatever to discuss, all are in the machine.

While I was sitting musing of past glories and present debacle, one of the organisers and delegates whom I had known in the A.W.A. days came to me and said: "What do you think of us, Ernie?" "You know what I think of you," I replied. "Yes," he replied, "you are right. We are all in the machine. You have to toe the mark or its 'outsky.' It is a matter of bread and butter, and if I opened my mouth – that would be the end of me." I said sadly: "There is no room for anyone like me amongst you now!" "You!" the delegate exclaimed, "why, they would murder you in a minute!"

*** * ***

The advent of Arbitration Courts into the Commonwealth marked a new and disquieting phase of unionism. Discouraged by the failure in great measure of the strike methods of securing redress for their countless grievances, the appeal on behalf of the compulsory arbitration system found a ready response. Without fully grasping the real significance of Arbitration, its implications, and worst of all, its emasculating effect upon union militant independence, the workers foolishly accepted it as a heavenly dispensation to solve all their troubles.

How compulsory arbitration has led the Australian workers into a fever stricken jungle of deadly diseases that remorselessly sapped the strength of the unions until they became but a shadow of their former manhood, the history of the past quarter of a century only too tragically records.

The Socialist, the industrialist, who clearly foresaw the inevitable result of arbitration, put up a stubborn resistance to this latest and most insidious weapon of capitalist exploiters to nullify the unions' power and bind the workers with chains of legal bondage. But it was not until after many years of bitter experience of the operations of arbitration, that the workers realised its true purpose and futility.

With a few others I continuously condemned the arbitration system, exposed its fallacy and urged the workers to repudiate it and retain that independence and fighting spirit that was the greatest glory of unionism. At every available opportunity, at conventions and trade union meetings, in the press, I did my utmost to arouse the unions to the very real dangers of the policy they had chosen. But it was all in vain. Union officials with few exceptions, and the whole of the politicians formed a solid phalanx in defence of a system that made it impossible for the basic principles of the working class movement ever to be anything but hypocritical platitudes. I was bitterly attacked from many quarters for my "disruptive and disloyal" utterances and attitude on this question particularly. Indignant letters signed by union secretaries were published in the "Daily Standard," seriously questioning my rights to attack arbitration, even my bona-fides as a responsible member of the working class movement.

* * *

Time, however, brought its compensations, and those who had scoffed at the anti-arbitrationists today sadly admit that they and unions generally had "bought a pup" and been largely responsible for the decline of real unionism and its subservience to capitalist law. Chris. Dawson, secretary of the Brisbane Waterside Workers' Union, who had openly attacked me in the "Daily Standard" for my criticism of arbitration, some years later said to me quite unexpectedly: "You were right, Ernie, and I was wrong. Arbitration has killed real unionism. Before arbitration, unionists wore unionists from conviction, and suffered victimisation and every hardship for their principles. Today every wharf labourer is a "unionist" but whenever a real working class stand should be taken these arbitration unionists, who are in the majority, always roll up and defeat any militant move. One hundred of the old unionists were worth more than 1,000 of our compulsory unionists."

And this indisputable fact in itself condemns compulsory arbitration as the workers most powerful enemy.

* * *

On the outbreak of the world war in 1914, with few exceptions, the workers in Australia as elsewhere, enthusiastically supported the war policy of their various Governments. Labour parties and Governments rivalled the most reactionary Governments in their determination to use the full power of the State to crush the "Huns." Andy Fisher, Prime Minister, spoke vaingloriously of pledging "the last man and the last shilling," in the holy crusade against the powers of darkness as represented by the central powers. The Federal Labour Government without hesitation imposed a War Precautions Act and established a censorship which won the admiration of the most ardent imperialist.

Thus abandoned by their leaders, the workers accepted without question the war propaganda that was poured out. "A war to end war," "To save democracy and civilisation," and "to destroy militarism," were some of the many slogans shouted from pulpits, press and parliaments.

Caught up in this whirlwind of jingoistic fury, the mass of the people fell easy victims to the prevailing war hysteria. Those of us who refused to be fooled by the militarist jargon and platitudes of ignorant or cowardly politicians were regarded as traitors to the holy cause of freedom, I.W.W.-ites, whose proper place was against a wall at sunrise or behind prison bars. As the years of slaughter rolled by, the truth of this war crime against humanity gradually became exposed in all its naked hideousness with a consequent revulsion of popular opinion and a strategic retreat of the Labour politicians, who, instead of being leaders in the van of progress, consistently follow the mob. While this latter method of leadership may not be very creditable, it is certainly much easier and generally leads the politicians to place and power - not into the wilderness.

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The appointment of "Jack" Crampton in August, 1915, to the position of Director of Labour in the new department created by the Queensland Government, brought about a change in my life and gave me an unexpected opportunity to expound the gospel of working class revolt. Entirely through the strong advocacy by Crampton of my fitness to succeed him as industrial editor of the "Daily Standard" I was appointed to that position by J. V. McDonald, the editor. I had not met McDonald until then so it was not a personal matter. "Joe" Collings tried to get the appointment, but was passed over. I can thank McDonald for enabling me to reach an audience in all parts of the State as my "revolutionary proclivities" had, and always would, effectively debarred me from getting employed on the "Worker" or any other Labour paper. In selecting a nom-de-plume for my articles in the "Daily Standard" I first decided on "John Ball," immortalised by William Morris in "The Dream of John Ball." But I could visualise it being corrupted and mis-spelt to "John Bull" – which was a horror too awful – though humorous to contemplate. So I, with humble appreciation, adopted the nom-de-plume of another good rebel of the same period, "Jack Cade."

Until twelve years later, when Alick Robertson, that genius who was going to show a gaping world how to edit a Labour paper, refused to publish any

"Jack Cade" articles, I wrote many hundreds of articles. I always – could not possibly do otherwise – approached every subject from a socialist and working class view-point. This, with a natural gift for writing – plus an ever-burning revolutionary fervour that found expression in all my activities throughout my life, gave the "Jack Cade" articles a wide appeal and appreciation by all honest working class people. They were a feature of the "Daily Standard," and were welcomed as a revigorating refresher amidst a super-abundance of uninspiring Labour-in-politics propaganda.

It was heartening to me to see very many "Jack Cade" articles republished in the Australian Labour papers and even in New Zealand. I felt and still feel that the articles were fulfilling a long-desired want, were comforting to those unswerving fighters in the Labour movement who, with sore hearts saw the rapid decline that was overclouding the one-time militancy of the movement and making it merely a soulless machine whereby to achieve power.

On the other hand the politicians and the craft unionists, the war-mongering Labourites and all who either consciously or unthinkingly considered that a mild "Lib-Lab." Labourism was the greatest boon, fiercely voiced objections and intensely disliked "Jack Cade" and my other militant activities.

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It seemed to be a queer trick of fate that I should be destined, after a lapse of 20 years to vainly endeavour to force or induce the Queensland Labour movement to return to its early faith, which had been so gloriously preached and established by my brother Will. Yet this was the actual position. At all times, unceasingly, on A.W.U. or A.L.P. conventions, at union meetings, in the "Daily Standard," I preached, stormed, and fought for the retention or rather the return to basic principles as against arbitration and all the other enervating policies that had, since the early nineties, gradually gained an evil ascendency in the workers' political and industrial organisation.

There was, however, a tragic difference between the situation in the 80's and 90's of the last century to what prevailed when I returned from Paraguay. My brother Will had a fallow field of rich soil, waiting for the sower and seed.

How amazingly he sowed that seed and how the despairing workers responded is one of the most inspiring pages of Australian Labour history.

After his departure from Queensland, his over powering example and influence removed, the drift towards expediency in contradistinction to a stern adherence to principle commenced. The politician and political aspirant attained a power previously unknown. Vested interests became a part of the movement, both in Parliament and in the unions, and a machine was fashioned that served to still further entrench the chosen few from any ill organised assaults from the rank and file. Instead of a receptive, uncorrupted movement as existed thirty or forty years ago, there was now a well organised and powerful machine which was far removed from the early intense working class movement that promised to bring into being a reorganised society.

This was the position I and others were faced with who embarked on the hopeless task of purging the movement of its impurities. I am not drawing any analogy whatever between my brother Will and myself, apart from the facts of the case. Will was a genius, a magnetic pioneer of Communism, who stands alone in his towering strength. None other in Australia ever approached him in the amazing work he put into his all too short life in Australia, or his inspiring writings. Whatever talent I have, does not place me within the same class as Will. But our faith was the same. Communism is to me, as it has been throughout my life, the imperishable, ever blazing beacon lighting the way to a new society. It was this ideal, for which Will sacrificed all to preach and practice, that has ever inspired me to step into the fight, to frustrate the ambitions of indifferent or corrupt leaders, to make the Labour movement worthy of its highest ideals.

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The centre of militant unionism of a class-conscious working movement at this period, 1915 onwards, was the Brisbane Industrial Council. With a courage and intelligence sadly lacking in any other of the Labour councils in the Commonwealth, also in very few of the unions, the council adopted a militant attitude on all questions, and in no uncertain manner declared its

hostility to the war, denouncing it as a desperate conflict between opposing nations for sordid economic interests. The council was also a candid critic, of the Queensland Labour Government with its supineness and trickery, common to most Labour Governments, in evading their responsibilities to the workers. This earned the hostility of the government and of the unions and unionists who, in their support of the war, were prepared to abrogate many of their union principles. As reporter of the council meetings I was in the position to give prominence to its discussions and emphasise the fine work the council was doing.

The A.W.U. officials as usual remained aloof from a militant organisation which could not be dominated by the A.W.U., and I was personally bitterly criticised by some of the reactionary officials for “booming” the Industrial council. As the first in the field to denounce the war, the council attained fame and respect - throughout Australia. Scorning all attempts of the Labour ministers, Theodore, McCormack, Coyne, Fihelly and Coy., to influence or address the council the ministers took refuge in the welcome haven of the reactionary Eight Hour Committee, and endeavoured to get public recognition of that body as the real central organisation of Queensland unionism instead of the Industrial Council. So far did this antagonism of the politicians to the Council extend that when appointments of unionists to the Legislative Council were made with the ultimate view of dissolving the Legislative Council, the Industrial Council was ignored, and three prominent members of the Eight Hour Committee, R. J. Mulvey, Alick Skirving, and G. Lawson, were appointed. This was such a flagrant flouting of the premier working class organisation of the State, rousing public indignation that when the next appointments were to be made, the Government requested the council to nominate three nominees. The council by ballot elected J. S. Collings, Hildreth and W. J. Wallace.

It seems inconceivable in view of the servile services that “Joe” Collings has since rendered to the Labour party for many years, that the Government refused point blank to appoint Collings, because of his virulent criticism of the Government and its non-Labour policy. The council rightly refused to submit

any other name. No Industrial Council nominees were ever appointed, but within a few months the “rebel” Joe was appointed to the Legislative Council, and shortly afterwards was appointed organiser for the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labour Party, a position he satisfactorily held (in accordance with the traditions of the Q.C.E.) until he was elected to the Federal Senate.

I never heard how Collings had thus become a trusty colleague of the politicians and in the ordinary course of political preferment received his reward.

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The acceptance by the workers of the arbitration system and the subsequent growing sectionalism of the unions was countered by a rapidly increasing propaganda of industrial as against craft unionism. The Industrial Workers of the World was in the forefront of this struggle between the old and the new unionism. The success of that organisation in the U.S.A., where hitherto scores of thousands of unorganised, unskilled workers flocked into the ranks of the I.W.W., found its repercussion in Australia. As a revolutionary industrial union, with scant respect for Labour politicians, it aroused much bitter hostility in the ranks of orthodox unions and Labour politicians. I.W.W.-ism became the bogey used pretty effectively to prejudice the more timid workers and the term I.W.W. was a term of opprobrium and denouncement applied to all militants in exactly the same manner as “Bolshevik” and “Communism” is used by the reactionary parties today.

But industrial unionism secured the support of a very large number of unionists and the One Big Union soon became the most prominent question in the whole field of unionism. The A.W.U., although on the surface a basis for the O.B.U., was in reality just a mass organisation under the control of a central authority and in close alliance with the Australian Labour Party. With its usual opposition to any movement that threatened the dominance of the A.W.U. that organisation bitterly fought “The Reds,” as all militants were

termed, and denounced as disruptives all those inside or outside the union who urged the claim of the O.B.U.

Chapter XIV.
A.W.U. Ballots.

It was not until 1917 that I succeeded in getting elected as a delegate to the A.W.U. annual convention in Sydney, which was the supreme authority of the organisation. I was elected, however, to the Queensland branch annual delegate meeting and the Queensland Central Executive of the A.L.P. in 1915 and my vote was increasing yearly. In 1916 I was elected vice-president with J. Stopford, who obtained fewer votes. On several ballots I was elected councillor of the Queensland branch, defeating the general secretary, W. J. Dunstan. This position carried with it membership of the Australian Executive, where I found that with representatives from all States I was the only unpaid official.

The Queensland delegate meetings were, in those days, generally controlled by the militants, much to the disgust and dislike of the president, W. J. Riordan and his reactionary mate, "Bill" Dunstan. Unfortunately, being a Commonwealth organisation, the Queensland branch delegate meeting's powers were very restricted and any far-reaching reform or advance had to be endorsed by the Australian Convention which always had an overwhelming majority of reactionaries. At all Queensland delegate meetings militant resolutions were invariably guillotined by the annual convention, where the big majority of delegates were paid officials largely under the influence of the general secretary, E. Grayndler, Senator Barnes, A. Blakely, F. Lundie, W. J. Riordan and other "diehards."

The vote I received in A.W.U. ballots could be taken as an endorsement of my revolutionary ideals, anti-arbitration, O.B.U. and anti-war activities. This vote was a true barometer of the trend of thought in the A.W.U., registering the reactions of the rank and file to the various situations that arose. When, during the war period and immediately afterwards, there was a marked militant swing in the Labour movement, my vote registered that semi-revolutionary motion by the positions I was elected to, obtaining more votes than any other

successful candidate, vice-president, councillor, delegate to delegate meeting and conventions and Q.C.E. and representative on the “Worker” board.

When the reaction took place, my vote registered it in the opposite direction, even as Riordan, Fallon, Lamont and their reactionary partners soared in the ballot. So, as the organisation became more machine like, with its crushing of any attempt to restore its lost vigour, I was, after about ten years, relegated to outer darkness, while “Mossy” Hynes and “Jack” Dash were exalted to the position of vice-presidents.

Some dim glimpse of the incongruity of cabinet ministers of a reactionary Labour Government retaining high executive positions in an industrial organisation can be seen in connection with the strikes that have taken place in the North since these two A.W.U. vice-presidents attained industrial and political power. In the sugar and railway strikes, A.W.U. members were directly involved, yet the government, which included Dash and Hynes, did not hesitate to enact anti-strike legislation projects, and without any qualms, still retain their positions on the A.W.U. Executive. This is a most anomalous position. And yet the A.W.U. delegate meeting, even the rank and file, have not seen fit to turn these two cabinet ministers out of their executive positions. With regard to the vote I received from the A.W.U. members, Dunstan, at one of the Sydney conventions, speaking after I had moved a resolution, said that one should not take any notice of anything I said because I was “living up in the clouds.” I replied that although that might be so it was because of my revolutionary utterances and ideals which I had always honestly endeavoured to carry out that made it possible for me to be at the convention. With few exceptions, it was a militant, revolutionary vote that elected me to all my positions in the A.W.U. When that vote failed me, as I said, it possibly might do, then I should not be “up in the clouds” at the A.W.U. convention.

PART IV.
War and Labour

Chapter XV.
Labour Confused.

It became increasingly apparent as the war continued that the Federal Labour Government was enthusiastically pursuing a policy in support of the war that differed in small degree from that of any anti-working class movement. Under the guise of war emergency, military supremacy in the conduct of affairs in the Commonwealth was accepted and encouraged. Freedom of speech was denied to all who would not meekly worship at the shrine of national hatred of the enemy. With a few honourable exceptions, the Federal Labour members loyally supported "Billy" Hughes in his frenzied jingoism. Anstey, Brennan, Blackburn, McGrath, O'Mally, Dr. Maloney, Myles Ferricks, and W. Finlayson were courageously outstanding in their opposition to the War Precautions Act and other war legislation introduced and passed by the Federal Government.

Many unionists also, befuddled and mislead, foolishly followed the will-o'-the-wisp of imperial capitalism and regarded with distrust those who sought to expose the true meaning of the world conflict.

Hughes was acclaimed as a great patriot who was well fitted to lead the people of Australia in the hour of crisis. During his famous tour of Britain in the latter part of 1915, when he consorted with dukes and duchesses and slept in "blue rooms," Hughes, with his flamboyant oratory, out-jingoed the jingoes in his exaltation of "the war to save civilisation and democracy."

It was while Hughes was engaged in this whirlwind campaign that I wrote a "Jack Cade" article "The Man of the Hour," as he was fulsomely termed by his admirers – Labour and Tory alike. I did not spare the whip, but castigated and exposed this mountebank Labour Prime Minister. This article aroused the resentment and ire of Hughes' supporters, and by a coincidence, Hanlon, editor of the Queensland "Worker," in his leading article the same week on Hughes, proclaimed him as indeed the "man of the hour," in whom the

workers could place entire confidence as an incorruptible champion of democracy and Labour principles.

It requires no comment to indicate how this adulation of Labour's greatest traitor reveals the reactionary nature and proclivities of the official organ of the A.W.U. at that time.

Shortly after Hughes returned to Australia, he declared openly for conscription, and the Labour Party split on this question was followed by the formation of the "national" government, which species of amalgamation of Labour and capitalist parties has since become quite common in other countries whenever it is necessary to sacrifice the workers on the altar of economic or war necessity.

On the decision of the Federal Parliament to take a referendum on the conscription issue, anti-conscription organisations were immediately formed in a desperate attempt to save Australia from this, the worst form of military frightfulness.

The Queensland Labour Government declared its opposition to conscription, although as far as some at least of its members were concerned, with hesitation and trembling. Here, as in other States, the determination expressed by the overwhelming majority of the unions to fight conscription and conscriptionists whoever they might be, swung the political wing into the fray on the anti-conscription issue. The Brisbane Industrial Council, as always, was in the forefront of the initial fight and exercised a powerful influence in its undeviating, courageous attitude.

The Queensland anti-conscription committee comprised representatives of the unions, Parliamentary Labour Party, Women's Peace Movement, A.B.P. and Australian Peace Alliance. Theodore was elected chairman, Lewis McDonald, secretary. Riordan, Dunstan, and I were the A.W.U. delegates. The committee was fully representative of the anti-conscriptionists of Queensland and carried out a most effective campaign throughout the State, and several thousands of pounds were contributed from organisations and individuals.

The inauguration of the conscription campaign was marked by an immediate tightening of the already drastic military censorship and it was a penal offence to criticise in any way the conduct of the war or question the infallibility of the military machine.

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The most important matter in the campaign was the compilation of literature, its printing and distribution. A literature committee was appointed, comprising J. Fihelly (Minister for Justice), H. Sewell, Cuthbert Butler, E. H. Lane. I pointed out that the censorship would render it practically impossible for literature that was of any real value to be passed by the censor and. urged that the literature committee be authorised to obtain and publish literature (if necessary) without submission to the censor. This was agreed to. Cuthbert Butler was elected secretary and I chairman of the literature committee.

Butler had quite recently become associated with the Labour movement. A radical parson, he had, on account of unconventional and “extreme” preachings, left the church. He was a man of considerable ability; a lover of literature and a keen sense of humour, and a good comrade to have in a fight. Practically the whole work and responsibility of the literature committee was undertaken or fell on us. We were good companions, and notwithstanding Butler’s later abandonment of his revolutionary ideals, I still retain pleasant memories of our escapades and adventures in the two anti-conscription campaigns. Butler at the following State elections was selected as Labour candidate for the farming district of Laidley. Quite unexpectedly he won the election, due to the fact that many of the electors were German farmers who had received scant justice at the hands of the authorities. Even after the war ended, Butler could have retained the seat, but he mistakenly thought otherwise and disappeared from Queensland and the Labour movement.

One of the first lots of literature decided upon it was considered had no hope of passing the censor so I was deputed to get three pamphlets or leaflets illegally. I persuaded A. J. Ross, a brother of “Bob” Ross, who had an old established printery, to do the printing. I assured him that if it was discovered,

the anti-conscription committee would pay the fine. In reply to his query as to what would happen if he got goaled as well, I said that the committee could not very well go to goal in his stead. Then I had to hunt round and get another compositor as the printing had to be done in the middle of the night. Apart from those who printed this literature only one member of the committee other than Butler and I, knew anything about it.

The next morning Butler came to see me at the "Standard" Office and exploded a bomb. The censor had walked into the anti-conscription committee rooms at the "Worker" building, handed Butler the three illegal leaflets, with the false imprint on them, and asked him why they had not been submitted to the censor. Butler was staggered and to gain some time professed ignorance and said he would see me and then we would come to the censor's office at the Post Office.

Butler and I concocted the most plausible story we could think of to explain the illegal literature and went round to the censor's rooms. He was out when we called. When we called again he was still out. So then we had a brain wave and decided to say nothing but leave it to the censor to make the next move. But we never heard any more about it, neither did we ever discover who had played the informer and betrayed us to the censor.

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This is not a record of the anti-conscription campaign in Queensland, only a few of the incidents that I was personally associated with. "Cosme" was the natural home of visiting delegates of the rebel army from other States. These included Adela Pankhurst, now Mrs. Tom Walsh, and Miss Cecilia Johns, representing the Women's Peace Army, who came to hold a series of meetings in Brisbane. As the campaign progressed the feeling on both sides became more intense, and clashes between the opposing forces, more or less serious, were a common occurrence.

Adela's first lecture was called "Down with Germany." The Centennial Hall was packed as the reputation of the lecturer as an irreconcilable opponent of the war was well known. It was at first doubtful if Miss Pankhurst would get a

hearing, so bitter was the popular feeling against Germany. But her determination and sincerity carried her through, and her passionate denouncement of the war mongers and plea for peace stirred many in the audience.

At another lecture in the same hall, it was arranged that the meeting would commence, with the singing of the once famous anti-war song “I didn’t raise my son to be a soldier.” This song had been barred by the military authorities so the chairman of the meeting was notified by the military just before the meeting started that anyone singing the prohibited song would be immediately arrested. However, we decided to ignore this threat. Copies of the song were quietly distributed to the audience, Miss Johns struck the first bars on the piano, the chairman gestured the audience to stand, which they did, and the song was sung with great gusto, the singers little knowing that they were all liable to arrest and six months’ gaol. Apparently the military decided it was too big a job to arrest 1000 people, so no one was hurt.

The first public anti-conscription meeting in Brisbane was held at the Lyceum Theatre, George Street. This meeting was not organised by the anti-conscription committee but by an independent committee of which I was secretary. Miles Ferricks, W. Finlayson, Ms.H.R., and Rev. Rivett were the speakers. Two resolutions were drafted, one dealing with conscription and the other advocating peace by negotiation. I had shown the resolutions to the three speakers who agreed without demur. The morning of the meeting I had a ring from Harold Hartley (Labour member for Normanby) from Parliament House. He said that he and other Labour members would like to be on the platform at the meeting, but they could not identify themselves with any peace movement. I said that we hadn’t the slightest intention of deleting the peace resolution for all the Labour members in Australia. “But,” said Hartley, “you don’t know how strong the war feeling is amongst the people. I have just come back from Rockhampton and know.” “Yes”, I retorted, “I know how widespread the War fever extends, and it is because of the cowardice or ignorance of some Labour representatives who will not tell the people the truth about the damned horror, that peace talk is abhorrent. “Anyway,” I concluded, “you should be on the

platform to-night to support fellow politicians who are prepared to voice un-popular truths."

I think that there was only one other Labour member on the platform besides "Charlie" Collins, who never deserted the workers, but who was always true to his principles.

It was expected that there would be an attempt to smash up the meeting, and a number of the more pugnacious anti-conscriptionists provided for emergencies by carrying concealed weapons in the shape of iron piping or wooden batons. However, the first speaker, Rev. Rivett, plunged boldly into the subject of peace to the evident amazement of the jingoes present who failed to rally from the shock.

Following a pitched battle at an anti-conscription meeting held at Market (now King George) Square, in which the soldiers and conscriptionists were routed, a surprise attack was made on the "Daily Standard" office, one or two shots being fired and stones thrown, but no damage was done. As it was freely rumoured that the soldiers intended to raid the "Standard," destroy the machinery, etc., an armed guard kept watch at nights. One day we were discussing what would happen if the soldiers carried out their threat and burst in the street door and rushed up the stairs. Some said they would fire at their legs. A Russian sitting across a chair with a rifle on his lap protested. "No!" he exclaimed, "Fire at their heads; we might as well kill them as the Germans."

The would-be attackers; hearing that a warm reception awaited them, evidently thought discretion was the better part of valour and abandoned their intended coup.

In a tramcar one day two portly, elderly citizens recognising Cuthbert Butler as one of the hated anti-warites, began to talk at him with regard to war. Butler sat like a sphinx until one of the baiters could endure his stony silence no longer, and turning to him, said viciously: "What do you think of the war?" With an expression as bland as Bret Harte's heathen Chinee, Butler said, "War? War? What war? Did you say there was a war on?" Spluttering with

rage, the would-be goader ejaculated, “Oh! I know what’s the matter with you, you’ve got cold feet.” “Oh, no,” replied Butler, “I haven’t got cold feet, As far as the war is concerned I am an icicle from the top of my head to the soles of my feet.” The fury of the rebuffed jingoes was unbounded as they left the car and Butler with a broad grin.

Quite unexpectedly for some time the censorship of the anti-conscription literature was somewhat relaxed, and Hanlon, editor of the “Worker,” who told me he got on well with the censor, offered to submit much of the literature to him. He did so, and was successful in getting it passed without any serious alteration. Butler and I, however, continued by various underground methods to print and circulate uncensored matter. Towards the end of the campaign, when the position became more tense, the censor in Brisbane put on extreme pressure. About three weeks before polling day the “blood-vote” poem by Winspeare was published in the Sydney “Worker” and passed by the New South Wales censor. I wrote it up a little, and sent it to the censor for endorsement. He flatly refused to pass it, although it had been approved in New South Wales, and threatened full penalties if we used it. Realising the great value of this poem, I determined to defy the censor and flood Queensland with it. But the next issue of the Sydney “Worker” had improved on it by adding the powerful cartoon of the woman dropping her “bloodvote” into the ballot box. As all wires and letters were censored by the military, I sent the following cryptic wire to the private address of a comrade in Sydney: “Send by rail immediately 50,000 Winspeare pencils.” (The woman voting had a pencil in her hand). The order was passed on to the “Worker” office at the “Worker” building, much to Albert Hinchcliffe’s dismay, as he had consistently refused to print any illegal literature on the plea that the military were shepherding the “Worker” and would seize the machinery and close down the paper if any illegality was indulged in. Neither he nor McCosker, then in charge of the composing room, would take the slightest risk in connection with the printing of anti-Conscription literature. With a desire and will to share the responsibility of this work, in direct contrast to the “Worker,” McDonald, the editor of the “Standard,” did not raise any objection to printing a number of uncensored leaflets when I asked him.

* * *

In August, 1916, the Industrial Council convened a Trade Union Congress to consider what action should be taken with regard to conscription. The congress was one of the most representative held, 56 unions being represented. Riordan and I were delegates from the A.W.U., and I reported the proceedings for the "Daily Standard." It was unanimously decided to utilise all the forces of organised Labour to defeat compulsory militarism, and that immediately any scheme for the conscription of life or labour was introduced, the workers of Queensland should be called on to "down tools." A further resolution was carried that drastic action would be taken by the unions if any attempt was made by the Federal Government to enforce certain clauses of the Defence Act. A committee was appointed to carry out the congress decisions and to prepare a plan of campaign.

A full report of the congress was published in the first edition of the "Standard" at noon. The military authorities immediately took action and deleted all the resolutions and references to strike action, so that the second edition at 3 p.m. was startlingly mutilated. Enraged and alarmed at the congress decisions, the censorship was extended in its scope in an endeavour by the authorities to suppress the result of the congress deliberations. All communications sent through the Post and Telegraph Office were either confiscated altogether or severely censored, and all reference in the press not only to the general strike but to conscription matters generally was made a military offence under military instructions.

One of the direct results of the Congress was a 24-hours' strike and demonstration in the Domain on Wednesday, October 4th, to protest against the Federal Government's drastic proclamation calling up the single men for military service. Although, owing to various causes, a few of the more timid unions did not partake in the demonstration, thousands of unionists marched in the procession from the Trades Hall. The protest was a powerful one and effectively demonstrated the bitter opposition of the workers of Brisbane to conscription.

Throughout the campaign the “Daily Standard” unhesitatingly stood staunchly with the workers in their bitter fight against militarism. Frequently the censorship regulations were defied. News that obviously would be censored was published in the first (noon) edition, and the paper withheld from city circulation until it had been rushed to all outside centres. The censor then “blocked out all the “objectionable” portions of the paper, making the second edition a very emasculated one. Eventually, of course, this evasion was stopped by the prosecution and fining of the editor, who, under a bond, was forced to submit all anti-conscription or anti-war copy to the censor for endorsement or rejection.

On the anti-conscription committee there was a very clear-cut division between the purely political anti-conscriptionists and the anti-war section. Our forces were very evenly divided with the politicians headed by Theodore and camp followers, which included Riordan, Dunstan and other reactionary delegates. Many bitter fights were waged in the committee meetings between these two contending forces, principally on questions regarding support of the war. All proposals in the direction of peace or even criticism of the righteousness of the Allies cause were ruthlessly opposed and defeated by the politicians who regarded the returning of votes and political power of far more importance than mere principles of humanity. It was on this committee that I first fully realised the varied methods unblushingly adopted by the politicians and their henchmen to keep the flag of reaction flying. It was an experience that prepared me for some of the many shocks I received in later years from the same coterie.

Miss Margaret Thorpe and Mrs. Lane represented the Women’s Peace Army on the committee, and were invaluable allies in the militant unions’ camp and a very painful thorn in the side of the war mongering conscriptionists. I, of course, was particularly obnoxious to Theodore, Riordan, and Dunstan, not only on account of my attitude on the committee, but because of the militant anti-war character of the “Jack Cade” articles in the “Standard.”

Military house raids were made during this and other periods while the military joss was supreme, but strangely enough I was not subject to this tyrannical method of militarism. The majority of the books in our home at "Cosme" were banned and condemned by the Federal Government. Mrs. Lane advised me to bury some of them in our gully, but keyed up to rebellion against military arrogance, I said if they raid the house, let them do their worst. "Cosme" was never visited by these sleuth hounds, neither did I fall into the clutches of the law, though I was under the shadow of a term in goal for quite a number of illegal activities, especially in reference to the issuing of uncensored literature.

In retrospect, I now almost regret that I escaped imprisonment as it is one of the experiences that would have been invaluable and worth while. While never desiring that attention from the authorities, I have never evaded any revolutionary activities or denied myself the right of "treasonable" utterances in order to avoid breaking freedom-suppressing laws. But I have, fortunately, I suppose, been favoured in this regard, while others, for only minor offences, have suffered.

Chapter XVI.
I.W.W. Activities.

The I.W.W. played a most prominent and uncompromising part in the anti-conscription campaign. Unlike the official Labour movement, the I.W.W. with rare courage and reckless of all consequences denounced and exposed the true causes of the war as a deadly clash of interests of conflicting imperial and capitalist groups. Tom Barker, editor of the I.W.W. paper, "Direct Action," was arrested and imprisoned for sedition. Shortly afterwards, Donald Grant, J. B. King, J. Larkin and other leading I.W.W.-ites were arrested and charged with sedition, arson and conspiracy, and savagely sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. This obvious "frame-up" by the police, at the instigation of higher authorities, roused a storm of protest throughout the Commonwealth. Release committees were formed and unions were organised. Tom Barker, on his release, came to Queensland and received strong support, and 40 unions were represented on the Queensland Committee. The Brisbane Industrial Council afforded every possible assistance to secure justice for the imprisoned men.

As industrial writer on the "Daily Standard" I was in constant contact with Barker, and formed a close friendship that has remained until today. In an interview and write-up of him, I said: "Barker is here to tell the truth about the evidence and questionable methods adopted by the authorities to silence and suppress some of the most dangerous – from the capitalist point of view - members of the I.W.W. It was particularly refreshing to come into contact with Tom Barker, who, despite the persecutions he has endured at the hands of an anti-working class society, still retains all that buoyancy, all the enthusiasm, all the power of youth. Rebels are born – not made and Tom Barker is a rebel against all things which serve to degrade and enslave mankind, and place money and privilege before humanity.

Barker, of course, the penalty for his working class agitation, and with a number of other "seditionists" was deported to the inhospitable shores of

Chile. Later he found a haven of rest from persecution in Soviet Russia, at one time acting as an official representative of that Government in Australia.

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My insistent advocacy of the I.W.W. claim in the "Daily Standard" for justice, aroused the ire of the Tory press, one publication stressing the fact that I was a vice-president of the A.W.U. and the regular official industrial writer of the "Daily Standard," also "the only reporter admitted to the secret conclaves of the Queensland Labour Party."

This latter paragraph apparently referred to my being a member of the Queensland Central Executive of the A.L.P. The intent of the capitalist press, of course, was to brand the Labour Party as a destructive force, allied to, the I.W.W. and other seditious bodies. Needless to say that this Tory accusation of the Queensland Labour Government was utterly groundless and a slander upon a perfectly innocuous and respectable political party. This attempt of their political opponents to fasten on them the crime of I.W.W.-ism was not at all relished by Ryan, Theodore, and their fellow politicians and quite rightly did not increase their esteem for my "irresponsible" actions and attitude.

No reference to agitation for a re-trial and release of the I.W.W. prisoners would be complete without acknowledgment of the remarkable and unceasing propaganda of H. E. Boote, the brilliant editor of the Sydney "Worker." Devoting his powerful pen, week after week, in the setting down of a damning indictment of the evidence, trial and conviction of the 12 I.W.W.-ites, Boote accomplished a mighty task in the interests of common justice that will for all time remain a glowing tribute to his marathon effort. Not content to wield his pen in this crusade, Boote, who was not a platform speaker, visited the various centres in Australia and addressed packed audiences. I well remember a flashing, scathing sentence he uttered when he was, with lightning like rapier, piercing the sham legal flummery and assumption of undeviating impartial justice that has been so cunningly woven round the whole machinery of the law. Referring to the judges, Boote exclaimed: "These dispensers of justice – with horse hair on their heads – and the dust of centuries on their brains!"

So, at last, despite the most determined opposition on the part of those who saw in the I.W.W. a fierce challenge to the whole capitalist system, the I.W.W. prisoners, victims of a most notorious “frame-up,” were released.

Reverting to the anti-conscription campaign, the defeat of the militant plan to enslave the workers of Australia on October 28, 1916, brought renewed vigour to those who had fearlessly borne the brunt of the fight and had not hesitated to risk their own liberty for the sake of a far wider freedom.

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In 1916 the Victorian section of the Labour Party had promised to convene a peace conference in the following year, 1917. Evidently too timorous to proceed with this object the peace movement was abandoned to outside non-political organisations. A peace conference was called by the Australian Peace Alliance to meet in Melbourne on Good Friday, April 7th, 1917. Invitations to attend were sent to the unions and various anti-conscription committees throughout the Commonwealth and other radical organisations. A motion to send two delegates to represent the Queensland Anti-Conscription Committee aroused the most virulent and unscrupulous opposition of the pro-war section of the committee.

The fight was a bitter one and was carried on for several meetings, but the anti-war section could not be side-tracked from their intent that Queensland should be represented at the Australian Peace Conference. Dunstan, Theodore, Fihelly, all that camp stormed and raved in vain and the motion that two delegates, J. S. Collings and W. J. Wallace be sent to the conference, was carried. Beaten on this vital question, Theodore and his henchmen wielded the big stick and with true political cunning advanced the argument that no money from an anti-conscriptionist committee could be used to send delegates to a peace conference! If the committee’s money was used for this purpose it would be done fraudulently and every member of the committee could be prosecuted by any subscriber to the subscription fund for criminal misappropriation of money!

What a brilliant example of statesmanship! This was put forward by Theodore, the modern Napoleon of Labour politics, in order to save the Queensland organisation and the miscalled Labour movement, in reality merely the Labour Party, from having the dove of peace placed on their sacred war-banner. But this move was successful enough to frighten two timid delegates to break away from the anti-war section and the motion was carried. As there was now no money to send delegates to Melbourne, with only a few days to go, it looked as if the plotting war-mongers had scored a knock-out blow.

But Margaret Thorpe, a delegate with Mrs. Lane from the Women Workers' organisation, took up the task of collecting the necessary £30 or £40 to finance the delegates. The money was collected and the matter seemed definitely finalised, but we had not yet plumbed the full depth of dirty political chicanery.

The day before the delegates were due to leave Brisbane for Melbourne, Collings' wife was taken seriously ill, so he asked me if I would accept the vacant delegateship. I agreed and Miss Thorpe asked Theodore if he, as chairman of the Anti-Conscription Committee, had any objection to me going as a delegate. He raised no objection.

On our arrival in Melbourne late at night in pouring rain, I stayed with "Bob" Ross, while ''Billy" Wallace was billeted on another friend. The conference commenced at the Guild Hall at 10 a.m. the next morning, Good Friday. On arrival at the Hall, Wallace handed me a telegram remarking: "This is a beauty!" It was a wire from Lewis McDonald brutally, and without any explanation, stating that at a special meeting of the Anti-Conscription Committee held on the day previously it had been decided to withdraw the Queensland delegates from the Peace Conference!

Fortunately we also had credentials from the Brisbane Industrial Council as proxy delegates, so that we were able to represent a more intelligent and courageous section than some of the members of the Anti-Conscription Committee.

On returning to Brisbane I heard the sordid particulars of the last minute effort to keep the 'Queensland Anti-Conscriptionist Committee pure and clean from any suspicion of being favourable to peace. It was not only in Queensland, but in every State, the Labour politicians with a very few exceptions, were strongly opposed to any effort to agitate for peace and proudly ranged themselves on the side of the jingoes in their war fervour. Thus the action of the powerful Queensland Anti-Conscriptionist Committee to send delegates to a peace conference was deplorable and must be prevented at all costs. Slanderous reports were insidiously circulated regarding the bona-fides and intentions of the peace conference and devious methods were adopted to as far as possible render the conference abortive. The New South Wales politicians were particularly hostile and were in private communication with the Queensland politicians in their endeavours to kill the conference. As a result of "certain information received from New South Wales," a special meeting of the Queensland committee was held on Easter Thursday. Many of the delegates were absent from Brisbane on Easter holidays, and it was only by a majority of one in a small meeting that the decision to recall the delegates was made. Writing to McDonald on this matter, Margaret Thorpe cuttingly said: "One would think that the Almighty W. M. Hughes had suggested recalling them under the War Precautions Act, because they did not belong to his 'Win the War' Party. We abided by the rule of the majority with regard to the allocation of the funds, so you can do nothing else than abide by the same rule with regard to the sending of the two delegates. I fail to see who has any authority to recall the delegates. They have gone on behalf of the A.C.C.C. – not the Parliamentary Labour Party. That any of you should hesitate to heartily support any effort made in the cause of peace is beyond my comprehension."

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The Queensland anti-conscription campaign committee was not dissolved, but indefinitely adjourned to be convened at any time in case of emergency. About June of 1917, it was considered necessary to meet again in view of the proposal of the Federal Government to take another conscription referendum.

As I had earned the antagonism of my two A.W.U. co-delegates on the Anti-Conscription Committee – Dunstan and Riordan, because of my passionate opposition to the war and efforts to force the political section to be honest and tell the deluded workers the truth about the war, it was evidently determined by these two "loyal" comrades that I should be prevented from again being a member of the committee.

Dunstan informed me, as a vice-president of the A.W.U., that the A.W.U. had been advised to send its three delegates to the first meeting of the Anti-Conscription Committee and asked me if I agreed to the taking of a ballot of executive members for the three delegates. Although surprised at this proposal, I agreed. Dunstan, Riordan, Stopford and I nominated, and the other six executive members were wired to record their votes. When I told Mrs. Lane she said: "Oh! that is the end of you on the Anti-Conscription Committee; they are determined to get rid of you." I pointed out that five of the six absent executive members were militants and strong supporters of me and would not conceivably vote against me. But I was wrong, as, according to the ballot declared by Dunstan, while he, Riordan, Stopford and I voted for Lane – the other absent six voted against me!

I cannot say that the ballot was faked against me in any way, it seemed bona-fide, but I am simply recording the amazing fact. I happened to see Riordan just after I was told the result of the ballot and could not restrain commenting on the surprise of the vote. "Yes," he mused, "it is strange, we all voted for you!" Mrs. Lane, when I told her, exclaimed: "Of course, the whole thing was loaded against you."

My reflections on this rebuff were somewhat bitter. Of the three A.W.U. delegates on the last Anti-Conscription Committee, I had been the honest toiler. Dunstan had not done anything except attend the committee meetings and strenuously oppose any progressive action, while Riordan, as president of the A.W.U., had done little except get the limelight on the platform at big meetings. I had not spared myself, worked day and night and gladly risked imprisonment for my illegal actions. I know of no craft union at the Trades Hall (whom the A.W.U. bureaucracy have such a contempt for), that would

dream of deposing any of their officials from a position which was being faithfully filled and more effectively carried on than anyone else could do it. But the mighty A.W.U. has a code of morals and honour peculiarly its own.

The militant section of the anti-conscription campaign committee indignantly resolved to counter the tactics of Dunstan and Riordan to keep me off the committee. At the first meeting it was agreed that the Toowoomba anti-conscription committee, which had done magnificent work during the previous campaign, should be allowed to send a proxy delegate to the Queensland anti-conscription committee. McCormack, who, perhaps suspected something, proposed that this proxy delegate be appointed by the Queensland committee, but it was resolved to give Toowoomba the right to appoint their own delegate. I was this delegate, and Dunstan and Co. gaped with disgust when I walked into the next meeting.

Notwithstanding all the manoeuvring of the political section of the committee, the militant anti-War section had a small but solid majority on the new committee, although the Australian Peace Alliance had now been refused representation. The first business was the election of a secretary and we nominated J. S. Collings against Lewis McDonald. Collings was uncompromisingly anti-war and with his well-known pugnacity and eloquence had severely castigated the war-mongering anti-conscriptionists. Theodore, McCormack, and their followers were viciously alarmed and had no hesitation in digging up Collings' black past in connection with his entire union activities at the time of the Brisbane Bootmakers' Strike, when he was secretary of the Boot Trade Employees' Association. But we were intent on defeating McDonald, who was a faithful servant of the reactionary section. A bitter debate ensued – but Collings was elected to the intense chagrin of the politicians. We knew that if Collings took the position that the anti-conscription campaign committee would be sabotaged and rendered futile by the defeated political section, who never hesitate when they are forced into a minority to disloyally jettison the majority who succeed in displacing them. We therefore, in the interests of the greater issue of the moment, anti-

conscription, withdrew Collings and Lewis McDonald was appointed secretary.

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Under the guise of "war necessity," the censorship which was so outrageously enforced during the conscription campaign, was not abated when conscription was again rejected in December, 1917, by a larger majority than on October 28th. It rather appeared that Hughes and his militarist allies, enraged at the failure of their conscriptionist plans, were determined to still more strictly deny freedom of utterance with regard to the war. As the ever-increasing war weariness of the people assumed more virile proportions, and the demand for peace louder and louder, frantic endeavours were made to stifle this plea for humanity as against a continuance of the bloody slaughter. Peace talk was taboo and although I endeavoured to keep within the military law as much as possible, a considerable portion of the "Jack Cade" articles was prohibited by the military censor. At this stage the editor of the "Daily Standard" had perforce to submit all matters pertaining to the war to the censor. My only personal contact with the chief censor, Professor Stables, of the Queensland University, arose in this connection. I had written an article "Coming of Peace," "Labour's Duty," "Propaganda of Peace Policy." in which it was urged that the peace by negotiation, which had been adopted by the Federal Labour Convention held in Perth in February, 1918, should be fearlessly and continuously propagated by all Labour organisations. I directed attention to the utterance of Acting Prime Minister Watts in denouncing the policy of peace by negotiation as adopted by the Federal Labour Party as a "poisonous pill," a "ghastly blunder." I wrote (inter alia), "The challenge is sneeringly thrown down by the leader of the militarist Party in Australia to organised Labour and its peace policy, and it is incumbent upon Labour's representatives, Labour's press, Labour's organisations to take up that scornful and vituperative challenge, and to prove to the general public of Australia that peace by negotiation is not a 'ghastly blunder or a poisonous pill' but something that is worthy of the adherence and advocacy of every man or woman who is a lover of their fellows and humanity. There is only one course of action now for every representative of the Australian Labour Party to take,

and that is to fearlessly and continuously expound the doctrine of peace by negotiation at all times, in all places, irrespective of whom it offends or of any penalties that may be imposed."

The whole of this article, a fairly long one, written for the sole purpose of trying to force cowardly jingo Labour representatives to toe the line, was returned by the censor with the censorship red pencil scored through every line.

I was incensed and saw McDonald, the editor, who said he could not help it and I had better see the censor. With very little hope of redress I went to the censor's office which was at the G.P.O. and introduced myself and mission. The Censor, Professor Stables (Queensland University) said that he always read the "Jack Cade" articles with interest. He knew I was sincere, but "a lot of your people," he remarked, "are not honest." I did not dispute this, knowing too well how much truth there was in it.

With regard to the complete censoring of my article, if it got to Germany it would indicate that there was a peace movement in Australia!

He, however, sent it to Melbourne for decision, by the Chief Censor. I interviewed Professor Stables a week later to hear the verdict, which, of course, was the same, and he adopted a more hostile attitude towards me when I gave him a few home truths regarding the war. "But," he amazingly retorted, "You don't know the unspeakable atrocities committed by the Huns. At New Farm there is a girl with her two hands cut off!"

Amazed at the audacity of a highly placed militarist venturing to put over this sort of war propaganda on me, I said: "If that was true, you only have to take that mutilated child in a car through the streets of Brisbane to get all the volunteers you want. There will be no need for conscription or recruiting campaigns."

This was my last personal contact with the censor and the experience exposed to its full the callous, unscrupulous nature of the military josses in their war-mongering policies.

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It was in January, 1917, that I was first elected as one of the Queensland delegates to the A.W.U. annual convention, which was then invariably held in Sydney. For eight or nine consecutive years I was delegate to that convention during which I got inside knowledge of the devious methods of the old guard of the A.W.U., whereby all efforts to galvanise into militant activity the dying bones of the organisation were sabotaged or checkmated.

My initial introduction into the high hierarchy of the A.W.U. did not remove impressions of its reactionary proclivities that I had gathered from delegates and members who had experience of the A.W.U. outside of Queensland. Trading on an early history of militant unionism when the A.W.U. had stood four square to all attacks of a powerful squatterage, the A.W.U. posed as the one shining light of the Australian unionism and scorned the smaller craft unions.

Comprising about 35 delegates from the various States, many of them paid officials, the overwhelming majority of the convention was, to say the least, very moderate, and opposed to anything of a really progressive nature. There was a larger proportion of militants from Queensland than from any other State and for some years there was a growing militant faction until a permanent reaction about twelve years ago once more placed the reactionaries in the saddle more firmly than ever.

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Prominent in the Queensland militant delegates was “Mick” Kelly, who attained fame in the early days of the amalgamation with the A.W.U. by nearly defeating W. J. Dunstan for the position of secretary of the Queensland branch, Dunstan just winning by six votes. Dunstan is credited with having made the cryptic remark: “This will never happen again.” Neither did it.

Kelly, a fine speaker and capable organiser, always secured a big militant vote for delegate meetings and conventions. In debate he could more than hold his own with the A.W.U. “big guns” by whom he was regarded as a very

dangerous man. For years Kelly was an outstanding figure at the Sydney conventions until he dropped out and embarked on a lucrative position with the T. & G. Insurance Company, Sydney. He still keeps in academic touch with the Labour activities but is no longer in the thick of the fray. Ex-Premier McCormack told me that occasionally he meets Mick, and they have dinner at an hotel in Sydney, where, after dinner, they discuss the world situation and exchange reminiscences of the old days of strenuous agitation.

One of the earlier rebels on the A.W.U. Conventions, Jack Cullinan, then secretary of the A.W.U., Armidale branch, is now but a memory in the history of that organisation, though he is still an active worker in the Labour movement in Sydney. Jack, through his pugnacious militancy, unshakable adherence to principle, and hatred of the intrigue and trickery of the A.W.U. heads, was the most detested rebel of us all. Absolutely fearless in his actions and utterances, Jack was feared and condemned by Jack Bailey, W. H. Lambert (afterwards Lord Mayor of Sydney), E. Grayndler, F. W. Lundie and all the other reactionaries. Jack Bailey, who later was alleged to be connected with the sensational ballot box scandal, was Cullinan's particular enemy, and never hesitated on the floor of the convention to fearlessly criticise and scathingly condemn Bailey and his actions.

Charges of a most serious character relating to corrupt ballot practices in connection with the annual election of A.W.U. officials in New South Wales, were constantly being brought before the Sydney Convention. Cullinan, as secretary of the Western branch, with its head office at Armidale, was in a position to bring to light some of the fraudulent methods employed whereby to secure the election of certain individuals. But, notwithstanding the securing of irrefutable evidence of ballot faking on several occasions, as far as I know, no definite action was ever taken to punish the offenders of the inner and ruling powers of the A.W.U.

The day before Convention commenced one year, I met Jack Cullinan in the Manly Corso in the afternoon. He told me he had the faked ballot papers of a Naomi A.W.U. ballot in his possession and that those responsible would not hesitate at murder to get hold of this proof of their villainy. Excitedly Cullinan

pulled a revolver out of his hip-pocket and wildly flourishing it said that he always carried it to shoot any of this crooked gang who tried to steal the tell-tale ballot papers.

These ballot slips, which were the subject of a committee inquiry at the Convention, were placed in a sealed parcel in the safe at the A.W.U. head office by Grayndler, general secretary, in the presence of members of the committee. The parcel was to be handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department. After the Convention concluded, Grayndler was absent from Sydney for some weeks. When the safe was searched for the parcel – it had disappeared. The safe had not been broken into, but unlocked. According to Grayndler, only the secretary, McPhee and the assistant secretary, Karl Alhurst, had a key. Grayndler informed the following Convention that he had "the utmost confidence in the integrity of these two officials." But still, the damning evidence had disappeared.

Another mysterious disappearance of fraudulent ballot papers occurred when a Convention committee of inquiry (George Martens, M.H.R., was a member of that committee) at noon on a Saturday deposited all the documents in a parcel in the safe of the A.L.P. strong room at McDonnell House. Carey was then secretary of the A.L.P. On the following Monday morning when the safe was opened in the presence of the committee – the parcel had vanished! So there was evidently a real conjuring department attached to the A.W.U. or rather that section that traded in corrupt ballots and reactionary policies.

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An incident in connection with the conscription referendum was my meeting Harry Taylor, after a lapse of 20 years. Taylor was a man of the highest integrity, brilliant intellect, and unselfish disposition. As young men we had first met in Sydney, prior to his departure in the "Royal Tar" with the New Australia Pioneers. With so much in common, Taylor and I became great friends, although it was some time before I discovered he was a passionate lover of Shelley the poet. When I made the happy discovery, it was in George

Street, Sydney, we stopped to grasp hands and embrace each other to the astonished amusement of passers by.

Harry, on New Australia and Cosme, proved to be one of the too few genuine Communists, but to everyone's regret, family affairs and a serious breakdown in health, compelled him to return to Australia.

Harry became owner and editor of the "Mildura Times," and one of the best authorities on grape culture and dried fruits. He attended an Interstate Country Press Conference,' held in Brisbane, and traced me to the "Daily Standard."

We were, of course, delighted to meet, but within a few minutes the inevitable topic of conversation, the war, arose. To my amazed horror, I found that Harry was a conscriptionist. Fortunately I had learned through long experience never to argue with fanatics, fools, or rogues. A strict observance of this determination has saved me from much heart burning and wasted energy. So I told Taylor we would forget the war and all its horrors.

Harry was enraptured by the climate and resources of Queensland and had several long journeys in the southern part of the State before returning to Mildura.

The evening before he left Brisbane, Taylor came to "Cosme" for dinner. I warned Mrs. Lane not to talk about the war, but, as it happened, Roy Connelly, since well known in the journalistic world in Sydney and Brisbane, also came to dinner. Roy was then a young, wild Irish rebel, intensely radical, though it is hard to conceive the later Connolly as such. Dinner had not been long in progress before the "war" broke out. Connelly, a rabid anti-Britisher in regard to the war, immediately entered into a fiery argument with Taylor, who, goaded by Connelly's unpatriotic (?) attacks on Britain and the allies, retorted in similar strain. Eventually Mrs. Lane, aroused by Harry's jingoism, could no longer refrain from joining in the wordy fray. At last I said: "Come, Harry, let us go to the other end of the room, and talk about Shelley – if he were alive he would not be a jingo conscriptionist. Like a flash Harry retorted: "Of course he

would, because Shelley loved freedom, truth and justice." I had enough control to laugh and say, "You are indeed hopeless."

After the war, Taylor, like many other fine men and women, realised the full criminality of the war, and how honest, unsuspecting people had been fooled and lied to. Harry had the courage and honesty to write a leader in his paper, freely acknowledging his war – mistaken judgment.

This recalls a similar courageous action by another fine Socialist – Professor Heron, who was one of the leading Socialist writers in the U.S.A. A master of the English language, Heron's beautiful prose with his revolutionary outlook made him an outstanding character in Socialist propaganda. When America joined the Allies, four of the most prominent America Socialists, John Spargo, Allan Benson (editor of "The Appeal to Reason"), Charles Russell and Professor Heron, were employed by the U.S.A. Government as missionaries to expound the war-gospel according to the Allies.

I was deeply shocked at Heron's apostasy as his Socialist writings were a source of inspiration to me and many others. Some time after the war I read a poignant article by Heron, then a professor at the Florence (Italy) University, bitterly regretting the part he had played as a war advocate. He wrote (inter alia): "I am suffering the torments of the damned to know that I supported this unholy war and was responsible for inducing many to go and sacrifice themselves on the bloody altar of Mars, though I mistakenly believed that the war of the Allies was fought in a righteous cause."

It would be interesting to know how many of our Australian anti-conscriptionist war-mongering Labour politicians have been honest enough to confess their blood guiltiness with respect to the war. I know of none, but I know scores who, with unblushing effrontery, denounce the Great War (because it is the vogue to do so) which they enthusiastically supported or kept a cowardly silence.

Chapter XVII.
Russian Revolution.

When the news of the Russian Revolution of February, 1917, reached Australia, with the acclamation of the Tory Press and Imperial capitalist governments, I immediately sensed that it was merely a political one – a change of exploiters The reports, meagre and heavily censored, did not supply any of the actual position or to what extent the Russian workers and peasants had participated.

In a "Jack Cade" article, headed "Russia in Revolt" – "A Political Upheaval" – "Capitalism Still Predominant" – I wrote (inter alia): "The new Russian Government, in common with all other belligerent governments, is determined to continue the war until certain trade objectives are attained, altogether independent of the desire or well-being of the workers. In Russia, as elsewhere, there is a rapidly increasing number of workers who only see in the war, as in all other capitalist wars, a bloody conflict between rival financial and commercial interests in which the common people gain no advantage but sacrifice everything. Knowing that this view is largely held amongst the Russian toilers, it is absurd to assume on the censored news which is permitted to be told, that the whole of the Russian people have revolted for the sole purpose of carrying on the war to a successful issue.

"To term it a people's triumph is untrue. The cables from day to day mention in a casual way that the 'extremists' in Russia are hopelessly endeavouring to obtain some vague and Utopian results from the present reshuffling of the cards, but that they are only an insignificant minority and are rapidly being forced to abandon their revolutionary purposes. Yet," I continued, "within the ken of these despised and impotent 'extremists' – lies the real revolution – the only revolution that counts as far as the workers are concerned. Political revolutions, such as has taken place in Russia, are sometimes of value to the workers in respect to government, but without economic freedom the worker is in reality but little better off and all such happenings are revolutions in name only. The very fact that the Tory and

capitalist press in all countries applaud and countenance the Russian revolution, should, without further argument, prove to the workers of what little real value to the people at large the inauguration of the new Government is. How different was the attitude of the whole capitalist press towards the Paris Commune of 1871, which was really a revolution of the workers, denounced in the most bitter terms, slandered and hated, while the brutal massacring of the Paris workers, even women and children, was gleefully approved. Capitalism does not object to political changes, in fact violent political upheavals are often of direct advantage to the capitalist class, but economic revolution is a change feared and resisted to the utmost.

"Under the new Russian regime the millions of workers and peasants will still be ruthlessly exploited by their patriotic German-hating employers, and whether the purified anti-German Government succeed in smashing the hated Hun or not matters very little to the factory slaves or peasants of Russia, who will still be but a despised and overworked cog in the great machine of production for the boss's profit.

"Under the newly constituted government the old vile caste of aristocratic landowners of Russia will still demand, and get, their pound of flesh from their unhappy tenants, and will still retain their many privileges, luxuries, and power. The factory owner, trader, the food exploiter, the usurer, will remain untouched as far as anything revolutionary is concerned, and can well afford to unctuously bless all such 'revolutions' as the present one.

"The worker can be, and is, robbed just as scientifically, just as constantly, under the protection of the great American Republic as under the tyranny of an autocratic Czar. Political freedom is certainly an advance on autocracy, but unless it is accompanied by economic freedom the lot of the toiler remains practically the same.

"As long as the whole edifice of civilisation is built upon the backs of the workers, as long as the governing and employing class are allowed by statutory law to exploit the labour of another class, as long as there is privilege, power, and luxury for one section of society at the expense of the

misery, degradation, and toil of another section, so long is it idle to talk about a successful peoples' revolution.

"There have been many successful revolutions of a kind, but never a successful and permanent one, of which it might truly be said that it was of the people, for the people. When that revolution comes, as it may sooner or later, then will the supporters of the present order, led by the capitalist press, be as loud in their denunciation as they are today in their praise of the Russian revolution, which, from the class conscious workers' viewpoint, is but the changing of one set of taskmasters for another." ("Jack Cade.")

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I have quoted this article at length because of the supreme importance of the later real Russian Revolution of November, 1917, when the Bolsheviks tore the mask off the face of their sham revolutionists and incurred the full venom and hatred of the capitalist class in every country in the world.

To me, as to many millions, the workers' revolution in Russia, came as an inspiring revelation of the new society which we had dreamed of and toiled for with little hope in the immediate future. The triumph of the Russian workers lit a torch that flashed a light across the world that gives faith in the hope that the age-long tyranny of the select few over the masses of the people will soon be a nightmare of the past. So in my writings and contacts with the workers I continuously and passionately emphasised the vital importance of the Russian Revolution and the badly needed lessons to be learnt therefrom.

The stable foundations of the Communist society were being laid in Russia despite the virulent hostility of the workers' enemies and the thinly veiled opposition of many "Labour" leaders.

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One of the Russians in Brisbane who had escaped from the Siberian exile of the Czarist government, returned to Russia after the revolution. I had almost forgotten him in the strenuous whirl of activities in which I was constantly engaged. A letter I received from him dated January 25th, 1920, from

Vladivostock, Siberia, caused me considerable pleasure, especially with regard to his appreciation of my militant articles. He wrote, inter alia: “My dear comrade Jack Cade: I am always so busy and I am living in such a condition that I had no opportunity to write you a letter, although I was always anxious to do so. But I was always reading the “Daily Standard” and enjoying your articles there. I always considered that the best part of this paper is the page ‘Among the Unions.’ Just a few days ago I had the fortune to read your splendid, well-informed class-conscious workers’ article on the Russian Revolution in the ‘Daily Standard,’ dated November 18th. I really enjoyed this article, so did my fellow workers. I have already translated the article and published it in a certain local paper. The article made a very good impression, and gave a good result. Since your article was written, the Russian Revolution, or rather the International Revolution is rolling ahead with still greater speed and I believe that it will reach its goal before long.”

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One of my most cherished memories with regard to the Russian Revolution are those relating to Professor W. T. Goode, who, as correspondent of the “Manchester Guardian,” had visited Russia before and after the Revolution and was recognised as a reliable authority on Russian affairs. On his return from Russia on a British destroyer where he had been imprisoned by order of the British Government and all his papers, notes, etcetera, confiscated, he startled the world of Britain by publishing a series of articles, “The Truth About Russia.’ It was the first time since the 1917 revolution that the truth of the epochal events in that maligned country had managed to pierce the wall of lies and anti-Bolshevik propaganda that had encircled Soviet Russia. Professor Goode, with Cook, secretary of the British Miners’ Union, and Colonel Malone, M.P. and a converted Communist, toured Britain lecturing on Russia and telling the people the long-concealed truth of the Bolsheviks. Malone, for his part in this “subservice agitation,” was arrested and served a sentence of six months gaol. Later he married and abandoned his erstwhile revolutionary activities.

Suffering from a serious breakdown, due to his self-sacrificing efforts in the cause of truth and humanity, Professor Goode embarked for Australia to recoup his health and visit near relatives in Sydney and New Zealand. Unfortunately for his own comfort and peace of mind, he was discovered by a newspaper reporter and consequently, despite his desire for rest and privacy, dragged once more into the whirlpool of a public lecturer on Soviet Russia. Goode was the first person to arrive in Australia who had visited Russia since the revolution.

Commencing a lecture on "The Truth about Russia," Goode travelled to many places outside the larger centres of population and formed many friendships with the workers of the back country. I got into communication with him and invited him to stay with us at "Cosme" as long as he stayed in Brisbane. As our guest a very deep appreciation of Goode's fine character, of his selflessness, and widespread sympathies, was born in the hearts of Mrs. Lane and myself. He, too, was thankful at the peace of mind and opportunity to quietly write undisturbed in the soothing charm of "Cosme" and its beautiful surroundings. A deep and lasting friendship was the result and he and I corresponded regularly after he returned to his home in Devonshire until his death a few years ago.

A small committee was formed in Brisbane, of which J. B. Miles, now secretary of the Australian Communist Party, then secretary of the Workers' School, was a very active member. A most successful series of lectures were given by the professor, much to the wrath of the capitalist press and to the resentment and secret antagonism of reactionary and orthodox Labourites.

I still retain some of Goode's letters in which the man's nobility of character, high intellectual attainments and unshakeable adherence to the highest principles of living, found moving expression. Today Soviet Russia is accepted as a commonplace phase of world change or development. It is recognised as an integral part of the community of nations, and its Government admitted (even though secretly feared and hated) to the highest conclaves of other countries. Thus one is a apt to forget – even if they ever knew – the courageous fight against the most powerful forces in the world,

fought by a few of those who saw the light of truth with regard to Russia, and at the risk of social ostracism, lost friendships, and many other cruel penalties, dared to stand almost alone and proclaim the justice and righteousness of the despised, the slandered Russian masses. Professor Goode, to his everlasting credit, was one of the pioneers in this battle for the honest recognition to the Bolsheviks right to their own destiny, and at a critical period when even many workers were ignorantly hostile to Soviet Russia, Goode by his self-sacrificing courage, rendered invaluable service, for which every truth lover owes him a debt of gratitude.

I make no apology in quoting the following extracts – taken haphazardly from the small amount of correspondence I retain from Goode: "The depression (1930) seems universal, save in Russia. That, of itself, sets up the backs of her enemies. Russia is going through a tight time, but one which her people knew well would come when they began to put their five year plan into execution. But they accepted the position to go ahead with a zeal and an enthusiasm which frightens others who now begin to fear, not only the political organisation and social position of Russia, but the possibilities for them of success in this industrialisation of the country. In fact, paradoxical as it may sound her enemies fear desperately her success, while proclaiming that she is an appalling failure. I have lived long enough to see the world pass through one cataclysm and enter on a stage from which there can be issue on one of two ways – by a complete overthrow – through a social revolution, or a disappearance, entire and swift, through the bitter animosities of people, fomented by the selfishness of the possessing class.

"Continue indefinitely in the present worsening conditions, economic and political, no country can. A few days ago I had a call from a Labour M.P., a former rebel, also the chief organiser, and two satellites. No one would infer from their talk that the country and world were anything but what they should be, and the M.P. was strong on the 'comradeship' of the House, which means that it is a great club, pure and simple, in which one gets stuck and gummed like a fly in a treacle and loses all power of initiative."

"Never mind," he wrote, another time, "about being despised and rejected – we are all that who take up any line which runs counter to the follies of mankind. Choose your row – hoe it, and go on with the hoeing in spite of all. One has the supreme satisfaction of knowing that one has fought the good fight, and that if we fail or fall it is in a good cause."

Referring to the British press (1931) Goode wrote: "The bulk of the newspapers are despicable, they distort their news, make comments lurid and play the game of the folks with purses, whether they be politicians, financiers or industrialists. For them the worker is just something to tread on. If he starve – well let him do so, wages will the sooner come to a reasonable (?) level."

Following a vivid recountal of the miserable and hopeless position of the mass of the people, and the complete bankruptcy of the capitalist countries, Goode continued: – "It seems incredible to turn from all this to a country which was the Cinderella of Europe – Russia – and find the opposite to all that one sees in the West. A galling prospect for all the anti-Soviet people, English, French, American. But it is a real fact, and one which gradually forces recognition. Indeed, it is just this view, just this comparison, which forces the idea, or prophecy, if you prefer, that the era on which we have just started will end in one supreme conflict – Communism against all other ideas or systems."

Late and present developments throughout the world testify to the remarkable accuracy of this forecast by Professor Goode and the inevitability of the final conflict between the disinherited workers, "The Army of the Night," and all the forces of capitalism whether it be in the guise of Fascism, Nazism, Imperial democracies or prostituted Labour Parties. And my own unshakeable belief, despite the many disillusionments and bitter disappointments I have encountered during the battle of life, is that the Communists – the working class – will achieve a glorious victory in the coming Armageddon.

In the meantime, all the pettifogging sections of the capitalist world, which include reactionary Labour Parties, ally themselves with the masters of finance and industry to stem the irresistible advance of the Communist faith. But all in

vain. As the Turkish proverb says: “The dogs bark – but the caravan moves on.”

In the last letter I received from Goode, just before his death, he wrote with his usual brave and undaunted spirit, sending a final message of comfort, comradeship, and hope. “I hope and hope again,” he wrote, “that things go, if not well, at least satisfactorily with you. The world turns upon its prophets – its good men, I know, but I would have you free from its claws. Anything else would be too unjust and cruel. I saw that ‘Bob’ Ross had gone. Another link with your side of the world broken. But it is of no use to repine. When the long day’s work is done, hand on the torch, and rest. Antony’s cry rings in my ear: – ‘Unarm, the long day’s work is done.’ But as long as health lasts it is difficult to lay down one’s arms; at least I find it so. And after all we have plenty of which to be proud, plenty to justify hopes. We have not yet arrived at the state of Job’s wife counselling the old boy to ‘Curse God and die.’ And if that be true, it is true also that ‘Hope springs eternal in the human breast’ and we will do nothing to quench it.”

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The advent of the Bolsheviks to power in Russia aroused the bitter malignity of the capitalist world and its press and a turgid flood of distortion and lies regarding the Soviet Government was poured forth on this greatest menace to capitalist society. Official Labour also saw in the workers’ government in Russia a challenge to their audacious pose as genuinely representing the working class, with odious comparisons to Labour’s utter failure to even attempt to carry out bona fide working class policies. Consequently the cry of the capitalist press and politician that Bolshevism was the negation of all principles of democracy or justice, and a menace to civilisation was re-echoed in the camp of reactionary Labour, who greatly feared the floodlight thrown upon their own ineptitude and hypocritical platitudes through the success of the Bolsheviks. Not only the capitalist press and its adherents, but also official Labour in Australia branded all militant action on the part of the workers and radical workers as “Bolshevism” and

"Bolsheviks." Any stick was good enough to use to attack all who dared to stand upright.

The Tory and the reactionary Labourite alike have always used as a term of opprobrium and scornful rejection of all militant workers the name attached to the left wing section of the Labour movement. Prior to Bolshevism, the "Industrial Workers of the World" was the stalking horse thus used. "I.W.W.-ism" and "I.W.W.-ite" connoted to official Labour – with their capitalist bed-fellows – all that was most immoral and iniquitous in political and even private life. This term of scorn and detestation was displaced by Bolshevism, later to give way to the present name of Communist for all "agitators and disruptors."

Writing on the misuse of the term "Bolshevism" as so eagerly seized upon by all sections of reactionary Labour and otherwise to discredit militant workers, I wrote, in the "Daily Standard," an article, "Bolshevism the Scapegoat," concluding thus: "However, no sincere advocate of working class emancipation will object to being termed a Bolshevik, rather will the name be accepted with pride as an honourable one signifying the acceptance and adherence of a faith that recognises only the one class which is open for every human being to belong to, viz., the working class, to whom shall belong the earth and the fullness thereof, and to none else. Bolshevism, rightly or wrongly, has been proclaimed by capitalist governments and press as the name whereby shall be known (and suppressed if possible) all those workers who seek drastic changes and the overthrow of capitalism. The challenge may well be eagerly accepted, and if Bolshevism means uncompromising and bitter war against the whole capitalist system, then no class-conscious workers will regard it with anything but joy. The hopes, aspirations, and results of Bolshevism will find a passionate and ready response wherever there is a wrong to be righted – a human desire struggling for articulation.

> "In every workshop brooding woe, In every hut that harbours grief,
> Ah! is it not the breath of life
> That pants and struggles for relief?"

A reminiscence of the hostile attitude of Labour politicians with regard to the Soviet Government is on an occasion when Jack Curtin, since leader of the Federal Labour Party, on a visit to Brisbane, had dinner with us at “Cosme.”

During the evening’s conversation, Soviet Russia was being discussed, and I extolled the inspiring achievements of that government with natural critical comparison of the Australian Labour Party’s ignominious failure to function as a genuine Labour Party. Curtin, as a Labour politician, did not appreciate this truth and forthwith criticised and belittled the Soviets, using all the insidious arguments that were, and still are, the stock-in-trade of all anti-working class parties and individuals. I was astonished at Curtin being stupid enough to attempt to “put over” this sort of twaddle on me or anyone who had a sound knowledge of the truth about Russia, and told him so, also very quickly exposing his fallacious arguments. In reply to my resentment at his method of attempting to discredit the Soviet Government, he said, “When one is engaged in an argument one makes use of every point possible to uphold his cause.”

This political morality, however, never appealed to me, even in the sacred cause of substantiating an argument or a slanderous attack on the Russian workers. Curtin’s utterances in this matter gave me a pretty clear insight into the underlying make-up of Curtin as a Labour politician, and many of his later actions and speeches, as leader of the Party, have fully borne out my opinion of him, formed on his anti-Bolshevik “argument.”

It was at “Cosme,” too, that, prior to the appearance of Curtin on the political stage, I heard first-hand evidence of the kind of morality that dominates the inner circles of the A.L.P. Jim Page, M.H.R. for Maranoa and Federal Party representative on the Queensland executive, was discussing politics at our home one day. Like other politicians who I have well known on occasions, they spoke frankly of the effect of politics on Labour members and how their whole outlook on life and their responsibilities to the workers became warped and distorted.

Page, in one of these moments of frankness, said “Look here, Ernie, I know you haven’t a very high opinion of Labour politicians, but if you or any

workers were present at a party caucus meeting and witnessed the intrigue, the selfishness of individuals, the gross abandonment or betrayal of working class principles, you would be horrified. If the workers of Queensland only knew the inside truth and what really goes on, not one of us would ever be elected again!"

If this was the mentality and position of Labour politicians 20 years ago what must they be like today after all these years of corroding political power and prestige.

An emotional man, Page, towards the end of the war, realised its true criminality and horror. Meeting him on a tram going home one evening, he indignantly condemned the war as a murderous outrage on humanity. I told Mrs. Lane this when I got home. The next evening Mrs. Lane said to me "Don't you ever tell me anything again about Jim Page's detestation of the war. I was in town today and heard him in a recruiting speech from the Post Office steps urge and plead for the young men to join the army to participate in the European blood bath."

Truly the politician's mind must be a strange conglomeration of warring emotions – the eternal battle between right and wrong. But unhappily it seems that with very rare exceptions, expediency and cowardice induces them not to take a stand against popular prejudices, but to drift with the tide, to blow wherever the wind listeth. After all there is seemingly as much grim truth as caustic wit in the old anarchist motto "All men are born equal – but some descend to Parliament."

Chapter XVIII.
1917 Industrial Upheaval.

The big industrial upheaval that shook Australia in 1917, marked a new phase in the history of Australian trade unionism. Commencing in the New South Wales railway workshops, the strike spread with startling rapidity. Union after union, without counting the bitter cost, downed tools to try to assist their fellow workers in their hour of need. Without any preparation for what would inevitably resolve itself into a long drawn out fight against hopeless odds, the rank and file of the N.S.W. unions did not hesitate to declare that craft distinctions did not count in time of battle, that an injury to one was an injury to all, irrespective of the calling or section to which the workers happened to belong. The ultimate defeat of the workers did not detract from the value of the fight in many ways. Bitter lessons learnt and a realisation as never before of the oneness of Labour, of the urgent necessity for the closest possible organisation and unity amongst all the unions. The strike gave a great impetus to the One Big Union scheme which was now the outstanding question being seriously considered by unions throughout the Commonwealth.

Under the heading “The Workers’ Glory,” I wrote a Jack Cade article extolling the unselfish action of the workers and emphasising the lessons taught. The article stated (inter alia):

“The magnificent solidarity of the men and women who have indeed fought the good fight of human advancement – human freedom and human comradeship – is one of the outstanding phases of the titanic battle just concluded. The spontaneous and enthusiastic realisation of the workers of the oneness of Labour, of the eternal justice of the workers’ cause, found soul-moving expression in the noble action of the scores of thousands who, in order to testify their unbounding faith in the brotherhood of toil, cast aside all calculating or restraining influences, made the hard-pressed railwaymen’s cause their own, and flung themselves into the thick of the bloody fray.

"It was not scientific industrial warfare – it was no carefully conceived plan whereby to match or outwit the cunning of the fuller capitalist plot – it was merely a humane and indignant protest by the workers against a vile injustice to other members of the working class, and as such was a glorious triumph of true unionism. Starvation, humiliation, victimisation, and slander have been meted out to these unionists, who, regardless of cost, took up the cause of their fellows. It is poor material comfort to say that these starving, victimised workers, callously bludgeoned into defeat by the overwhelming power of money, have proved their magnificent fidelity to the great principle of working class solidarity. But the solidarity and unselfishness shown during the recent industrial trouble has been the one grand redeeming feature of the campaign. True to their class, with an abiding faith in the justice of the cause, these workers have rendered a service to the whole of the Labour movement of the Commonwealth, that can never be over-estimated, that overwhelmingly counterbalances the apparent defeat of today.

"In the meantime, much remains to be done by the workers if they desire to even retain what privileges they have today. Closer unity – a linking up of the whole of the unions throughout the land – a clear and unmistakable confession – by action – of the community of interest of all the workers. A speedy breaking down of the present craft distinctions that have spelt nothing but disaster in the past. A sane and practical realisation of real industrial organisation to the complete exclusion of the pettifogging, infinitesimal tactics, principles, and ideals of the old unionism. Organisation to the utmost limits on these lines, a complete abandonment of the old system, of unionism with its aloofness, its castes, and its narrow vision.

"Organisation on the broad and challenging lines of Big Unionism, coupled with the fine spirit of comradeship so splendidly illustrated in the recent struggle, and the Labour movement with the union, will sweep on from triumph to triumph, until at last the crowning victory of industrial emancipation, the abolition of the whole system of wage slavery, will reward the workers and gladden the hearts of all those who are today enduring a penurious life of toil, under the benign regime of exploiting profiters."

I am afraid that this vision in 1917 of a united irresistible working class movement in Australia has not materialised. The day has not yet come wherein the exploiters will be unknown and the people come into their own. But, despite Arbitration Courts and time-serving Labour politicians, the delayed victory of the workers is nearer, much nearer, than it was in 1917, and the lessons of that testing is today bearing fruit.

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The immediate effect of the 1917 upheaval was to give a great impetus to the movement for the formation of One Big Union to displace the ineffective and disunited craft and sectional unions. The I.W.W., as the pioneer of this bigger unionism, had accomplished invaluable work in implanting this ideal in the minds of many Australian unionists, and in every State there was an ever growing swing in this direction.

The defeat of the unions in 1917 had revealed how impotent sectional unionism was to meet in combat the powerful and organised forces of capitalism. A Commonwealth-wide agitation for the One Big Union captured the imagination of thousands of unionists, also the fear and hostility of those unions and officials who dreaded any revolutionary change that imperilled their comfortable positions or called a halt to their reactionary policy.

After a series of union conferences in the various States, an All Australian Trades Union Conference was held in Melbourne, January, 1910. All States, including Tasmania, were represented and the preamble, classification and rules of the “Workers Industrial Union of Australia” were adopted.

The Queensland delegates at the conference were “Tim” Moroney, secretary of the Queensland branch of the Australian Railways’ Union, and W. J. (Billy) Wallace, secretary of the Queensland Painters’ Union. Wallace, about this time, was also honorary secretary of the Brisbane Industrial Council, which office he held until the amalgamation of the Council, Eight Hour Committee, and Trades Hall Board, when R. J. Mulvey, secretary of the Eight Hour Committee, became secretary of the new Trades and Labour Council.

One of the “old guard,” a pioneer of the Queensland Labour movement, Wallace has never faltered in his adherence to the basic principles of working class organisation, either politically or industrially. Today, as yesterday, “Billy” Wallace is in the forefront of the fight, ever ready to take an active part in the militant movement activities however unpopular it may be. He is one of the very, very few union officials who have retained the ideals of their youth and never deviated from the hard and thorny path that does not lead to political preferment or remunerative office. As fellow members of the old South Brisbane Workers’ Political Organisation (now known as A.L.P. branches), and on many radical committees, I have been closely associated with Wallace for many years. We have often fought together in forlorn hopes, and he has never yet sounded the retreat.

The strongest opposition to the O.B.U. (One Big Union) came from the Australian Workers Union which, or rather its bureaucratic officials and executive, regarded the O.B.U. as an unscrupulous poacher on its preserves and a revolutionary menace to the “sane” moderate Labour movement. Added to this was an intense personal hostility by leading A.W.U. officials, which included the general secretary, E. Grayndler, Jack Bailey, W. Blakely, F. Lundie, Senator Barnes, W. J. Riordan, W. J. Dunstan, and many others to “Jock” Garden and other militant O.B.U. advocates.

This hostility assumed a more frenzied character as the O.B.U. movement permeated the ranks of the unions, including the mighty A.W.U., and one would imagine that the real enemies of the workers were not the exploiting employers but those militant officials and unionists who objected to capitalist Arbitration Court methods and Labour duplicity and reactionaryism.

There was a strong militant section of the Queensland branch of the A.W.U., and at the annual delegate meeting we were in a majority, much to the disgust of the secretary and president, W. J. Dunstan and W. J. Riordan. Unfortunately as part of an Australian organisation, the powers of the Queensland branch were very restricted, and many militant resolutions or recommendations were subject to the endorsement or rejection of the annual Australian Convention then held at Sydney. There, Dunstan and Riordan were

in the bosom of their reactionary comrades. The convention always had a good majority whereby to sandbag the “reds,” “I.W.W.” or whatever term of opprobrium all militants were labelled. Therefore we received little mercy from the convention in our persistent efforts to make the A.W.U. a bona fide working class organisation.

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This regrettable conflict of personalities and petty prejudices between individuals in opposing camps has been all too common amongst the unions. It has resulted in the collapse or failure of numerous well-founded schemes to further the interest of the workers and lessen some of the injustice and hardships which are the lot of the toilers. On more than one occasion the helpless rank and file have been literally crucified on a cross of fierce personal antagonisms that has raged without any thought of its dire consequences between some of the leaders of different policies or schools of thought.

I have sometimes said that the greatest blessing that could befall the workers would be for these bellicose officials to be taken in a boat to sea and abandoned as derelicts. Mutual jealousies – a frantic scramble of the opposing officials for positions of power and affluence has been and still are to a large extent, one of the most serious obstacles to the desired united front of the working class. To the credit of the Queenslanders, they, with few exceptions, refused to be dragged into the mire of militarist conscription. There was one well known union, however, the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, that declared its adherence to conscription. The reactionary character of this union can be gauged by the fact that, at a State conference in Brisbane during the war years, the delegates were entertained at a civic reception by the Tory Brisbane City Council! Such an honour (?) was unique in the history of Queensland unionism. When this conference concluded, a dinner function was held by the union to which was invited press representatives from the bitterly anti-Labour metropolitan press – “Courier,” “Daily Mail,” and “Telegraph,” as well as the “Daily Standard.” As the “Standard” had a monopoly of all union official news and reports, this was also a significant indication of the outlook of the locomen’s union. I, as

industrial writer of the "Daily Standard," had to report the function. At the head of the table – honoured guests – were a number of the highest officials of the Queensland Railway Department, excluding the Commissioner. The speeches by the union representatives and the railway officials were, of course, of an intensely reactionary and ignorant character. Pride was expressed at the "comradeship" that existed between the loco men and the departmental heads. The policy of collaboration and understanding between the workers and the employers was extolled and unctuously blessed as the bedrock of all sane unionism. As I listened and reported this damnable heresy, this repudiation of real unionism, I saw "red." Before the last toast, "The Press," was proposed, the other reporters had left, so I was called on to respond. Seething with indignation, I determined, whatever the consequences, to strip the veil of ignorance and hypocrisy from the caricature of unionism and society that had been expressed by the speakers. I branded the "mutual interest of employers and employees" policy as a lie and treachery to the working class. I told them of the glories of the Russian Revolution, what it connoted, and whether they liked it or not the world was being swept by a revolutionary urge that would sweep all opposing forces as they into oblivion. At the first pause in my talk, I fully expected to be howled down. Instead, to my amazement, there was a solid round of applause from the 200 rank and file members of the union who were present. When I finished I received an ovation and they crowded around me and declared mine was the only speech worth hearing, and if I didn't report it fully in the "Standard," they would complain that the report was not a correct one. Needless to say, I did not report my own speech. Anyway, it was a refreshing experience and the indignant astonishment on the faces of the "heads" as they unwillingly listened to my revolutionary utterances added a touch of humour and satisfaction to the evening's entertainment.

It is only fair to add that, like many others, the Loco. Enginemen's Union has seen the light, left the old beaten track of class collaboration, and joined hands with other unions to demand for their members a place in the sun.

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As one of the Queensland delegates of the A.W.U., I attended the State Labour-in-Politics Convention, held in Brisbane in January-February, 1918. Dunstan, secretary of the A.W.U. (Queensland branch), had been most anxious to attend, but, as the date clashed with the commencement of the A.W.U. annual convention in Sydney, he resolved to use all his personal influence with the members of the A.W.U. Australian executive to postpone the convention for a week. I had been elected that year as Queensland councillor on the Australian executive to the exclusion of Dunstan, and was also desirous of being present at the A.L.P. convention, though not for the same reasons as Dunstan, who was successful in securing the postponement of the Sydney convention. But the plan miscarried with regard to Dunstan, as the Queensland A.W.U. delegate meeting elected myself (the biggest vote), G. Martens, Harry Bruce, and Jack Dash. Riordan, who would also have been defeated with Dunstan, shrewdly sensed disaster, and withdrew from the ballot and quietly secured a nomination from Bourke.

As usual, the A.L.P. convention was dominated by the Labour politicians, and the “moderates” had a vote of about 48 to the militants 22. There were 13 Labour politicians, including W. M. Gillies (later Premier), W. Forgan Smith, W. McCormack, E. G. Theodore, T. J. Ryan (Premier), and Charlie McDonald, M.H.R.

On the opening day “Tim” Moroney and I took our seats with three other rebels at one of the tables provided close to the platform. Theodore immediately dubbed it “The Bolshevik Table” and, by a strange mischance, McCormack sat with us.

On the third day, despite the badly concealed fear and opposition of the politicians, the convention carried a lengthy and all-embracing resolution which, in the nature of an exhaustive preamble, reviewed and condemned the world war.

I had forced the convention, on the second day, to admit a reporter from the “Daily Standard,” whose reports, however, were subject to a press committee, of which McCormack and Lewis McDonald were members. The report of the

day's proceedings published in the "Daily Standard" following the debate and adoption of the peace resolution, I found at the luncheon adjournment, had no reference whatever to the question. I saw, of course, that it had been censored, so I resolved to take drastic action to break up the convention. Prior to the resumption of convention, I conferred with Moroney and others and agreed to move the adjournment of the convention to direct attention to the gross suppression of the peace proposals in the report. In the event of obtaining no satisfaction, the militant section – about 20 delegates – decided to leave the convention. Lewis McDonald had evidently been watching me and called me. He said: "When I got to the office at lunch, I found three or four sheets of the manuscript of the convention report had blown off the table!" In reply to me he said it was the portion of the report dealing with the peace proposals and that he would instantly take it to the "Standard" for inclusion in the second edition. As that was all that was required we, of course, let the matter drop. I heard later that McDonald, breathless and ghastly white, had rushed to the "Standard" office with the "mislaid" report.

All through the convention the militants waged a hopeless fight against the forces of the politicians. It was bad enough then, 20 years ago, but with the constantly growing power and unscrupulousness of the Labour politicians and their henchmen, with the banishment of the left wing, Labour conventions are today little better than a hollow mockery.

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But the historic fight on the 1918 A.L.P. convention was that which on the last day raged round the following motion which I moved: "That this convention urges upon the Federal Labour convention the necessity in the interests of the workers of Australia of the immediate repeal of the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act, and that the Queensland delegates to the Federal convention be instructed to vote accordingly."

At the commencement of the debate, McCormack offered to bet five to one that the motion would be defeated. I have been in many hard fought and bitter fights on conferences but the one which this question raised I consider was the

most intense of all. As the afternoon wore on one could sense a swinging over of the moderates, to the left wing. Riordan foolishly rose and opposed the motion. I told Moroney, who had not yet spoken, that at the Queensland A.W.U. delegate meeting the previous week, at which Riordan had presided, I had moved a similar motion which had been carried unanimously. Following Riordan, Moroney exposed the audacious attitude of Riordan, who sat a humiliated and furious man. We told the convention that the workers of Queensland were waiting to see who were the real conscriptionists – those who supported the lowest form of conscription – that of the boys. The gloves were off and we undoubtedly frightened some of the reactionaries to desert their political masters. With the exception of Charlie Collins, every Labour politician delegate voted against the motion. Randolph Bedford, who was not a delegate, but only a visitor, with his well-known jingo Australian outlook, continually interjected across to the anti-conscriptionists. Bedford's action so annoyed one of the country A.L.P. delegates, an elderly bearded man who happened to sit in front of Bedford, and who had voted enthusiastically with the politicians all through the convention, that he actually voted with the hated "reds."

The finishing touch to an historic fight was just after the chairman, T. J. Ryan, had closed the debate. Charlie Collins rose to his feet. "Let me speak," he cried, "I will not give a silent vote on such a question. Every time I go down the street and see a man in military uniform my whole soul shudders. If this motion is defeated this convention shall be known for all time as the Black Conscription Convention!" It was a thrilling moment when the vote was taken; Moroney and I demanded a division, "so that the workers of Queensland would know who were the conscriptionists." The voting was 38 for the anti-compulsory clauses, and 20 against, who looked a very sorry lot when they had to stand up and have their names recorded.

The next morning I left for Sydney to engage in the annual forlorn hope fight against the might of the A.W.U. reaction. That year I was in constant fights for six weeks, viz., A.W.U. delegate meeting, nearly two weeks; A.L.P. convention, one week; A.W.U. convention, three weeks; so that I had more

than a fair share of strenuous work and was indeed glad to get home and enjoy the peace of “Cosme.”

* * *

In connection with the war, and Labour parties’ attitude thereon, a later incident in this year is illuminating. Although the Queensland Labour Government had remained solid on the anti-conscriptionist question, the policy of Labour had not diverged from that of undeviating support of the war. It was too unpopular to oppose the strong jingoistic fervour that was rampant and any tendency to peace talk was calculated to lose votes at the election. Therefore, all efforts of the more militant unions and A.L.P. members to force a courageous change in the policy failed.

Quite a large number of responsible members of the Queensland Labour Party, including some Labour members, still went on the recruiting platform to assist the militarists to obtain yet more cannon fodder for the front firing line. This was in 1918, when the Allies’ part in the war had been exposed as the conflict to vanquish a dangerous economic and trade rival. In view of this situation, when there was a rapidly spreading detestation of the war madness that had cost millions of lives and brought desolation to countless homes, it was an outrage on every principle, of Labour, in common humanity, that Labour representatives should be permitted to degrade the movement by calling for still more bloody slaughter. So I resolved to endeavour to force the Queensland Central Executive of the A.L.P. to prohibit any Labour representative from committing the enormity of recruiting. The following is the motion I moved:

“That in view of the fact that the Federal Government has persistently refused to depart from its war policy of a ‘military victory,’ of annexation of the German colonies in the Pacific and elsewhere and is bitterly antagonistic to bringing about an end to the war by ‘peace by negotiation methods,’ as adopted by various Labour conferences, including Queensland, and further, that as this Executive is firmly of the opinion that the war as conducted by the Allied Governments, has developed into a war of aggrandisement, can no

longer be termed a war for democracy, and that its continuance is diametrically opposed to every interest of the workers, therefore, this Executive representing the Q.C.E. of the Australian Labour Party is emphatically of the opinion that no Labour representative should appear on recruiting platforms or in any way endeavour to induce men to enlist."

One would have thought that there would not have been any opposition to such a resolution in 1918, but the motion was the prelude to a bitter and stupid attack on me by Theodore. "Where was Mr. Lane," he shouted, "when the war started?" "Just where I am now," I interjected, dumbfounded at his scurrilous audacity in inferring that I had ever done anything but denounce the war for the unholy thing it was.

"It is all very well for Mr. Lane at this late hour of the war to come here trying to get a little cheap popularity by talking peace and anti-war."

After a heated debate I replied that if these assumably picked leaders of the Labour movement did not know the truth about the damnable war by now or had not the decency to tell it then they were not fit to occupy any responsible position in a working class movement. It was all in vain. It is almost unbelievable, but this motion to stop Labour representatives recruiting in 1918 was actually defeated by a full meeting of the Q.C.E.!

Going home that evening with Jim Page, I said: "I don't mind defeat in any fight, I have been in that position almost all through my life, but I admit feeling very hurt at being lyingly accused by Theodore today of being a cowardly opportunist on the war issue." Page replied: "You should not let that trouble you in the least, Ernie; everyone at the Q.C.E. meeting knows you and where you have always stood – and they also know Theodore!"

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The action of the Q.C.E. in its cowardly refusal to do anything to encourage a cessation of the murderous capitalist war, to abandon a subservient policy of support of the militarist beast, was typical of the attitude of Labour politicians, with a few honourable exceptions, throughout the Commonwealth. Yet, when

the war ended, and the inevitable reaction against war and militarism swept Australia, the erstwhile war-mongering Labour Party and its mouthpieces had the brazen effrontery to proclaim from the housetops and highways their detestation of the war and denounce the authors and causes of it as capitalist bandits.

Is it any wonder that I and others who, in exposing the true inwardness of the war, for four long years endured the bitter hostility and scorn of miscalled Labour leaders, have lost all respect or confidence in a Labour Party that did not hesitate to betray the workers and unhesitatingly assisted to prolong the inhuman slaughter.

The Labour Party's audacious pose since the war of an honest anti-war party in view of its own war record, is surely a glaring example of political perfidity and expediency – and cynicism.

Labour and Socialist parties in other countries who had likewise betrayed the workers in their hysterical support of the war, now it was over, join in the now popular denouncement of militarism and war. At an International Labour conference, held at Amsterdam, a delegate -Philip Snowden – welcomed this eleventh hour repentance, but remarked that it was just as well, to also remember the war policies of Labourites and Socialists when the war crisis arose. On the basis of this report I wrote a "Jack Cade" article "The Australian Labour Party and the War," severely – but truthfully – reviewing the Party's policy throughout the war period. This much required reminder of Australian Labour's failure to function as a courageous, non-war-mongering party in a time of crisis, was evidently too bitter a pill to swallow as it was not published, being one of the few "Jack Cade" articles thus treated during J. V. McDonald's editorship of the "Daily Standard."

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It has been well said that "Stupidity is the root of all the evils of the world – and war is the supreme evil, because it is the supreme stupidity." Labour or so-called Socialist parties who, for whatever obscure reason, countenanced or approved the greatest "supreme stupidity," cannot by any manner of political

juggling escape their responsibility for the ignoble role they played throughout the war.

Chapter XIX.
Q.C.E. Morality.

As a member of the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labour Party for nearly ten years, from 1915 onwards, I have had the opportunity of gauging the depths of political mendacity and expediency which were the cardinal points of that select and all-powerful organisation. The experience has been invaluable insofar as it enabled me to get a close-up view of the machinery of Labour-in-Politics and to assess at their true value the genuineness of the Labour Party's assumption to express the ideals and lead the workers of this State out of the House of Capitalist bondage.

The experience has sufficed to convince me that the Labour Party as functioning today, is far removed from its original purpose. Instead of honestly facing the position and courageously challenging the right of the capitalist exploiting system to any longer rob and sweat the mass of the people, the Labour Party has degenerated into an effete and reactionary organisation that, in some instances, rivals its political opponents in its vicious anti-working class activities.

Dominated by Labour Ministers, the Q.C.E. has always pursued the path of compromise and adopted vote-snaring policies even though the trusting workers were thrown to the lions in the process.

Although there is a majority of direct industrial representative members of the Q.C.E., unfortunately with few exceptions these delegates have been and are spineless followers of the Labour politicians. To successfully resist the autocracy and overbearing egotism of the purely political section of the Q.C.R an industrial representative has to possess knowledge, intelligence and courage wherewith to meet and overcome the powerful and insidious influence exercised by the politicians. Very few Q.C.E. members had these qualifications with the inevitable result that the Theodores, McCormacks and Forgan Smiths have always been the senior dominating authority on the Q.C.E. On terms of personal friendship with many members of the Q.C.E., I

invariably found myself in fierce antagonism to them on practically every serious working class question that came before us for discussion or decision. There was, of course, a small minority of militant members which always included the two representatives of the Australian Railways Union, with a varying number of other radical delegates. But in those days there was at least a determined and class conscious militant group on the Q.C.E. who never faltered in their intense advocacy of fundamental Labour principles and to whom the majesty and prestige of Labour Premiers and Ministers had no awe. We were a continual source of annoyance and detestation to the political right wing, forcing its adherents on all occasions to discard the mask of workers' true representatives and reveal their real identity as time servers and place hunters. Today that virile section of the Q.C.E. no longer exists. The expulsion of the A.R.U. – my own eclipse, plus the rapid deterioration of the Labour Party and of militant unionism down to the last decade, has rendered the Q.C.E. a virtual monopoly of the politician.

It was – and still is, I suppose – esteemed one of the highest honours in the Queensland Labour Party, to be a member of the Q.C.E. I, however, never had that conception of its greatness. I often used to wonder if Theodore, Lewis McDonald & Co. considered I was honoured to be in the Q.C.E. – in the same caste as they were – as I, a militant, actually felt humiliated to be regarded as in the same class as these perverters of the Labour movement.

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My first insight into the real Forgan Smith with regard to his claim to be a genuine workers' representative occurred on the Q.C.E. I had been particularly friendly with him on account of his Socialist faith and apparent honesty. At a Q.C.E. meeting, the militants were making the usual vain attempt to force the Parliamentary party to give effect to a reasonable claim of the workers. Forgan Smith arose with blustering indignation to strongly resent the "audacity" of the Q.C.E. to attempt to "dictate" to the Labour Government. He swelled visibly in venting his righteous wrath at our simplicity in imagining that the Q.C.E. or any other working class organisation had any right to advise or control the mighty Labour Government. This revelation by this later lath-and-plaster

"Labour" Premier, was more than sufficient for me to disregard for all time his pretensions as a bona-fide Labour representative. Forgan Smith at that time was not even a Minister, so one can humorously try to conceive what kind of an egotist he must be today as a Premier. "The never-ending audacity of the elected person!" that scathing indictment of Walt Whitman's, surely must have been born as specially designed to apply to Labour politicians – not only in this State but elsewhere.

I soon discovered that Theodore, McCormack, J. Fihelly and the rest of the political bunch, had a philosophy and outlook with regard to the Labour movement that filled one with amazed contempt. This outlook was, of course, not openly expressed, but countless actions clearly indicated its acceptance and operation. Whenever a serious question was dealt with by the Q.C.E., the attitude adopted by these gentry was not, "Is this a right or wrong principle from the Labour point of view," but "How will this affect our welfare?" Then they considered whether they could with safety adopt a line of action that they could "get away with," to delude or bluff the workers. If it was considered too brazen or risky to do so, the plastic politicians would make a virtue of necessity and do the right thing by the workers. As far as my knowledge of the politicians on the Q.C.E. is concerned, I never knew them to frankly adopt a genuine working class principle without demur – unless it happened to suit them.

The endorsement of nominees for official or parliamentary positions also revealed the unscrupulous methods of the Q.C.E. right wingers. With an effrontery that almost commanded respect (it did amazement) a separate method of considering the endorsements of their own friends and supporters and the condemned militants was unblushingly exercised. One of the right brand was always sure of approval unless he had committed some outrageous crime which even the Q.C.E. could not overlook. On the other hand the unfortunate militant nominee who might happen to be the victim of even a rumour of some slight misdemeanour, was subject to every conceivable form of obstruction and was lucky to pass the test and secure endorsement. But at least in this period 20 years ago or less, members of the Q.C.E. had to give

their reasons for objecting to endorsing any nominee in open meeting. Latterly even this mild privilege has apparently been jettisoned as a nominee's name goes to a silent, secret ballot.

I had always on the Q.C.E. opposed the endorsement as a Labour representative of any employer and, of course, in every instance of this objection the endorsement had been granted. A resolution from the Paddington W.P.O., "That no member of an employers' federation or association be eligible as a Labour representative" was adopted at a Labour-in-Politics convention at Rockhampton and added to the rules and constitution of the Labour Party.

Shortly afterwards, at a Q.C.E. meeting, the name of an employer was submitted for endorsement. I said that as always I would oppose it, but pointed out that, owing to the Rockhampton resolution, the position was now entirely different and the endorsement could not now be granted. But I had not yet evidently realised the cunning tricks of the Labour politicians to gain their own selfish ends and defeat the workers. Theodore virulently attacked me, "another heresy hunt by Mr. Lane," and he declared that the Rockhampton convention did not intend the new rule to apply to employers generally. It really meant, he said, members of employers' organisations with a political platform opposed to the Australian Labour Party!

I protested against the outrageous absurdity of this interpretation of the intention of the convention to exclude employers from the Labour Party. I pointed out that employers' federations, chambers of commerce, or other employers' organisations did not have any political platform in their constitutions, but every worker knew how bitterly anti-Labour they were. "Billy" Demaine exclaimed with horror: "Why, you would exclude me as I am a member of the Printing Trade Employers' Association." "That would be tragical," I retorted, "but you would be only a small sacrifice for a fundamental Labour principle."

However, the resolution to exclude employers from the movement was thrown into the waste paper basket as something that would be a source of danger to the welfare of the Labour Party.

On account of W. G. Higgs's (Labour M.H.R., Capricornia) very questionable attitude on the conscription issue, but more particularly on his very definite antagonism to a proposed conscription of wealth and to relieve the workers of some of their burden, I opposed his re-endorsement, stating that I had too high a regard for the Labour movement to agree to the nomination of such a representative. Of course, I received no support, only abuse. Within three years Higgs was called upon by the Q.C.E. to show cause why he should not be expelled from the Labour Party! Every member of the Q.C.E., including Moroney, with the sole exception of myself, received a personal letter from Higgs "explaining" his actions, but he was repudiated by the Q.C.E. and eventually got put out of politics.

It has been my experience in connection with the Q.C.E., that although its meetings were supposedly confidential and details of decisions and discussions not to be divulged, I never received the benefit or protection of this loyalty. Always, within a few hours of the Q.C.E. meetings, any action or utterance on my part against crooked or non-working class individuals was always conveyed to the persons concerned.

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The advent of the I.W.W. in Australia, about 1913, supplied a badly needed energy in the direction of militant industrialism which, under the combined retarding influence of Arbitration Courts and Labour politicians, had lost most of the uncompromising virility that had been such an encouraging feature of the earlier movement in Queensland. As an insistent driving force, the I.W.W. had attracted the sympathy and support of the left wing of the unions, while it had also aroused the open antagonism of the "moderates" and their political masters.

The I.W.W. comprising the vanguard of working class revolt, was regarded – and treated – by this latter section of Labour as a deadly enemy – a pariah –

a disruptive force – which at all costs had to be discredited and destroyed. Just as later "Bolshevism" and today "Communism," is the bogey of Labour politicians, so I.W.W.-ism was the object of vicious attack and repudiation. The term, as with Communism today, was deliberately and with malice applied to all individuals and organisations that criticised the official Labour movement and earnestly endeavoured to keep it on the straight track of working class emancipation.

Unfortunately the I.W.W., as a definite and uncompromising opponent of any political action, was an easy target for the attacks of political and industrial Labour, which were pledged to political as well as industrial action.

It is worth noting on this question, however, that although the Communist Party is as definitely political as the I.W.W. was anti-political, it has not been spared the same scornful repudiation and slander by official Labour throughout Australia as was directed against the I.W.W. It is clear that, whatever group or party adheres to, and propagates, a revolutionary policy of attack on the capitalist system, with its ultimate overthrow and the destruction of all forms of exploitation, will be branded by the official Labour movement as anti-Labour and a deadly enemy of the working class.

The stalking horse of I.W.W.-ism was gleefully used by Theodore and his fellow politicians to attack all the militant elements in Queensland. I, of course, was regarded as an "I.W.W.-ite," notwithstanding that I had never faltered in my belief in, and advocacy of direct political action on the part of the workers. But the I.W.W. bogey was too rich an opportunity to be allowed to remain in abeyance, so the Q.C.E. decided to issue an "official manifesto," "Solidarity or Disruption," wherein to attack the I.W.W. and castigate militant Labourites at the same time.

I was absent in Sydney at an A.W.U. convention when the Q.C.E. made this decision and the first I knew of it was the receipt of a letter from Lewis McDonald, secretary of the Q.C.E., advising me that I, with Theodore and another whose name I forget, had been appointed a committee to draft the desired manifesto. It is against all procedure to appoint anyone to a committee

or office without the knowledge and consent of the appointee. I sensed that I had been appointed in defiance of this rule in order to ensnare me into a position to have to denounce the I.W.W. and other militants. I hesitated whether I should agree to walk into the trap but decided to accept the position, also to insist that my opinion of the militants should be inserted in the manifesto, failing that to resign.

At the next meeting of the Q.C.E., Theodore submitted a draft manifesto overflowing with his usual condemnation of the left wing. I, as a member of the committee objected to this method and it was agreed that we should both draft a manifesto and later collaborate in its final production. I was fully expecting Theodore to refuse to accept my portion of the manifesto relating to the militants, but to my surprise he did not demur and after it had been submitted and adopted by the Q.C.E., was published with the signatures of all members of the Q.C.E.

Included in these signatories (March, 1919), were the Premier, T. J. Ryan, E. G. Theodore, J. A. Fihelly, W. McCormack, D. Gledson, Ms.L.A., T. Moroney, R. J. Carroll, G. Lawson, J. Page, J. S. Collings, M.H.R., W. J. Riordan and D. K. Higgie.

The decline of the Queensland Labour Party since this manifesto was issued in March, 1919, is too well known to the deluded and disillusioned workers to need comment. Twenty years ago it fell far short of its highest purpose and ideals, but it was then possible to at least call a halt to its downward path and force some recognition – however tardy – of Labour's true mission.

Herewith is that portion of the manifesto relating to the militants that I wrote and was accepted by the Q.C.E. Such a declaration, reasonable as it is, would be inconceivable from the Q.C.E. today.

"To Members of Workers' Political Organisations and Affiliated Unions:

The Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labour Party, being desirous of consolidating the industrial and political wings of the Labour Movement, in order that a united front may be presented to the conservative

and reactionary forces opposed to it, declares that any element in the ranks of Labour, political or industrial, which deflects the Movement from its true aim – "the securing of the full results of their industry to all wealth producers" – or which destroys its discipline or undermines its authority, or which, by unfair or unwarranted criticism, endangers its solidarity, is detrimental to the interests of the movement and must be combated.

The Movement looks to education and such social and political reforms as strike at the root of the injustice from which the masses now suffer. By loyalty to principle, unity of purpose, aim, and method alone, can we succeed. Rules are but a means of securing unity of action; nevertheless their observance and recognition are essential to success.

While the Queensland Central Executive considers that it is its duty as the executive body of the Labour Party, to clearly enunciate the only constituted policy of that Party and to draw attention to the dangers threatening by unconstitutional and disruptive tactics, there is no intention or desire in any manner to stifle legitimate criticism or advocacy of newer and what may be considered better and more rapid methods whereby to achieve the ultimate objective of all true Labourites.

The Queensland Central Executive fully recognises that the suppression of bona-fide and honest criticism is vicious in principle and reactionary in effect, and would inevitably result in stagnation and early decay of the Labour Party. Without the driving force of the left or extreme wing of Labour, and intelligent and advanced criticism, progress and virility are impossible.

At no period of working class history have there been such revolutionary changes in the thoughts and desires of men as at the present time. The heresy of today may become the orthodoxy of to-morrow. The minority view that was rejected with scorn today gains acceptance and becomes the determined policy of the majority. Therefore, all sections of thought that make for the advancement of Labour on sane and class conscious lines are welcomed by organised Labour, so long as the great underlying basis actuating its advocates

is the earnest desire to improve and solidify the Labour Movement, to strengthen and not to disrupt, to build and not to destroy."

Of course, the I.W.W., as an anti-political organisation, was criticised and condemned in the manifesto. No other attitude was possible from an avowedly political body like the Q.C.E., but the original intention of Theodore and his group to viciously attack and slander the left wing section of Queensland workers sadly misfired, much to their ill-concealed chagrin.

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At the conclusion of the Federal conference of the Australian Labour Party, held at Perth in June, 1918, at a meeting of the Q.C.E., I moved a vote of censure on the Premier, T. J. Ryan, W. McCormack, and J. Fihelly, three of the Queensland delegates to the conference, who apparently had voted. against their instructions from the A.L.P. convention held in Brisbane in January, 1918, with regard to compulsory military training.

The Queensland convention had most convincingly – despite all desperate politicians resistance – carried a resolution instructing the six delegates to the Perth conference to vote for the repeal of the compulsory clauses of the Defence' Act. For the purpose of covering up their tracks on this and other important questions decided at the Perth conference, that conference, at its opening session, resolved not to publish any division lists. Consequently the rank and file of the workers were kept in ignorance as to how their representatives voted. Speeches, however, were reported in the official report which, in some instances, indicated how the speakers were going to vote. It was on this unsatisfactory basis of knowledge that I based the motion of censure.

Fihelly did not appear at the Q.C.E. meeting to answer the charge, but admitted its truth and attempted to justify his action in defying the instruction from the convention. The debate was in an interesting and heated stage when T. J. Ryan arrived. On being informed by the chairman, W. Demaine, that he, Ryan, was coupled in the censure motion, the Premier stated he was not present at the Perth conference when the vote was taken. McCormack

substantiated this. I said that I accepted unreservedly Ryan's statement, but pointed out that owing to the cowardice of the conference in not publishing division lists, I could only judge delegates by their predelictions or utterances. Anyway, while there was a doubt as to Ryan's vote on the compulsory military question, I was not going to exempt him from a censure motion simply because he happened to be the Premier.

McCormack made a fighting defence and, realising the seriousness of his position, made the cryptic statement that if he was going to drown he was not going to drown alone, but would drag others down with him. However, with its usual shrewd method of avoiding all unpleasant issues – unpleasant, of course, only to the approved circle – the Q.C.E. adjourned finality "until further information was secured" Thus the matter faded into the darkness of hush and oblivion that has been the fate of many other undesirable happenings in connection with the Q.C.E.

* * *

My most outstanding experience of the dominance of the politician on the Q.C.E. over supposedly industrial representatives came when the demand of the unions for the restoration of the basic wage, which had been reduced by the State Arbitration Court, was considered by the Q.C.E.

Following the decision of the Court in 1925, to reduce the basic wage from £ 4/5/- to £ 3/15/-, there was a State-wide agitation by the unions for the Government to restore the basic rate by legislative enactment to £ 4/5/-. The workers bitterly resented the drastic cut by the Court, and realising the futility of again appealing to that wage reducing instrument of the capitalist class, rightly demanded that the supreme authority in the State, the Labour Government, should give the workers the modicum of justice denied them by the Court.

An intense campaign was carried on by the unions to force their political representatives to take action but with little effect. The Government shirked its responsibilities in the usual manner by declaring that wages were fixed by the

Arbitration Court and that it was outside the jurisdiction of Parliament – and unthinkable to question the supremacy of the Court or override its decision.

This suave method of rejecting the unions' demand aroused such a storm of protest that the Q.C.E. was forced to deal with the question and a special meeting was convened for that purpose.

All the union representatives on the Q.C.E., and they were in the majority, were instructed and pledged by their organisations to uncompromisingly insist on the restoration. But the Labour Ministers, with Theodore and McCormack as the spear head, came to the Q.C.E. armed to the teeth with statistics, statements and arguments to show to the selfish and unreasonable workers that to restore the basic wage to £4/5/- would immediately result in the bankruptcy of Queensland, close down many industries and throw thousands of workers on the unemployed market. A truly tragic picture was painted with the most lurid colours as to the sad fate of the wage earners and their unhappy wives and children if the Government so far forgot its duty as unswerving guardians of the welfare of the people as to weakly submit to the workers' demand.

It was an amazing attack, bristling with unscrupulous distortion of the true position. But the politicians knew well the vacillating cowardice and ignorance of the majority of the union representatives, nor was the politicians' confidence in their ability to overawe and throw dust in the eyes of these men mistaken.

As the unceasing battery of political eloquence and sophistry thundered against the advocates of wage restorations, one could see the ranks of the unions wilting, decimated and beaten to its knees. Secretaries of unions subserviently admitted the righteousness of the Government's case and the serious mistake the unions had made in attempting to force the Labour Government to bring ruin to the people of Queensland! One secretary said that he must accept the considered statements of Ministers of the Crown! Chris. Dawson (Waterside Workers) declared that he could not take the responsibility of throwing hundreds of his members out of work. R. J. Carroll stated that he would have to vote for the restoration of the basic wage as he had been

definitely instructed by his executive (Amalgamated Engineering Union), but he felt certain that if they had been present at the Q.C.E. meeting and heard Theodore and other Ministers, his, Carroll's, instructions would have been different.

And so the fight went on. I said that the figures and financial statements of the politicians, even if I believed them, and no one at that meeting had any means whatever of checking the Government's allegations, left me absolutely cold, and that the workers' demand was a challenge to the Government's pretensions to represent the workers. When the division was taken only seven voted for the restoration motion. The following are the seven Q.C.E. members who did not betray the workers at the behest of the unscrupulous gang of politicians: – R. J. Carroll, R. Sumner, D. Gledson, M.L.A., G. Rymer, J. Hayes (A.R.U.), S. J. Bryan (Electrical Trade), and E. H. Lane (A.W.U.).

The attitude of the Q.C.E. on this question caused extreme indignation amongst the rank and file and I was anxious to issue a minority report on the part of the dissenting delegates. But Bryan declined on the grounds that it was a majority decision; Carroll and Gledson, of course, I knew would not agree, and Sumner had left Brisbane. Consequently, with only three of us it would have been a minority report of a minority of a minority, which was impossible, so I abandoned the idea.

The sequel to this victory of the reactionary Q.C.E., was written within a few weeks when the railway workers throughout the State went on strike for the restoration of the basic wage to £4/5/-, with some other demands. The strike was settled by the Government (W. Gillies was Premier at this period) granting the restoration! There ensued no ruin, unemployment, or bankruptcy as was prophesised by the Labour politicians, and the irony of the situation was that the Government, by grudgingly and through industrial direct action, granting the restoration, exposed Theodore and his political confreres as mountebanks and brazen bluffers of the highest order.

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As one of the four or six representatives of the A.W.U. on the Q.C.E. (the number varied, one or two being elected direct from the A.L.P. conventions), I found myself in almost continuous conflict with the other A.W.U. delegates on fundamental Labour principles. W. J. Riordan. W. J. Dunstan, F. Martyn, J. Dash, R. Funnell, and many other A.W.U. delegates, were invariably solid supporters of the political section, and bitterly opposed to the small militant minority to which the two Australian Railways Union delegates were always attached.

The Q.C.E., being an executive body, there was no possibility of camouflage by delegates with regard to their attitude or votes and my position as an uncompromising opponent of the reactionaryism of the politicians and A.W.U. delegates was a grim and disquieting reproach to my A.W.U. colleagues. It was an invidious situation and demanded my removal in the interests of the peace of mind of Riordan and his followers.

I had always been elected to the Q.C.E. in the annual ballot and polled a very big vote in excess of the other successful nominees. So there did not seem to be any possibility of my being removed by an adverse vote of the rank and file. But at a delegate meeting Riordan, on the specious grounds that the ballot had resulted in the election of a northern delegate, who could not possibly attend Q.C.E. meetings in Brisbane (this could have been prevented by not accepting such nominations), induced the delegate meeting to agree that the Q.C.E. representatives be elected by the delegate meeting. When this resolution was carried, I said to Hanlon, editor of the “Worker,” who was sitting next to me, “That is the end of me next year as a delegate to the Q.C.E.” This prediction was correct, as although I apparently had strong support among the delegates, the machine was too powerful and I was defeated in the secret ballot of the delegate meeting.

Thus concluded my membership of the Q.C.E. after ten years strenuous and often nerve racking fighting against what proved impossible odds. I do not in any way regret the experience which was invaluable to me. It revealed to me without a shadow of doubt the falsity of the Queensland branch of the Australian Labour Party – at least as expressed consistently by the Q.C.E., the

supreme governing authority of the Party in assuming the role of a genuine Labour Party with an honest desire to protect and advance the interests of the workers at all costs.

I discovered on innumerable occasions that no intrigue was too unclean, no method too audacious or unscrupulous whereby to entrench the privileges of the Labour Party in its determination to retain political power, and to defeat and discredit all those who foolishly imagined that the Labour Government was a courageous and fitting expression of working class principles in the political arena. Since my personal contact with the Q.C.E., it has developed into a political machine, whose closest counterpart appears to be the old infamous Tammany Hall of New York.

Today the Q.C.E. reigns supreme in its authority, its one time militant members and minority is no more, bludgeoned or intrigued out of its sacred precincts, it is indeed a fitting executive body for a Labour Party that grovels at the feet of that most astute and tricky of Labour (?) Premiers, W. Forgan, Smith.

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Far removed though it might seem, the AW.U. convention and the Australian executive had and have much in common with the Q.C.E. and its unsavoury methods and pursues a similar reactionary course. I particularise the Q.C.E and the Queensland Labour Party only because I have had no personal experience of the A.L.P. in other States, although one has not any reason to believe that there is any marked difference in their anti- or non-working class attitude. Therefore I write only of that which has come within my own direct knowledge and experience.

Covering a period of eight or nine years from 1917, I attended the A.W.U. annual conventions in Sydney and was also for two terms Queensland councillor and a member of the Australian executive. During that decade I experienced the chairmanship of F. Lundie, A. Blakely, and Senator Barnes, but there was little difference in their attitude towards the annoying militant

section or their staunch adherence to the politico-arbitrationist policy which has been the bedrock of A.W.U. reactionaryism for many years.

PART V.
Opposition to Militant Unions

Chapter XX.
O.B.U. Derided.

It would not be possible within the confines of these memoirs, to more than touch the fringe of the A.W.U. convention debates and decisions. I can only refer somewhat briefly to some of the more important events and clashes that occurred while I was a delegate. The outstanding feature of my experience was, however, a consistent determination on the part of the "old guard" to jealously protect the preserves of the A.W.U. from the inroads of more progressive organisations and to persecute and suppress all those, whoever or wherever they might be, who had the temerity to question the infallability of the A.W.U. or to challenge its supremacy as the greatest union in Australia. With an almost senile reverence for its past creditable history before it had degenerated into a fulsome appendage of the Australian Labour Party and the strongest prop of an iron cast system of compulsory arbitration, the A.W.U. head officials virulently attacked and slandered unions and unionists who sought to bring into the Labour movement some of its lost vitality and class consciousness.

The acceptance by many unions of the policy of industrial organisation as opposed to craft unionism was regarded by the A.W.U. as a pernicious and immoral attempt to "steal their thunder" and pose as the only honest One Big Union in Australia. Brought into the ranks of Australian unionism by the detested I.W.W., full and unscrupulous advantage was taken of this fact by the A.W.U. officials to denounce as "industrial assassins," "anarchists" and "disruptists," all advocates of the O.B.U. Individual prejudices and antipathies against "Jock" Garden and other militant advocates of the O.B.U. were given full play and a campaign of vituperation was launched that had no parallel in Australian union history. It can at the same time be stated that some of the O.B.U. leaders were not exempt from these scurrilous methods. Thus the battle

raged while the unfortunate workers, as usual, were crucified between the two opposing camps.

Unfortunately for the plans of the A.W.U. bureaucracy, the agitation and demand for the establishment of a class conscious industrial organisation, free from the corroding alliances with the Arbitration Courts and the Australian Labour Party, was not by any means confined to the ranks of other unions but found a wide response in the minds of thousands of A.W.U. members. As the A.W.U. executives and convention had failed to give serious consideration to this question other than to scathingly condemn it as a thinly disguised I.W.W. organisation, there was forwarded to the 1920 (January) annual A.W.U. convention many resolutions from various parts of Australia, demanding either that the A.W.U. join up with the "Workers Industrial Union of Australia," as adopted at an All Australian Trade Union Congress, held in Melbourne in January, 1918, or to take a plebiscite vote of A.W.U. members on the question.

A motion to take such a ballot was moved. An exhaustive debate, covering several days ensued, in which Grayndler, Dunstan and Coy. frantically contended that the A.W.U. was the only genuine O.B.U. and viciously condemned the O.B.U. sponsors. Eventually an amendment was adopted to appoint a committee to draft a scheme and to confer with representatives of the Miners, Seamen, Waterside and other unions that might have adopted the O.B.U. scheme.

In support of this amendment I said that if the convention could adopt a satisfactory scheme it would be a quicker method than taking a plebiscite, but knowing the convention as it was I should be very pleasantly surprised if any results were achieved. In that case I said that I reserved the right to move a motion that the question be immediately submitted to, a ballot of members throughout Australia. The president, A. Blakely, assured me that I could, under those circumstances, move such a motion.

During his speech in opposition to the O.B.U. the president sneeringly referred to it as "This pipe dream of Trautman's" (Trautman was the secretary of the I.W.W. in America.).

The committee appointed conferred with the Coal and Shale Miners (J. Baddley, A. Willis, J. O'Reilly), Seamen (T. Walsh, Manning), Railways (Buckley), and Gas Unions (Rawlings), for a period of over two weeks, while convention was sitting, and from time to time submitted progress reports. These reports were of an insidious character, to convey the impression that, while the A.W.U. delegates wanted an O.B.U., the representatives of the other unions were insincere and dodging the issue. As I was very friendly with Albert Willis, who however he has developed since, was at that time a staunch pioneer in the O.B.U. movement, I saw him and heard the actual truth of the conference.

I was not surprised, as this smart method of evading issues was a common practice of the A.W.U. officials in Queensland as elsewhere. At last the inevitable happened. The conference broke down, wrecked (according to the A.W.U. delegates) on a demand from Tom Walsh that coloured aliens should not be barred from membership of the O.B.U. This was the last straw to the overburdened camel's back and was made to appear as a deliberate and diabolical attempt to break down the untouchable White Australia Policy.

Dunstan challenged me "as the strongest advocate of coloured labour on the convention," to approve of such a principle. I replied that I sensed that this "White Australia" bogey was just a red herring brought to the convention to smash the conference. That I was not going to be trapped into a coloured labour controversy, but was prepared at any time, whatever the consequences, to state my position with regard to coloured aliens. A motion was moved for the adoption of the committee's report, to which I moved the following amendment:

"In view of the unsatisfactory and fruitless nature of the A.W.U. One Big Union Committee's report, and its failure to bring forward a scheme embodying the principles of real industrial organisation, a ballot of the members of the A.W.U. be immediately taken on the question of the A.W.U. adopting the O.B.U. scheme as embodied in the constitution of the Workers' Industrial Union of Australia."

To my intense surprise the president, A. Blakeley, after I had spoken to the amendment for a few minutes, ruled the amendment out of order. When I objected and recalled his assent previous to my intended action, he retorted: “We have finished with the O.B.U., it has been debated here for three weeks, and you can move disagreement with my ruling if you want to.” I did so, but, of course, the machine majority did its work. During that convention the chairman’s ruling was challenged by the militants no less than 25 times – and his ruling, however tyrannous or unjust, upheld in every instance.

So ended the A.W.U. convention fight over the O.B.U. in which the militants suffered their usual reverse. But within the year the revolt of the rank and file of the organisation against the stubborn resistance of the official authority to even honestly consider the ever increasing demand for a more class conscious organisation, assumed a strength that threatened the complete disruption of the A.W.U. in all States. So with an unblushing change of front, the A.W.U. coterie accepted for the time being, the detested O.B.U. system of industrial organisation and agreed to co-operate with other unions on this question.

There are, however, methods more obscure than open hostility to outwit an enemy and after the new organisation had apparently been safely established on an impregnable basis, by one swift, audacious move, the A.W.U., or rather, its head officials, wrecked the whole structure, and to the present day the O.B.U. remains an unfulfilled dream in the realms of Australian unionism.

The principal and popular objection raised by the A.W.U. to the O.B.U. was its revolutionary preamble and frank condemnation of the whole system of capitalism. This was, of course, in noticeable contrast to the bourgeoise Arbitration Court mentality and Reformative Labour Parties to which the A.W.U. was so closely allied.

Herewith is the preamble and objects of the much maligned O.B.U. – and its working class basis is unassailable:

"We, hold that there is a class struggle in society, and that the struggle is caused by the capitalist class owning the means of production, to which the working class must have access in order to live. The working class produce all value. The greater the share which the capitalist class appropriates, the less remains for the working class, therefore the interests of these two classes are in constant conflict.

"There can be no peace as long as want and hunger are found among millions of working people, and the few who constitute the employing class have all the good things of life.

"Between these two classes the struggle must continue until capitalism is abolished. Capitalism can only be abolished by the workers uniting in one class-conscious economic organisation to take the means of production by revolutionary industrial and political action. "Revolutionary action" means action to secure a complete change, namely, the abolition of capitalistic ownership of the means of production – whether privately or through the State – and the establishment in its place of social ownership by the whole community. Long experience has proved the hopeless futility of existing political and industrial methods, which aim at mending and rendering tolerable, and thereby perpetuating, capitalism – instead of ending it.

"The rapid accumulation of wealth and concentration of the ownership of industries into fewer and fewer hands, make the Trade Unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class, because craft unionism fosters conditions which allow the employer to pit one set of workers against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby defeating each in turn.

> "The conditions can be changed, and the interests of the working class advanced, only by an organisation so constituted that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries, shall take concerted action when deemed necessary, thereby making an injury to one the concern of all."

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The close grip of the officials on the majority of delegates attending the annual A.W.U. conventions was constantly in evidence. I cannot recall any major question that came before the convention covering a period of eight years that Grayndler, Barnes, Blakeley, Dunstan, Lambert, Bailey and their henchmen did not score a victory.

All A.W.U. members had the right to appeal to the convention against any penalties or decisions imposed by branch executives. It soon became self evident to me that it was a case of appealing from Caesar to Caesar as invariably the majority of the convention, after hearing the "heads," dismissed the appeal.

There was always a strong militant minority to advocate a more virile working class policy for the A.W.U. and to endeavour to break down the sectional hostility and bitterness of other unions which then, as now, seemed to be a bedrock principle of the organisation machine. But it was all in vain. We found that the citadel of bureaucratic control and dispensation of favours was too strong and unscrupulous.

An instance of the reactionary character of the convention was manifested in 1918, when, after a bitter debate a motion to agitate against the compulsory clauses of the Defence Act (really a dishonest system of conscription), was defeated. All the "old guards," including Riordan, Dunstan, Lambert, Bailey, and Senator Barnes, rallied to the support of the militarists and did not hesitate to indulge in the usual vitriolic attack on the militants which was a marked feature of the conventions. It seems inconceivable that while purely political (A.L.P.) conferences in three or four of the States had at this time repudiated compulsory militarism, that a union that plumed itself on being the most

advanced in the Commonwealth, should openly declare itself as antagonistic to this powerful weapon of imperial capitalism.

Resolutions that in any way sought to curtail the power and influence of officials and union members of Parliament were ruthlessly slaughtered and the unfortunate delegates who dared to defy the official juggernaut were derided as “limelighters” and denounced as sham democrats.

These efforts to restrict the governing clique were referred to as “hardy annuals,” as at every convention such resolutions came from the rank and file in all States.

I always objected to union officials who were elected to Parliament retaining their official positions in their union. Notwithstanding that the Labour movement comprises political and industrial wings, there is always a conflict of interests, more of less pronounced, between the two sections. The Labour politician, ever seeking the line of least resistance, and his vote catching propensities developed to an abnormal degree, obviously is opposed, openly or secretly, to any revolutionary or even militant demands of the workers through their unions. I told conventions that no one objected to a union Labour politician as such, but I resented an industrialist who wanted to be a politician retaining official position in a union for the purpose of enhancing his prestige and privileges.

The president of the A.W.U., Senator Barnes, never failed to castigate those who presumed to limit the right of politicians to hold office in a union, and indignantly repudiated any suspicion that the great A.W.U. would ever be made by him subordinate to Labour politics. Yet, within a few years, he became the classical example of the Labour politician serving two masters. When the Federal Government submitted three constitutional questions to ‘a referendum, the Federal Labour Party – of which Senator Barnes was a member – resolved to support the three proposals. The A.W.U. declared its policy in opposition to one of the three questions. Here was a direct and vital conflict of interest and opinion between Labour-in-Politics and the largest union in Australia, of which Barnes was president.

What allegiance did Senator Barnes give to the A.W.U. of which he was president? He stayed in the camp of his political associates and ignored the policy of the A.W.U.!

This position was reviewed by the delegates at the next annual convention held at Katoomba. Barnes frankly admitted (he could not do otherwise) that he had been in a very unpleasant and worrying predicament, having to choose between two loyalties. He said he had decided to "loyally" support the A.L.P. as against the A.W.U.! One would think that if a union Labour man found himself in this position, that he would immediately resign from the presidency of the union whose will he had flouted. But this procedure does not appeal to the sense of A.W.U. officials or their code of morals and Barnes retained his presidential office. Stranger still, the A.W.U. convention and apparently the rank and file, did not turn him down but allowed him to retain his high office in the union!

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With a persistence worthy of a better cause, this A.W.U. hierarchy pursued with vindictive malice those members who had incurred the enmity of the inner circle and openly criticised and fought the reactionary officials. Arthur Rae, one of the pioneers of the A.W.U., who had served gaol sentences in his lifelong devotion to the A.W.U. and the whole working class, was a particular object for venom by Grayndler, Bailey and Co. Rae, disgusted with the cowardice and treachery of Labour politicians in New South Wales, had, with other honest men and women, joined what was termed by the crooked A.L.P. machine, the Breakaway Party. This was an opportunity eagerly seized upon by those who desired to persecute and discredit Rae because of his militancy. He was summoned to "explain his action" to the 1918 Sydney A.W.U. convention, evidently on the grounds that as the A.W.U. was affiliated with the Australian Labour Party, he had committed an unpardonable crime by deserting a corrupt Labour Party. However, no charge could be sustained against Rae and he was leaving the convention without a stain on his character when Grayndler, the secretary, said: "Half a minute. Mr. Rae, have you signed this pledge?" The pledge referred to had, at the instigation of the Australian

executive, been endorsed by the convention after a fruitless effort by the militant minority to save the organisation from the disgrace of adopting a method whereby to still further hamstring any unwanted rebels. The following is the pledge, which is still embodied in the constitution of the AW.U.:

> "I hereby pledge myself to, at all times, loyally and conscientiously carry out the constitution and policy of the A.W.U., as laid down by the executive council and the annual convention from time to time; and, furthermore, I will not join any body or organisation which is opposed to the policy of the A.W.U., nor will I assist in the advocacy of any policy which is in contravention to that of the A.W.U."

The real insidiousness of this "test of loyalty" is not fully indicated in its phraseology as it does not clearly define its meaning – or its purpose. If the pledge was restricted to the industrial constitution, and policy of the union it would at least come within the orbit of a trade union organisation, although it could and would be applied and interpreted in a tyrannous and arbitrary manner by a reactionary executive or convention to stifle all opposition or remove "undesirable" members.

But the policy of the A.W.U. as set forth in this precious pledge also embraces any political activities or organisation such as the then Socialist League or the present Communist Party, whose outlook and methods are in advance of the Australian Labour Party. It was not that there was any difference in the ultimate goal of the A.W.U., at least in theory, and the oft boasted declarations of its leaders, and more progressive organisations, but only a difference in tempo and methods. But according to the A.W.U. any working class divergence from the infantile and flabby A.L.P. had to be regarded and treated as gross disloyalty to an organisation that presumptuously posed as the great champion of industrial unionism – the O.B.U.

Thus the pledge was deliberately concocted to penalise Rae, who was a member of the Socialist Party, and all others who were dissatisfied with the bona-fides of the A.L.P. as a genuine Labour Party. As Rae was not now

working in any industry covered by the A.W.U., retaining his membership as an “agent” as provided for by the Federal Arbitration Court, his refusal to sign the pledge also automatically severed his life-long membership of the A.W.U.

Before the vote on the pledge was taken I asked the chairman, A. Blakeley, if it meant the prohibition of any official joining any Socialist or other working class political party other than the A.L.P. He replied very emphatically that was what it meant.

I said that I was under no delusions as to its outrageous meaning, but I wanted the delegates to fully realise the damnable thing they were asked to vote for. But the whip had been cracked and the pledge was adopted.

Jack Cullinan was another of the intended victims of the pledge. But Martens, Kelly, and I had lunch with him and urged him not to walk into the trap set for him by Bailey, Lambert, Grayndler and others. He vowed he would never sign it. However, we succeeded in making him promise to sign the pledge by pointing out that he would be scabbing on the stalwarts who elected him to office and convention to wage uncompromising war on the official junta.

When the convention met in the afternoon, Cullinan, in reply to the chairman, said he would sign the pledge. Bailey could not conceal his bitter chagrin and disappointment and denounced Cullinan as a twister and backslider of the lowest type. But we only laughed and enjoyed the discomforture of Bailey and his associates.

But the mills of the A.W.U. bureaucracy, though sometimes they grind slowly, yet sooner or later crush their victims. Unable to defeat Cullinan at the annual ballots as secretary of the Western (Armidale) branch or to in any other way prevent him holding office, it was brilliantly conceived that his elimination could be effected by the abolition of the Western branch office. This was done without any qualms and plenty of hypocritical reasons why it was in the “best interests of the organisation,” and Cullinan, like Othello, found his occupation gone, much to the joy of his enemies.

* * *

While the A.W.U. was pursuing its vendetta against all and sundry who sought to galvanise the Australian Labour Movement and to put some life into the decaying bodies of its leaders, there was a very widespread and growing dissatisfaction in the ranks of unionism at the obsolete policy and objective of the Australian Labour Party. In the course of the war years and immediately afterwards the party had almost entirely abandoned its original purpose as an uncompromising political body to challenge and eventually supplant the capitalist system and establish the Socialist State. Indeed, in many respects there was little difference in outlook and method between the opposing forces of Capitalist and Labour in the parliamentary arena. In New South Wales this dissatisfaction had gone so far as to find expression in a breakaway party in open hostility to the A.L.P.

Recognising the serious danger this revolt of the workers was to the prosperity and well-being of Labour politicians, the members of the Federal executive of the A.L.P., in the early part of 1921, took a bold and unique action in convening an All Australian Trades Union congress to formulate a programme that would embody the desires and political aspirations of Australian trade unionism. The congress was to place its decisions before the A.L.P. executive for the consideration and acceptance or rejection of a later A.L.P. conference. This convening of such a trade union congress by a political Labour Party is the only case on record, and clearly indicates the sorry position of the Labour politicians and their desperate venture by this plan to rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the disgusted workers, who were, and are still, regarded by the majority of Labour politicians as useful and necessary voting machines whereby to secure power and prestige.

On first receiving the invitation from the A.L.P, some of the large and militant unions regarded the proposal with natural suspicion and not important enough to give it serious consideration. J. M. Baddley and A. C. Willis, president and secretary of the militant and powerful Coal and Shale Workers' Union, took this view. I was particularly friendly with them, as with all those who were keen advocates of the O.B.U., and pointed out that if all the

progressive unions abstained from attending the congress, the drafting of a policy would be in the hands of the craft and politically swayed unions. One could easily imagine what sort of a policy would emanate from such a congress, and how eagerly it would be adopted by the A.L.P. as the declared policy of Australian trade unionism.

I convinced Willis of the importance of the congress, which met in Melbourne in June, 1921, and was attended by delegates from the big majority of the important unions and represented 700,000 unionists.

I had the very good fortune to be present as one of the two representatives of the Queensland branch of the A.W.U., although I had not succeeded in being elected by the Queensland branch executive. W. J. Riordan, president, and W. J. Dunstan, secretary, were elected delegates, but, the day before leaving Brisbane for Melbourne, Dunstan was selected by the Q.C.E. as Labour candidate for the Maranoa Federal electorate, which had been rendered vacant by the death of Jim Page, M.H.R. The congress was presided over by the then president of the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, E. J. Holloway, now M.H.R., who was also president of the A.L.P. Executive. In his opening speech the president outlined the reasons for which the congress had been convened, and stated that there had been lightning changes all over the world, and the programme of the Australian Labour Party was considered by some members to be obsolete. The members of the Federal Executive, he said, knew that the mass of the workers was not satisfied with the programme and objective of the Australian Labour Movement. The A.L.P. Executive wanted to get from the trade union representatives an ultimatum as to what they really wanted. An A.L.P. conference would be held after the congress. There was a very exhaustive debate, extending over two days, on the question of the party's objective and fighting platform at this historic congress, and ultimately the now famous socialisation of industry, production, distribution, and exchange, objective and fighting platform drafted by a special committee was adopted.

As the Australian Labour Party has ignominiously failed during the years that have elapsed since the socialisation plank was adopted at the A.L.P. Federal conference in Brisbane, in October, 1921, and has, in fact, deliberately

evaded the issue and pursued an innocuous semi-capitalist non-working-class policy, the following major portions of the congress decision is invaluable:

> 1. That, for the purpose of achieving the objective, industrial and Parliamentary machinery shall be utilised.
>
> 2. That, in recognition of the fact that this is an era of social production, this conference declares that craft organisation, as a workingclass weapon, is obsolete, and pledges itself, and all its future representatives, to organisation of the workers along the lines of industry, as shall be ‘decided by the Organisation Committee of this Conference.
>
> 3. The nationalisation of banking and all principal industries, and the municipalisation of such services and supplies as can best be operated in limited areas; adult franchise and extended powers to be granted municipalities for this purpose.
>
> 4. The government of nationalised industries by boards, upon which the workers in the industry and the community shall have representation.
>
> 5. The establishment of an elective Supreme Economic Council by all nationalised industries.
>
> 6. The setting up of Labour Research and Information Bureaux and of Labour Educational Institutions, in which the workers in the industry and the community shall be trained in the management of nationalised industries.
>
> 7. That the foregoing be sent to the Australian and New Zealand Labour Parties as a recommendation that it be the fighting plank of the platform, believing that only by the abolition of the capitalist system can working-class emancipation be achieved.

8. That all Parliamentary representatives be required to function as active propagandists of the Objective and methods of the Movement.

Another no less important question was also dealt with by the congress – that of trade union organisations and methods. Many divergent opinions and conflicting elements found expression in this vital problem, but eventually a detailed scheme of industrial unionism, in reality the O.B.U., was hammered out by a committee, of which I was a member, and adopted by an overwhelming majority. Unfortunately for the welfare and the credit of Australian Unionism, the sequel to this brave and encouraging showing in 1921 has borne little fruit. As the politician has sabotaged the socialisation plank, so almost in similar ratio have the unions failed to establish the O.B.U. Made the fierce battle ground of bitterly contending forces submerged in a vicious internecine warfare of ambitious and egotistical individuals, viewed with strong disfavour by reactionary politicians and union leaders alike, the high hopes of a sane and all-powerful trade union movement which were born at this congress, like many others – shall one say dreams? – have never yet been realised.

During the discussion on industrial organisation, “Jack” Crampton, as a visitor, was sitting next to two I.W.W.-ites, in the public gallery. Their remarks on the utterances of craft union advocates and orthodox Labour-in-politics adherents were lurid and entertaining. When I managed to get the chairman’s eye, and had a longed – for opportunity to passionately urge the cause of revolutionary industrial unionism, Crampton told me subsequently, the two I.W.W. comrades pricked up their ears. It was very cold, and I wore an old overcoat and, with grey hair and bald pate, must have appeared very old to anyone in the gallery. “Did you hear that?” exclaimed one I.W.W. to the other. “What do you think of that!

Why, the old chap with one foot in the grave – he sees the light!”

That was 18 years ago, and I suppose I must almost have two feet in the grave now. But I still see the light – “the light that was never yet on land or

sea," but burns forever in the hearts of men and women of all time and ages who love their fellow men, and are ever ready to strike a blow for human freedom."

Chapter XXI.
Socialisation Plank Sabotaged.

In consequence of this Congress came the Federal Conference of the Australian Labour Party, held at Brisbane in October, 1921. The principal purpose of the conference was to receive and consider the decisions relating to the political side of the movement, as adopted at the Melbourne Trade Union Congress.

With the exception of Queensland, perhaps one other State also, the various States had held conferences and instructed their delegate how to vote on the socialisation objective. The six Queensland delegates included E. G. Theodore, W. M. McCormack, L. McDonald, W. J. Riordan, D. Weir and W. Demaine. I was anxious to be one of the delegates, but, of course, could not get elected by the Q.C.E. The Victorian delegates included J. Scullin and Maurice Blackburn. The Tasmanian branch sent only three delegates on the score of expense, but, in reality, because the executive was opposed to the socialisation proposal, while the Tasmanian A.L.P. conference had instructed its delegates to vote for it. J. McDonald, one of the delegates who was an A.W.U. delegate at the Sydney convention, and had been a hard-hitting and consistent militant, asked me if I would act as a proxy delegate for Tasmania if he could get the authority of the Tasmanian executive. I readily agreed, but it was not before the third day of the conference that the authority to appoint me was granted.

I had been an interested listener to the conference proceedings from the commencement, and heard with resentment and indignation Theodore's plausible attack on the socialisation proposal, and his stubborn defence of the old platform. It was my old comrade, R. S. Ross, who was a proxy delegate for Westralia, who courageously took up the gauntlet so sneeringly thrown down by Theodore, as the champion of reactionary Labour policies. In denouncing the decision of the Melbourne congress, Theodore said that if it was adopted

the Labour Party might as well change its name to the Communist Party, as that was really what was the true meaning of the socialist programme. However, it was carried by 22 votes to 10, Theodore and McCormack voting with the minority. A motion to place the socialisation plank in the forefront of the fighting platform was rejected in favour of an amendment to refer the matter to a committee.

Some time previous to the conference, Theodore had addressed a meeting of A.W.U. members on industrial organisation, in which he had without any equivocation declared that syndicalism was the one and only certain system of society that would enable the workers to destroy capitalism and inaugurate the proletarian state. His exposition of syndicalism was the most concise and convincing that I had ever heard, and made one wonder if Theodore was actually a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of politics. At that same meeting this political weathercock extolled the literature that I, through the A.W.U. literature committee, had been instrumental in circulating throughout Queensland in the face of the bitterest opposition of Theodore, as president of the A.W.U. He stated that such working-class literature was the first essential in the education of members of the union in the truth and necessity of revolutionary methods, such as syndicalism, also that it was the intention of the A.W.U. to still further avail itself of propaganda by means of working-class literature.

With a vivid remembrance of this revolutionary declaration of Theodore, in amazing contrast with his intense antagonism to the socialisation plank, I took my seat at the A.L.P. conference. There were only two vacant chairs at the conference table, one next to Theodore, and the other next to Mrs. Kate Dwyer, of New South Wales, one of the strongest orthodox supporters of “sane” Labour politics. Of two evils I chose the lesser, and became the neighbour – but not the colleague – of Mrs. Dwyer. Within a short time I got an opportunity to speak, and craving the delegates to allow me some latitude owing to not being on the conference from the commencement, I scathingly criticised Theodore on his role as high priest of reaction. All the indignation with which I had listened to his diatribes in denouncement of any progressive

change in political Labour found angry expression in my attack. I related the incident of his syndicalist address in the same building, emphasising the fact that syndicalism was a much more revolutionary policy than socialisation, and scornfully designated him as an outstanding example of a reactionary Labour politician. Theodore, to his credit, did not interject or attempt to contravert my statements, though one or two of his associates appealed to the chairman, "Billy" Demaine, to rule me out of order. Demaine, however, let me proceed probably he, like many others, considered that Theodore deserved some castigation. Later, as I was sitting away from the conference table, Dave Weir, M.L.A., one of the Queensland delegates who had sat silent for two days without protesting against Theodore's attitude, came to me and said: 'I am glad you attacked Theodore, he richly deserved it and it may do him good." I remarked that I now doubted whether it was actually worth while or of any use to take Theodore too seriously.

On the last morning of the conference, Bob Ross, who was on the committee appointed with Theodore and two others to arrange the form in which the conference decisions should be placed in the A.L.P. platform, informed me that despite his strong dissent, the committee was recommending that the socialisation plank and the methods to secure same be an objective and not on the fighting platform. Ross agreed with me that this would render the whole question negative and absolutely ineffective. When a motion for the adoption of the report was moved, Maurice Blackburn forestalled me in moving an amendment to the effect that the first plank of the fighting platform be socialisation of industry with the methods agreed to wherewith to bring it into operation. He pointed out that the conference had simply wasted its time in discussing socialisation if it was to be relegated to the obscurity of a pious objective.

It was idle to pass resolutions unless they were to be the fighting platform at the subsequent elections. What the Trade Union congress wanted and what the conference had actually done was to revolutionise the Labour Party, and the objective adopted was immediate Socialistic proposals.

In seconding the amendment I said that the report absolutely nullified what the conference had been discussing all the week. The Trade Union Congress had laid down a definite political fighting platform with socialisation as its basis and for the conference to shirk the issue by relegating this vital principle of a genuine working class programme was not only cowardly, but dishonest. I said that experience had clearly shown that Labour Party objectives were not regarded seriously by Labour politicians when seeking for votes at election campaigns. If the socialisation plank was to be made an objective it would undoubtedly have the same fate as other objectives. It would be pigeon-holed, apologised for or flagrantly ignored by delegates sitting at this conference who were either Labour members or aspiring Labour politicians. I stated an extreme case as to what would happen in the future if socialisation was not adopted as the fighting platform. The case I presented was unanswerable, it was not answered by any succeeding speaker and I optimistically thought that reason and honesty would prevail against political expediency. But I was sadly mistaken. The amendment to make Socialisation the fighting plank was defeated on a division by 20 votes to 11. All the Queensland and New South Wales delegates voted against the amendment.

The history of the socialisation objective of the A.L.P. since the 1921 conference needs little comment. It is a discreditable one and every forecast I made at the conference has been justified. Socialisation, instead of being an inspiring slogan of a genuine Labour Party, has become a byword amongst Labour's enemies, a cheap plaything for the politicians to tickle the ears of the groundlings, even while they are subserviently making obeisance to the capitalist state.

It needs no investigation to reveal for all to see how far the Australian Labour Party has drifted from its Socialist objective to become a servile catspaw of capitalist finance and vested interests. All my dire prognostications of the fate of the Socialisation objective at the hands of vote snaring Labour politicians have come to pass. Even such a non-revolutionary union as the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen, in its official journal of the Queensland branch, in a leader (July, 1938), thus frankly reviews the

A.L.P. relation to the Socialist objective: “Fifty years ago the slogan of the Labour movement was ‘Socialism in our time.’ Today political Labour relegates Socialism to the background. The word socialism is never mentioned by Labour candidates at political campaigns. At the recent Mackay Labour-in-Politics convention, a motion to give greater prominence to this as the objective of the Party was defeated. The implications to be drawn from present day trends is that Political Labour is not Socialist.” After pointing out how the A.L.P. has utterly failed to even introduce any real social reforms in the interests of the masses, the article states: “This clearly indicates that the Political Labour Party is pandering to the supporters of capitalism, and is not much concerned with the socialisation of production, distribution, and exchange.”

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In the following June (1922), the All Australian Trades Union Congress again assembled in Melbourne to review the decisions of the A.L.P. Brisbane conference and the response of the unions to the programme adopted at the 1921 Trade Union Congress. The report of the president, E. J. Holloway, revealed that the high hopes of a united Australian Labour Movement and an honest acceptance of the progressive policy laid down had to a very large degree not been fulfilled.

In his opening address, the president stated: “that the old tooth and claw policy in more than one State, is still the order of the day, and, of course, with the inevitable result, to the disgrace and downfall of the workers’ movement.”

Despite the efforts of Riordan and Dunstan to prevent me getting selected as one of the A.W.U. delegates to the conference, I was elected, owing to a cross vote, at a full meeting of the Queensland branch executive.

Although the congress adopted the objective and methods adopted by the Federal Convention at Brisbane, there was evinced a very strong resentment by the militant section of the congress at the Brisbane convention’s attitude and an amendment was moved repudiating the reactionary revision of the All Australian Trade Union Congress policy by the Brisbane A.L.P. conference.

As could be anticipated, the A.W.U. delegation, with its representation from all parts of the Commonwealth, was in bitter opposition to the detested “reds” and as usual I found myself as the sole A.W.U. delegate in the camp of the “enemy.”

One of the most vital questions dealt with by the congress related to a long standing, bitter dispute that existed between Dwyer Gray and the A.W.U. executive in connection with the position of the Hobart “World,” the property of the A.W.U. and from the editorship of which Dwyer Gray had been dismissed. The dispute had extended far beyond the confines of Tasmania and was seriously disrupting the whole trade union movement. The congress debate brought into startling perspective the unrestrained hostility existing between the A.W.U. and the militant unions and delegates. The A.W.U. delegates, Grayndler, Barnes, Blakeley, Riordan and Co., expressed uncompromising antagonism to the congress daring to interfere with A.W.U. affairs. But the fight went on. A motion to reinstate Dwyer Gray as editor of the Hobart “World” was lost by 76 votes to 70.

A motion was moved to appoint a committee of seven to include in its duties “to enquire into the question of the dismissal of Dwyer Gray from the Hobart “World” newspaper, with the object of finding a satisfactory solution of the differences between the parties.”

The A.W.U. delegates were furious. I said to Riordan: “If you and the A.W.U. delegates continue to act and speak like this you will break up the congress.” “That’s what we want to do,” he retorted. When the vote was being taken after a tense and heated debate, Jack Hanlon, editor of the Queensland “Worker,” who, being present in Melbourne, was appointed as an extra Queensland delegate to which the branch was entitled, said: “I must vote for this” and started to walk across the floor of the council chamber with me to record our votes. Riordan called out to Hanlon: “Where the hell are you going? Come back here!” and Hanlon “came back” like a lamb!

After the vote had been taken and the motion carried, I was having a quiet smoke outside in the corridor and met J. Howie, the militant president of the

Sydney Trades and Labour Council. He said: “You are having a rough time with the A.W.U.; it must be very hard.” I agreed, remarking that I had been in the same position and fight for about ten years.

At the conclusion of that conference I felt that I never again wanted to attend a Labour conference. The vindictiveness and bitterness voiced by conflicting delegates had been appalling and made one wonder if it was possible to subdue the warring elements so that the interests of the workers as a whole would be the sole consideration instead of the triumph of cliques and the gratified egotism of blatant individuals.

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During my visits to Melbourne and Sydney, I came in contact with very many of the officials and leaders of the Trade Union movement as well as Labour members. My degree of friendship with them was naturally measured by a similarity of ideas and mutual advocacy of well defined working class principles. Included in the close friends I made was the colourful Frank Anstey. We had much in common and when he passed through Brisbane at various times, he always was a welcome visitor to “Cosme.” Anstey was quite with me about the corruption existing in the ranks of Labour politicians and politics generally. He did not spare himself in his vivid and picturesque fulminations regarding political scheming and dishonesty and approached the question in an undoubted pessimistic and cynical point of view.

Our home in Brisbane seemed to be the centre of call of delegates and visitors to Queensland who came within the category of rebels. “Cosme” was an open house to these kindred spirits, though unhappily few are left today who have scorned the fleshpots of Egypt and retained their one-time faith. Jack Beasley, Judge Foster, F. Riley Monk, J. Smith, F. Hyatt, T. Walsh, P. Lamb, George Dale, Wallace, are a few of those I remember as welcome southern visitors and some of the memories are redolent of pleasant and happy times.

“Bob” Ross, however, was never displaced in the warmest corner of the home and heart of Mrs. Lane and myself. Very few, even of his intimate

friends, know the amazing work for the Labour movement that “Bob” Ross carried on throughout his life. Never blessed with robust health, he attacked and accomplished many seemingly impossible tasks. Of an extremely loveable character, Bob never failed a friend – or a stranger for that matter – in their hour of need - and could be relied upon to help any lame dog over a stile. With unceasing energy he gave of his best to the working class and his lifelong devotion and untiring work for the cause he loved so well is writ large on the imperishable history of the Australian Labour movement.

His wife was a real helpmate and in absolute accord with Bob’s work. It is fitting indeed that the two sons, Lloyd and Edgar, should take up the torch so selflessly carried by their father for the many years and give their undoubted literary and other gifts to the cause of the workers.

Bob and I were continually planning – and dreaming – in earlier days when there was need and hope of dreams coming true. One of our cherished ambitions was to establish a Socialist book depot and publishing house. We often talked of it, but, like many other dreams it never blossomed into a glorious reality, due only to lack of money and adverse circumstances in other directions.

*** * ***

In later years I sometimes disagreed with Ross’s philosophy and attitude, but always recognised his absolute honesty and that his love for his fellow humans was unfaltering. He has an exalted opinion of me – and of my abilities and was anxious to get many of my “Jack Cade” articles published in book form. It was through his persistency and great help that I, or rather Ross, published as a book a number of articles I had written at various times on industrial unionism, under the title of “One Big Union.” It was published while the military had censorship power. The articles were ruthlessly censored. Bob had a trying experience and vowed he would not handle another book while the military censorship remained.

So the “One Big Union” was published and had a good circulation among the unions. But the O.B.U. is still a figment of the imagination; craft unionism

is still supreme in Australia and it almost seems that all the O.B.U. propaganda was cast to the winds, wasted and futile.

Bob was keen on re-publishing in book form “Men and Events,” articles I had written on working class leaders, poets, and epochal events. But this desired book has never emerged from the realms of desire and there now seems no probability that it will.

*** * ***

Another, but very different close associate for many years, Tom Walsh, I saw much of since returning from Paraguay. In the old Vanguard days, Walsh had been an active member and as a seaman on the Queensland coast had acted as an enthusiastic distributor of Socialist literature. On our journey to South America, Mrs. Lane and I spent much of our last days in Sydney with Walsh.

During the war years and for some years afterwards Tom Walsh, as revolutionary agitator and general president of the powerful Seamen’s Union, was the stormy petrel of Australian unionism. As a very old friend, with a similar outlook, we often discussed the possibilities of the unions adopting a more militant attitude and declaring for the bigger unionism.

In searing contrast with his ultimate abandonment of all decent unionism or militant activities it is interesting to recall his statement of policy at the 1921 A.W.U. conventions. Walsh attended on invitation to state his and the Seamen’s Union’s views regarding difficulties in the way of a proposed amalgamation with the A.W.U.

Walsh said that he had not seen any attempt on the part of the A.W.U. to amend its constitution so as to meet the revolutionary phase of the movement which the Seamen’s Union represented. The Seamen’s Union was a revolutionary body, and an organisation that was going to absorb it would have to be as revolutionary as they were. The attitude of the seamen began and ended with the declaration of uncompromising revolutionaryism. Again, the

A.W.U. allowed politicians to hold office in their union. The Seamen were against that.

Also the A.W.U. had adopted the principle of arbitration. The Seamen would not have arbitration, maintaining that there was nothing to arbitrate about. In addition to politicians, no man who had been associated with the naval or military forces or the police could hold office in this organisation.

And elaborating on these lines, Walsh declared himself an uncompromising revolutionist. During one of his frequent visits to Brisbane on union business he stayed with us at "Cosme" for a couple of weeks. Every night in true seaman fashion, he walked up and down the long living room, foreshadowing how the workers' revolution would be brought about and how it could be carried on and the dictatorship of the proletariat established.

When later the A.W.U. had, forced by circumstances, taken initial steps in the direction of inauguration of a genuine O.B.U., I vainly endeavoured at Walsh's home, at Willoughby, Sydney, to induce him and his union to join the new organisation. He stubbornly refused to consider any O.B.U. that was affiliated with the Australian Labour Party. I said that I had the same deep rooted objection to the A.L.P. as he had, but, after all, affiliation with the A.L.P. was a small matter compared to the bigger issue and with the advent of the Seamen and other militant unions into the O.B.U., would be soon rejected. I urged that there was a great opportunity at that particular time to form the O.B.U. which, if not taken advantage of, would postpone the O.B.U. for 20 or 30 years.

Mrs. Adela Walsh said: "I think Mr. Lane is right, Tom." But it was all in vain. Within a short time the same Tom Walsh was, in the Seamen's "Journal," the perfervid advocate in a heated controversy for the Seamen's Union to affiliate with the A.L.P..

One more spotlight on the staunch working class representative Walsh was before his notorious betrayal of his life-long principles and activities. I have a letter from Walsh dated September, 1925. The British Seamen's strike was in

full swing in which the Australian Seamen's Union was involved. It was intended by the Federal Government to deport Walsh and Johnson on account of their activities in connection with the strike.

Walsh wrote to me with regard to getting all books, documents, copies of letters, or anything in the Seamen's Union office in Brisbane that might be of use to the authorities in their search for necessary evidence to deport. Continuing, Walsh said that his deportation should not be allowed to affect any efforts to win the strike for the British Seamen. The deportation stunt should not be allowed to supersede the greater issue – to win the strike. "Deportation or no deportation," he wrote, "there must be no compromise on this question of a reduction of the wages of our fellow seamen." After expressing some thoughts on the general working class position, Walsh concluded:

"All efforts must be concentrated on winning the strike for the British Seamen, because the deportations arise out of the strike. It is essential to win the strike even if a thousand of us had to suffer deportation. If the strike is won Bruce will be defeated, and we will all be invited to return one day. But in the meantime, win the strike. Win the strike must be our slogan, and nothing must be permitted to intrude itself on this great issue."

Yours for Freedom,
Thos. Walsh.

Today Tom Walsh and his wife Adela are the pets of the workers' enemies, on the payroll of the very people and institutions that Walsh regarded and fought as instruments of the devil to torture and exploit the workers!

Many of the men I once knew as good rebels, class conscious working class advocates, have sold out to the enemy or recanted their former beliefs. But just as Walsh was one of my closest comrades, so is he also tragically the outstanding example I know of working class apostasy.

On returning from the Melbourne congress, I encountered in the corridor of the Melbourne-Sydney train yet another of my old comrades-in-arms, Jim

Dooley, the Labour Premier of New South Wales. He had been an active member of the old Queensland Social Democratic Vanguard and prior to, and on my return from South America, I had visited him. But although I was in Sydney frequently, once Dooley had developed into the traditional Labour leader with their conscienceless betrayal of the Labour Movement, as I saw it, I carefully avoided meeting him. I have always acted similarly towards all my one time close associates whenever they crossed the border of expediency into the realms of darkness, of worldly honours and preferment. For what is the use of consorting with men who have not hesitated to choose the easy pathways of life even though they lose their own souls in the process? They would merely attempt to justify their actions and salve their own conscience with sophistry and self-deception. Besides, I have scornful contempt for all these seducers and recreants of the Labour Movement.

Dooley was delighted to meet me again, and in a moment of frankness caused by past disturbing memories said: “It is no use, Ernie; you had great hopes of me in the old Vanguard days, but it is too late. I have gone the way of all flesh. I have got fatter in more ways than one.” So we parted.

Another Dooley, J. B., who, as organiser of the N.S.W. Railway branch of the A.W.U., had attended the annual conventions, and as a fiery rebel against the bureaucracy, had earned his martyr’s crown, also went the “way of all flesh.” He became one of the New South Wales Labour Senators in the Federal House. After a lapse of some years, I met him in Brisbane at the Labour Day smoke function, which I was reporting for the “Daily Standard,” at which he was one of the “distinguished guests.”

When I greeted him, I remarked, referring to his physique, that he had changed. Thinking I meant mentally, he said: “Yes, I’ve changed alright. I got in out of the wet. You’ve got to do it, Ernie, if you ever want to get anywhere. I with my old revolutionary ideas, or you, while you retain them will, for all time be persecuted and crushed by the machine. I realised that - and here I am.”

Yet another tragic and even more extreme example of this rakes' progress of erstwhile working class fighters, "Tom" Mutch, who I first knew as sub-editor of the "Sydney Worker." Mutch was gifted in many ways and I was greatly attracted to this young, enthusiastic Labourite. His descent into the maelstrom of politics was rapid and devastating. Labour member, Labour Minister, renegade Labour member and finally selected and elected as Tory member for one of the "gift" seats of the Nationalist party in New South Wales.

I could continue recording similar instances of which these are some outstanding examples.

But I get tired – and oh! so heartsick in recalling the recreancy of one-time Labour stalwarts – the most insidious curse of the working class movement.

Chapter XXII.
Inauguration of the O.B.U.

In January, 1922, the inaugural convention of the One Big Union was held in Sydney. The A.W.U., Coal and Shale Federation (Miners) and the Waterside Workers' Federation, were the three organisations represented, being the only unions that had adopted the Workers' Industrial Union programme and system of organisation.

Despite the opposition of the A.W.U. heads to the new and more revolutionary unionism, the insistent demand of its members had broken through the hitherto impregnable ring of the "old guard" and under this duress a ballot had been taken on the O.B.U. scheme, the result being, for, 18,649; against, 3,889; a majority in favour of 14,760. The ballot submitted had contained as the preamble and objects of the proposed O.B.U. the one made famous by the I.W.W., which the A.W.U. officials had so scornfully rejected. It was a nauseous pill to swallow, but it had to be swallowed.

At this convention, differences existing between the two sections were exhaustively discussed and agreement reached, the constitution adopted and the new organisation actually established. During the convention, Senator Barnes said that the three organisations represented 153,000 unionists, but them only. No organisation could challenge the registration on that basis. "Let them act on that principle by first linking themselves up definitely," he said. "Such a course would not then antagonise other unions, but rather would induce them to come in. To do otherwise would mean throwing down the gauntlet to hundreds of thousands of other unionists who should really be met with the hand of friendship. They should bring their own organisation solidly together first. If they did not it looked like playing for a defeat."

This question of registration in the Federal Arbitration Court under the name of the Australian Workers' Union, was discussed and it was definitely resolved that the registration should be sought to include only the three organisations as outlined by Senator Barnes.

The election of secretary resulted in the election of Barnes and the defeat of A. Willis, notwithstanding that for years the latter had been insistently propagating the O.B.U. scheme, while Barnes had just as consistently opposed it.

In a "Jack Cade" article I wrote on returning to Brisbane on the "One Big Union," I stressed the vital significance of this convention and unsuspectingly hailed it as the solid foundation of the O.B.U., which had been agitating the minds of Australian unionists for nearly a decade. I wrote in conclusion: "Therefore the foundation of all permanent working class achievements must spring from the workers' industrial organisation. The O.B.U. is the unanswerable and unassailable basis of any sane and scientific system of unionism and as such demands the enthusiastic support of all workers.

"The O.B.U. scheme drafted at the Sydney conference is not confined to those organisations which actually participated. It is open to every union to join in, take advantage of its provisions, and help to build up still more rapidly and effectively a One Big Union of workers which will be enabled to translate into reality the splendid and humanitarian objective of the Labour Party."

But despite all my years of experience of A.W.U. official methods whereby to sidetrack or obstruct any militant policies to which they might be antagonistic, I did not in the slightest degree visualise how the newly-born O.B.U. was going to be strangled at birth.

The amazing sequel to this launching of a virile O.B.U. was that the instructions of the convention to register the new organisation immediately, to cover the three unions only, was never carried out. Some months afterwards, Barnes, as secretary, applied to the Industrial Registrar, Mr. Stewart, for registration to include practically every trade in Australia, carpenters, engineers, railway workers, and so on!

Obviously there was only one result to this audacious and defeatist application. The unions who were already registered as the organisations legally covering the various callings, rightly objected to such a registration of

the O.B.U. The registration was, of course, refused by the Court – and that was the end of the O.B.U.

At the following A.W.U. convention, I asked Barnes by what right or by whose authority he made such an application. He submitted a long printed rigmarole wrapped up in legal phrases, asserting apparently that as the A.W.U. had members working in various callings, it was legally advised that to protect their interest these callings would have to be in the O.B.U. registration!

There are many ways of circumventing schemes and betraying policies other than that of at least honest, open hostility. The A.W.U. bad vainly sought to kill or deflect the O.B.U. by this method. They adopted the detested scheme and destroyed it through the Federal Arbitration Court registration. Yet, even to this day, A.W.U. officials with supreme audacity, will publicly declare that the A.W.U. was and is the only bona fide O.B.U. in the Commonwealth, for when they applied for its registration "all the loud mouthed militants and hypocritical O.B.U.-ites with the craft unions, rushed to the Federal Court to protest against the registration of the O.B.U."

*** * ***

It was during this period of stirring events, of desperate battle between the two opposing forces in the Labour Movement, that, as industrial writer on the "Daily Standard," I was writing "Jack Cade" articles that embodied much of the revolutionary thought of the Australian and World Workers. While these articles were a source of encouragement to the left wing, the politicians and "moderate" trade unionists did not view them with any favour.

The "Daily Standard" industrial page, published daily, was an outstanding feature of the paper and was eagerly read not only by workers but by many outside the ranks of Labour who, with radical tendencies, welcomed the international news and outlook which was one of the industrial page's greatest attractions.

I know of no other Labour daily newspaper that gave such regular prominence to industrial affairs as affecting the workers and while the

industrial page remained, the “Daily Standard” supplied a great need, justified its existence and commanded the attention – and the respect – of more than the workers.

With a never-failing determination to drive home the real lessons to be learnt from passing events, I averaged about four “Jack Cade” articles weekly and felt that I was helping to light the path that alone would lead the workers out of the maze in which they were apparently lost.

The then editor of the “Daily Standard,” J. V. MacDonald, who later was elected as one of the Queensland Labour Senators, always freely recognised the right of the unions, who created and owned the paper, to have an industrial page, also a special member of the literary staff to voice their point of view. He often strongly objected to the militant tone of my articles, but rarely to me personally, and he almost invariably allowed them to be published, sometimes much to his resentment.

On one of the few occasions in which MacDonald “interviewed” me over one of my articles, he exclaimed: “I am not going to allow you to make a Bolshevik paper out of the “Standard,” The policy of this paper is the policy laid down by the Labour-in-Politics Convention. You know Communism is a failure. It is a failure in Russia. You know it is a failure, you’ve been to Paraguay; anyway, you can’t preach Communism in the “Daily Standard.”

I mildly disclaimed any intention of making the “Standard” a Bolshevik paper. But I used to get the propaganda in just the same.

Another time MacDonald, objected to my articles. I argued that the unionists had rights and that I justly voiced the aspirations of that section of the movement. Also that my articles were not the policy of the paper, as that was contained in the leading articles. MacDonald admitted that was true, but, he added, “unfortunately a lot of people take your articles as the policy of the paper.”

On another occasion, following a State election in which the Labour Party was again elected as the Government, I wrote a critical article pointing out that

as there were now no votes to be gained or lost, it was time for a little plain speaking. I wrote (inter alia): “The tendency of Labour Ministers is to adopt an exclusive attitude and to indignantly resist so-called interference with the exalted powers and prestige so long attached to Parliamentary governments. As far as the workers are concerned, they are demanding a very definite recognition of their rights as the most important section of the community, which includes a direct voice in the framing of industrial legislation enacted by any Government whose existence is only rendered possible by the solid support of the organised workers. Any Labour Government which ignores the reasoned requests of unionists in this direction, which adopts a policy of exclusiveness in these matters, will not assist in consolidating the working class movement, but is seriously menacing the much desired united front.

“Labour governments should be anxious and glad to break down the age-rusted barriers which have hitherto made politics and parliaments a stilted phase of social life far removed from the toiling masses. There is no more divinity to hedge parliaments than kings when either these methods of government or the institutions themselves conflict with the workers’ demand for progress. The dignity and power of parliaments, as of all else in these days of revolutionary change, are conditioned and governed by the rate of progress and the desires of the workers.”

Alick Robertson, the sub-editor, informed me that MacDonald refused to publish this article as a “Jack Cade” article, but that he would allow it only to be published as an ordinary letter signed E. H. Lane.

As I was very anxious to have it inserted I agreed. I wrote an article on somewhat similar lines the following day, which met a like fate. At the Trades Hall I was asked if I had left the “Standard” seeing the signed letters. The next day I wrote another uncompromising militant article and sent a message to MacDonald that unless he published it as a “Jack Cade” article, uncensored, to return it to me and I would place the article – and the position – before the unions. The article was published as a “Jack Cade” article and I never had any further trouble in this direction while MacDonald was editor.

* * *

The managing director of the "Standard," Mat" McCabe, one time secretary of the Brisbane, branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation, resigned from that position in 1917. It was absolutely essential that the new manager should be a man who had not only ability but also the complete confidence of the unions. The "Standard" was facing a financial crisis and it was necessary to appeal to the unions for a levy or substantial financial assistance. I decided that the only person to do this work was Jack Crampton, Director of Labour. I placed the position before him. Unwillingly he agreed that it was his duty for the sake of the paper and the Labour movement to apply for the managership. He promised me he would do so. He kept his promise and sacrificed a highly placed and permanent Government position to do so. I know of no other prominent official in the Queensland Labour movement who would have acted similarly.

Theodore, who was very friendly with Crampton – and was also afraid of him as an able militant industrialist, endeavoured to dissuade him from throwing up his position as Director of Labour, but Crampton declined to follow the easier path.

Within two weeks of taking over the managership of the "Daily Standard," Crampton found that the financial position was more serious than anyone had imagined. News paper, owing to the war, had soared from £11 to £90 per ton. If I had known the real position, I don't think I would have tried to persuade my worst enemy to take the job. But Crampton never upbraided me for being the cause of his leaving a comfortable, sheltered position for a task that was overflowing with intense worry and responsibility. However, Crampton's appeal to the unions was very successful and many thousands of pounds were raised by levies. Two or three years later, while the "Standard" was not yet on an even keel, Crampton was offered a managerial position on a long established newspaper in Sydney at a salary of £1,000 annually. He was receiving £500 on the "Standard." I did not hear this rumoured. I saw the letter which definitely asked Crampton to take the position. He refused, saying that

he could not, or would not, leave the “Standard” until he had finished the job and its position was assured.

Such an act of abnegation on the part of a Labourite is surely unique, praiseworthy and deserves to be recorded.

Week in, week out, I penned the “Jack Cade” articles, deeply thankful that I was enabled to preach the fundamental truths of the Labour Movement, its international basis and the need of unceasing vigilance against the betrayals and treachery of miscalled Labour leaders.

After a State election when the Labour Government’s majority was reduced to four, Crampton interviewed Theodore, then Premier, with the object of obtaining more financial assistance for the “Standard” by increased Government advertisements. Crampton came to me and stated that Theodore had strongly objected to the “Jack Cade” articles. He said that throughout the election campaign in the north and west he had to answer the arguments and propaganda propounded in these articles. “You can’t expect me,” said Theodore to Crampton, “to, what practically amounts to subsidise the “Standard” while Lane is allowed to write such articles. If the Government had a bigger majority, it wouldn’t matter much, but we can’t afford to have the industrialists criticising and fighting us.” So Crampton said to me it would be better to “tone down” the “Jack Cade” articles for a few months until the “Standard” was in a better financial position. Otherwise in two months the paper would be closed up. He asked me to agree, but I said that if the editor or directors declined to publish my articles that was the end of the matter, as I had no power to compel them to do so.

*** * ***

On several occasions I had written scathing articles on the anti-working class utterances and sermons of various clergy of the Protestant churches in Queensland without any restriction or comment by MacDonald or others in authority.

A vicious and slanderous attack on the workers was later voiced by a prominent Roman Catholic prelate, Archbishop Duhig, and I, of course, wrote an article in rebuttal. It was not published. Robertson, sub-editor, said that it was useless to write criticisms or attacks on the Catholics. If one appeared, the "Daily Standard" building would be stormed and burnt!

"If that is the position," I said, "then I will never again criticise the utterances of Protestant clergy, however outrageous they may be. I object to giving any one sect or party exception from rightful criticism, and will not in that way penalise Protestant reactionaries."

Quite unexpectedly on my return from the 1922 Melbourne conference, I was offered the position of leader writer on the "Daily Standard," rendered vacant by the transfer of Max Ramsay to the sub-editorship of the Queensland "Worker." Alick Robertson came into my office and said: "Prepare yourself for a shock, MacDonald is determined to put you in the job of leader writer!" I replied: "Before I will take that position I will leave and tramp the country for a job." "Is that an ultimatum?" asked Robertson. "Yes; I have never yet written a line against my convictions or attempted to lead the workers up blind alleys and I certainly am not going to do it now."

Robertson argued in an endeavour to get me to take the job and it was then for the first time I saw, as in a glass, darkly, the real Robertson. I said: "I am astonished at you trying to persuade me to do something which you know is utterly wrong for anyone of my opinions to contemplate."

MacDonald saw me and for two hours endeavoured to shake my determination not to accept the leader writer's position. He pointed out that it was a higher salary, no night work and that I could still conduct the industrial page. I said I was not a journalist, but he replied that I was primarily a writer and that it would be a good thing for me and the paper. He declined to accept my immediate refusal and asked me to consider it for a few days.

When I saw him again I told him it was impossible for me to accept the position. He assured me I would not be interfered with. Then I told him plainly

why I declined, stating that he would tell me to write an article on some subject on certain lines. If I disagreed with the line to be adopted as would inevitably happen, well, then, I could not conform and it would be useless for me to accept such a position. I said that as industrial writer, if I could not write what I wanted to or the "Standard" would not publish the article, I could leave it alone and not be forced to play the hypocrite.

MacDonald expressed regret at my attitude but was very friendly over the matter. He then offered the job to Jim Comrie, the Government roundsman, who, with no qualms of conscience, accepted it without hesitation.

One would have thought that the same reasons that actuated me in refusing to become the mouthpiece of a degenerated political Labour Party and of "moderate" unionism, would have made Comrie adopt the same attitude. For Comrie seemingly was as confirmed a Communist and rebel as I and could not without abandoning his principles, write the kind of article that would be acceptable to the governing body of the "Standard." But Comrie, like many others, was a very high principled individual, a zealous left wing advocate – until his personal advancement conflicted with his beliefs. Then they were swept aside without any heartburnings. But he has reaped the ultimate reward of his time-serving proclivities and subservience. He is now "liaison officer" for that great working class leader – the ineffable W. Forgan Smith!

But, although I rightly earned the enmity and dislike of the successful and triumphant heads of the official Labour Movement, I, in inverse ratio, had the unswerving esteem and support of the militant section of the bottom dogs.

*** * ***

The Industrial Council, as the most militant body of organised unionists in the Commonwealth, had been in continual conflict with the reactionary elements of the movement both political and industrial.

It is interesting to note that as far back as February, 1917, there was an agitation for the 40 hour week. A motion on this question, forwarded from the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, was endorsed with an addendum that with the

reduction of hours there be no deduction in the amount of remuneration for work in a 40 hours instead of a 44 hours week.

The president of the Industrial Council, for two years, was “Bob” Mulvey, who was also secretary of that semi-moribund body, the Eight Hour Committee. Although not entirely at home with the militant council, Mulvey carried out his instructions until at last he broke down under the mental strain and reverted to his first love. The council had refused a request by H. Coyne, Minister for Lands, to allow him to address the council on a reactionary returned soldiers’ assistance scheme. In the face of this, Mulvey arranged a meeting of union representatives to hear Coyne on the following Sunday. Mulvey wrote to the “Standard” stating that my report of the matter was quite untrue. At the following meeting of the Council the charge was brought forward and thus reported in the “Daily Standard”:

“At the last meeting of the Brisbane Industrial Council, Mr. McCosker brought forward the matter of a letter written by the president (Mr. R. J. Mulvey), which appeared in the “Daily Standard” regarding the report of the Council’s action in dealing with Mr. H. Coyne’s proposal relative to the returned soldiers’ assistance scheme. Mr. McCosker desired to know in what particular “The Daily Standard” report was incorrect. Mr. Mulvey offered no statement, and a long and somewhat heated discussion followed. Eventually the following resolution, moved by Mr. English, was carried by a large majority:

> “‘that the action of the president in writing to the press, and the contempt with which he has treated the decision of the Council with reference to the proposed meeting with Mr. Coyne, be condemned by a vote of no-confidence in him.
>
> “Arising out of this matter was the correctness or otherwise of the report published in the ‘Daily Standard’ relating to this question.

> "Mr. Brazier (Progressive Carpenters'), said that the reports of the council's meetings, as reported by Mr. E.H. Lane, the industrial writer of "The Daily Standard," were invariably of an absolutely correct character, and very faithfully and clearly conveyed the views of the delegates on all questions, and this statement applied to the particular report under review, He referred eulogistically to Mr. Lane's reports of the Council's proceedings and his work on "The Daily Standard" generally, and moved the following resolution, which was carried unanimously:
>
> "That this council expresses its sincere appreciation of the reports of its proceedings which appear in "The Daily Standard," both as regards accuracy, and the ability with which they are written.
>
> "The secretary was instructed to forward a copy of the foregoing resolution to the management of 'The Daily Standard.'"

This was Mulvey's valedictory appearance at the Industrial Council. He found a more congenial home in the sanctity of the Eight Hour Committee, with its craft union outlook and servile worship of Labour Ministers. As secretary of that body, when the amalgamation of the Industrial Council, Trades Hall Board, and Eight Hour Committee was eventually consummated, Mulvey, as the nominee of the "moderates," who had a big majority on the new Trades and Labour Council, was elected secretary, holding that office for many years, despite all efforts of the militants to remove him.

PART VI.
Reaction in the Saddle

Chapter XXIII.
Russian Workers Triumph.

The Bolshevik revolution in 1917, with the later revolution in Germany, Hungary, and the general revolt of the workers in other countries, following the end of the world war, opened up entirely new phases in international affairs. This was largely due to the shortsighted acceptance by the Australian workers of the impotent Labour Parties or Governments, with Arbitration Courts, wherewith to remedy all their ills and ultimately establish the Socialist State.

The amazing triumph of the Bolsheviks rudely shattering to atoms the smug theories of a peaceful evolutionary emergence of the workers out of the house of bondage into the promised land along a flower strewn path of parliamentarianism, was regarded with disfavour and alarm by national Socialists and Labour politicians alike. They saw in this manifestation of the workers will and power to victory a serious menace to their long unchallenged position as the infallible saviours and leaders of the masses.

The consolidation of the Soviets, their successful operation as an unassailable method of supplanting parliamentary capitalist democracy, with all its false ideology and ineffectiveness, was a scathing reflection on, and contrast to, the miserable failure of Labour Parties here and elsewhere. On the other hand the militant section of the workers in Australia, long dissatisfied with the barren harvest of years of Labour parliamentarianism hailed with joy the Bolshevik revolution as the harbinger of light, showing to the suffering workers of all lands the pathway to economic freedom.

I wrote many articles extolling the achievements of the Bolsheviks, and based many arguments and exhortations on that basis to the sadly lagging and doped workers of this country. The glorious victory of the Russian workers had brought to me, and many others, a gladness and hope for the cause of the

workers that had been the supreme motive and desire of my life. No longer despised and rejected, the workers had brushed aside with scorn age-old traditions, to stand erect in defiance of all their enemies. So the Bolshevik revolution thrilled me, and I never failed to, at all times, point out its tremendous significance to the working class of all countries – the lessons to be learnt and the policy to be pursued.

Ever urging the workers to do their own thinking – to refuse any longer to be fooled and hoodwinked by specious and false friends, I wrote at this time an impassioned appeal which contained the following:

"Gaol is the gateway of freedom, declared the imprisoned Debs, and from that gateway in America another sufferer for the workers' cause, Arturo Giovannitti, some years ago, delivered a passionate appeal to the workers to think, to use their divine powers of brain for the world's salvation, not its enslavement. This message is the one great need of the hour, it is the lesson which must be learned by the workers; must be the cornerstone of the new temple of freedom which suffering workers are so anxiously attempting to build today. To think – can it be said too often? Therein full success awaits the toiling millions, without such thought the reconstructed temple will be built in vain.

> "Think! Think! Unburden, liberate Your brains from all its
> waste and loss,
> Throw down from it the age-worn weight
> Of few men's feet and one man's cross.
>
> Think! If your brain will but extend As far as what your hands
> have done,
> If but your reason will descend
> As deep as where your feet have gone,
>
> The walls of ignorance shall fall That stood between you and
> your world,

And from its bloody pedestal
The last god, Terror, shall be hurled.

Think! Think! While breaks in you the dawn, Crouched at
your feet the world lies still,
It has no power but your brawn;
It has no wisdom but your will.

From you, the chained, reviled outcast, From you the brute
inert and dumb,
Shall through your wakened thought at last
The message of To-morrow come."

No reference to this epochal period of working class progress would be complete without mention of a book, "Creative Revolution – A Study of Communist Ergatocracy," by Eden and Cedar Paul.

Published in 1920, it threw down a challenge to a startled and smug world, which sensationally shook lethargic sleepers – dreamers of an empty day – out of their slumbers. Ergatocracy was a new word, coined to meet and explain the new role of the Russian workers – meaning "workers' rule," as distinct from the old shibboleth, "democracy."

Written at a time when confusion of ideas reigned in the minds of men, this book in no ambiguous terms ruthlessly plumbed the depths of hitherto unquestioned Labour and reform policies, revealing their superficiality and ineffectiveness. It was a call to arms – to an honest and intelligent recognition of the class war – a new dispensation that could and would not be thrust lightly aside. The key to the book was voiced on its cover – a quotation from Paul of Tarsus – "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself for the battle?"

Mr. Molesworth, Director of the Workers' Education Association, who was far more revolutionary then than in later years, sent the book to me through Vic. Smith, requesting me to review it in the "Daily Standard." I devoured the

book and the fine summing up by its brilliant authors of the revolutionary situation and how it had to be met by the workers.

I wrote a long, eulogistic review and pointed out that, whether one liked it (the book) or not, it had to be answered. Its thesis could not be ignored, it was a cutting indictment of parliamentarianism – of all the accepted methods of orthodox Socialist and Labour parties to overthrow capitalism and establish the new order.

I must record that despite his own personal disagreement with many of the "Jack Cade" articles, MacDonald very rarely took any steps, either by censoring or rejecting, to silence me. But this review was evidently too hot for him, as when it was published serious censorship was evident. Probably the fear of the wrath of the politician at too scathing a repudiation of parliaments and Labour politicians influenced MacDonald's action. Still the review as published gave plenty of food for thought. Molesworth told Vic. Smith that he was somewhat disappointed at my review. Vic, although he did not know at the time, replied that he was certain the review had been censored.

I sometimes wonder how many of the younger generation of Communists or militants have read "Creative Revolution." When it was published it was a blazing beacon of working class development, and still remains a classic.

As industrial writer for the "Standard," it was my job to report all union functions. For some years the holding of regular smoko or similar celebrations was the custom of most of the unions. As I always had to reply to the toast of "The Labour Press," I willy nilly used to talk. There was, or I thought there was, during the war years and immediately after, a semi-revolutionary position even in Australia. Thus I did not feel hampered in giving expression to my revolutionary thoughts and prophecies. The latter, alas, have never been fulfilled, or perhaps they have only been delayed. I always got a good and sympathetic hearing even from the most moderate unions, who I know, while disagreeing with my militancy, recognised my sincerity and comradeship with the whole of the workers.

I had many interesting experiences attending these functions. One of my discoveries was that the rowdiest and where most drinking was indulged in was at the function of the respectable Shop Assistants' Union, while the most sober and orderly were the smokos of the Seamen's Union.

The passing of the years had not by any means brought any improvement in the political or even the industrial situation with regard to an honest recognition of Labour's real and only mission. Neither was there the slightest attempt on the part of the Labour parties, State or Federal, to implement genuine working class measures or to propagandise Labour objective. This situation is indicated in the following "Jack Cade" article which also was reprinted in the southern radical press:

"The strong tendency of every successful political party is to lead the people to believe that their welfare will be best served by retaining the services of such party. In pursuance of this policy, first principles, whenever they come into apparent conflict with the popular mind, are relegated to the background and in their place arise policies more in keeping with the reactionary ideas of a mass ignorance. Unfortunately, Labour political parties are by no means exempt from this dishonest and weak method of submission to the popular will. To this source can be traced the major cause of the disappointing results of political Labour in office and the consequent discontent of the workers. To placate the majority of electors is too often the primary consideration of Labour-in-Politics, even though that can only be reached by a cowardly abandonment, and even betrayal, of vital Labour principles.

LACK OF PROPAGANDA

"The much desired change of society from the capitalist to the Socialist State can only be brought about by intensive propagation of the basic principles of the New Order. The mass of people obviously adhere to present day methods both in politics and industry. The consequence with Labour has been a tragic drift down the stream of expediency. Instead of an intelligent and courageous preaching of working class philosophy and ideals there has been evidenced a determination, conscious and unconscious, to hide these essentials

to a virile and honest Labour Movement as though they were something to be afraid of. From a sound working class point of view, nothing but dire disaster lies at the end of this road of political expediency and concealment wherein will be lost all hope of any real socialist progress.

"Recent developments in the political arena have effectively indicated that there is no possibility of a realisation of Labour's objective per medium of the capitalist State. To talk about a safe and proper route to socialisation within the capitalist system is sheer sophistry, or worse. The Labour movement in Australia has laid down a very definite and tangible scheme whereby Labour's objective can be reached, but this policy is in effect disavowed in every election campaign until it has come to be regarded by the average elector as a mere dry bone with which to satisfy the hunger of the "extremist" minority.

"It has been truthfully said that until Labour's objective and the methods for its attainment are made election issues they can never become a parliamentary policy and must simply remain an objective.

WORKERS RESPONSIBILITY

"While politicians may be blamed for cowardice and submergence of principle, every other section of the working class movement must share the responsibility for the present disquieting position. The trade unions, who, to a greater extent than the politicians, have a supreme part to play in attaining Labour's objective, likewise adopt obsolete methods of organisation. If the objective of Labour is regarded as anything else than a meaningless, pious declaration of faith (?) then the workers of Australia and their organisations, both political and industrial, have so far not even attempted to carry out the responsibilities invested in them. Some plain talking and thinking in regard to the recreancy and cowardice of the working class movement in this country is apparently the most essential need at the present stage of Labour development."

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Owing to the sudden death of John Adamson, Queensland senator, J. V. MacDonald, editor of the "Daily Standard," as the highest in the previous plebiscite of Labour nominees for the Senate, was selected by the Q.C.E. and government. Consequently, he resigned from the editorship, and Alick Robertson, sub-editor, was appointed editor by the directors.

As a reputed and pronounced militant and Communist, the "left wing" rejoiced at the new appointment and foresaw a big change in the direction of militancy under Robertson.

But they were grievously mistaken, as contrary to all anticipations, Robertson, shedding all his revolutionary ideas, became a hater of militant trade unionism and a servile sycophant to the Labour politicians. His advent as editor, and eventually managing editor, of the "Standard" coincided with its wrecking and disappearance as a true Labour paper. It subsequently became bankrupt and closed.

Regarding himself as a Napoleon of the press, in actual results he proved himself to be "Napoleon the Little," Robertson, on his accession to the editorial chair, set out on his new career. No one was more deceived than myself at the real Robertson now revealed for all to gaze upon, not in awe, but in wonder and disgust. It was some time before I realised what he meant when he told me he intended "cutting out all propaganda." He really meant all militant expression from the sacred editorial office of the "Standard." Imagine a union-owned Labour paper "cutting out all propaganda." Yet Robertson did this without a qualm in the one direction, but the insidious propaganda of the innocuous Labour politicians was allowed full sway, backed up by the leading articles written by another supposed one time rebel, J. Comrie.

Obviously the most important matter in hand was to emasculate the "Jack Cade" articles with a view to their ultimate and early extinction. First, Robertson altered in varying degrees my articles, eliminating or adding a word or two which changed or shifted the whole meaning of the question set forth. Growing bold with success, Robertson very shortly after consigned all my articles to the waste paper basket. He never even had the courtesy to come to

me and tell me frankly that his policy was to have only one article published, the leading article. I did not go to Robertson and object, knowing it would be useless, and any interview would probably end in me leaving the paper. I could see no good purpose to be gained by forcing the issue, so submitted to what was an almost intolerable position.

The unions were fiercely indignant at the suppression of the “Jack Cade” articles. Resolutions of protest were adopted at union meetings. Deputations protested to Robertson but all in vain.

In reviewing this matter I am definitely of the opinion that the directors acquiesced in this anti-militant policy of Robertson. He was only an individual and could have been either disciplined or discharged by the board of directors. Why was Robertson for years both as editor and later managing editor, permitted to remain as the great Pooh-bah of the “Standard"? With a lack of intelligence, courage or a proper recognition of their duty to the “Standard,” to the unionists who created the paper, and owned it, to the Labour movement generally, the directors allowed Robertson to steadily pursue his disastrous policy. It is hard to fathom this mad support of a man who years later, when it was too late, severed his connection with the “Standard.” That action could well have been taken within a year or two of Robertson’s editorship, when the whole of the composing staff went on strike and stopped the issue of the paper in protest against certain of his actions. But apparently Robertson had imbued the directors with a stupid obsession that he alone as a super editor could successfully conduct the paper and make it a sound financial success. But I believe that the underlying motive for their tragic failure to deal with Robertson was their hostility to the militant union officials who did not hesitate to severely criticise the paper, its vapid political policy, and castigate those responsible.

Robertson found himself in close alliance with the directors who equally with himself detested such outspoken critics as George Rymer, president of the Australian Railways Union, Tim Moroney, secretary A.R.U., Ernie Ellis, secretary of the Carpenters Union, H. Carrigan, secretary of the Seamens Union, W. J. Wallace, secretary of the Painters Union, J. Carleton, secretary of

the Builders Labourers, and other militant officials. To recognise as comrades in arms these “disrupters” and “revolutionaries” who dared to scathingly condemn many actions of the “moderate” section who, unfortunately for the good of the workers, were all powerful, was unthinkable. Therefore, Robertson, who never hesitated to use the “Standard” to viciously attack the militants, retained the support of the directors.

On one occasion, McCormack, as Premier, issued a bitter diatribe against the A.R.U. and its officials. Robertson seized on this golden opportunity to discredit and humiliate, if possible, his most feared and hated opponents, Rymer and Moroney. So he streamlined and featured McCormack’s statement. Moroney, as secretary of the A.R.U., sent through me for the “Standard” an official reply to McCormack’s attack. To my amazement, Moroney’s reply, as it appeared in the “Daily Standard,” was grossly censored, some of its most cutting and pungent passages being eliminated. I was furious, and went to Robertson and asked him how he dared to censor an official reply by a union secretary to an attack by a Labour Premier. “Why,” I exclaimed, “You wouldn’t dare to alter a line or a comma of any statement sent to you from a Labour Minister, yet you have the audacity to ruthlessly censor a union secretary’s reply.” Robertson was white with suppressed rage at my daring to question his actions and weakly explained that what he had censored was not germane to the issue. I suppose he never forgave me for this and other things I told him regarding his actions from time to time.

At the commencement of his editorship I frequently had long arguments with Robertson with regard to the suicidal policy he was evidently going to adopt towards the unions, including the elimination of the industrial page. He said once “I know that Wallace, Moroney, and the rest of that crowd think that your articles are just what are wanted. I might agree with your ideas myself, but the man in the street doesn’t want that sort of thing, and I am going to cater for him.” He then propounded the kind of newspaper the ordinary individual wanted and said that the militants in the union movement were only a small minority.

I disputed his low estimate of the “man in the street,” and said a Labour paper should rather try to raise his standard rather than play down to it. “With regard to the militants,” I said, “I know better than any other man the weaknesses of the unions. But the small militant section, whatever their faults may be, are the life and breath, the driving force of the movement. Once you divorce them from the “Daily Standard” then you might just as well close up the paper as a Labour paper. You should try and foster the paper’s connection with the unions. You can’t afford to lose that, for the “Daily Standard” had not and never can have the finance to compete with the “Mail,” “Courier,” or “Telegraph” as a mere newspaper. If you ignore this position, then I can see only disaster ahead for the paper.”

However, all my reasoning was of no avail. He, Robertson, knew how to run a paper, and would prove his capabilities. As a result, I did not waste any more time seeing a man who refused any advice and who apparently regarded Labour principles of very minor importance compared with more mundane things.

As the “Standard” started on its new career of more or less veiled hostility to the unions, so was my position on the paper becoming more irksome and unsatisfactory. Still I could not do anything to relieve the situation. I remember at the conclusion of one of the earlier Queensland trade union congresses before the card voting system was introduced, and the resultant domination of the A.W.U., the “Daily Standard’s” leading article dealt with the proceedings and decisions of the congress.

The article was a damnable one. It was a disgrace to any decent Labour paper. As the congress had at least been strongly influenced by the militants, including Moroney, Rymer, and others, it was naturally fair prey for Robertson and Comrie. The Congress decisions were sneered at and the unions generally held up to public scorn because of their alleged futility and failure to get anywhere. Some of the things that were said in this article were true enough up to a certain point, but it was utterly unwarranted and only used as a snide method of discrediting the unions.

When I read the infamous thing I had to express my resentment by some means, so I wrote an article reviewing the work of the congress and giving words of cheer and encouragement to the unions, who in the face of many disabilities, were at least trying to lay down and carry out a progressive working class policy. In the afternoon, Dan Quinlan, the only other genuine rebel on the whole literary staff of the "Standard," came into my office and asked me if I had read the "vile 'Standard' leader' " and what I thought of it. I showed him the article I had written to relieve my indignation. He said: "It is true and good – what are you going to do with it?" I said I would send it to one of the Southern Labour papers who would be glad of it. Quinlan urged me to send it in to Robertson for publication.

I pointed out that my articles had been tabooed for a long time and I did not relish giving Robertson another opportunity to slap my face. Quinlan argued that I would at least have the satisfaction of knowing that I had tried to publish in the "Standard" a fair review of the congress. Unwillingly I sent the article into Robertson, but it was never published, returned or mentioned to me!

Quinlan later became sub-editor, but as an honest militant, could not endure Robertson and the vitiated "Standard" atmosphere. He resumed work on the "Daily Mail," but, unhappily, died soon afterwards.

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An arresting character, Chris. O'sullivan, was also a temporary sub-editor, who, as an enthusiastic Irish rebel, could not submit to the reactionary restrictions and policy of Robertson. O'sullivan had an adventurous career during the war, when he had visited Ireland and worked as a journalist in London. I became very friendly with him and he confided his plans and ideas to me.

He was in continual conflict with Robertson, and an amusing feature of their relationship was that all their squabbles were carried on by notes in true diplomatic style. I suppose it was O'sullivan's conspiratorial complex that induced him to indulge in this comic opera method. He would come into my office and pen an ultimatum to Robertson, who, in due course, replied with

probably another ultimatum. And so it went on. O'sullivan promised me he would not leave the "Standard," but would remain with me in the hope that we might do something to make the "Standard" more like a real Labour paper. But O'sullivan found he could not tolerate his chief and burst into my office shortly afterwards, exclaiming "It is finished! I had a row with Robertson and am going to Sydney to the 'Labour Daily." I said to him that the "Standard" from the workers point of view was bad, but the "Labour Daily" was worse. He agreed, but went all the same. He has now, I believe, returned to Ireland.

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As the work on the "Standard" was re-organised under Robertson's regime, I was allotted the unpleasant duty of reporting Arbitration Court cases. For some years I had this work to perform in addition to collecting and collating union reports. Having no delusions about the kind of justice that was meted out to the workers per medium of Arbitration Courts, I did not receive any shocks when I thus had a continual close up view of the Arbitration Court and its methods. If one had previously accepted the popular legend that Arbitration Courts function impartially or, indeed, in the interests of the workers, closer acquaintance with the Court soon removes the scales of disillusionment.

It seemed to be the irony of fate – a sardonic jest – that I, of all men, should find myself the official recorder for the unions of compulsory arbitration cases. No one in the Commonwealth had more consistently and bitterly denounced this system of immoral compromise between the exploiter and the exploited as expressed to its highest or lowest depths in Arbitration Courts.

Yet here I was, day after day, week after week, seeing with my own eyes the damnable evidence of the workers' foolishness – and humiliation, when at the behest of certain vested Labour interests, they had welcomed the chains of compulsory arbitration.

Sitting in that Court of capitalist class justice so symbolic of working class degradation and spineless submission to the employing class, I oft-times reflected on the earlier days and contrasted the unionism of then and now. For a mess of pottage that turned sour in the mouth, the Australian workers had

sold their priceless heritage of freedom, had weakly accepted a system of industrial bondage which sapped the very life blood of real unionism. Arbitration Court judgments had, on numerous occasions, branded revolting workers as outlaws and pariahs, criminals subject to severe legal penalties. The one-time independence and fighting spirit of unionism was but a memory killed effectively in the poisonous atmosphere of Arbitration Courts.

Having accepted the dictum and philosophy of their exploiters, that there was a case for the division of the fruits of their toll, that there was a close identity of interests between the haves and the have-nots, the unions quickly found themselves “cabined, cribbed, confined” on every side.

Years of bitter experience had taught those who had been the most ardent advocates of arbitration that it was a delusion and a snare to enmesh the workers in a tangle of futility with no escape from capitalist conditioned laws. Often did I hear the Court Judges, with unctuous righteousness, rebuke and humiliate the union representatives for daring to, question the infallibility of the court or to indicate that the sorely tried workers would kick over the traces and take direct action.

But the workers, with their own hand, had sown the seed of compulsory arbitration and were now reaping the whirlwind which effaced all the higher conceptions of unionism – of working class solidarity, and left the workers naked to their enemies. In close alliance and sympathy with political Labour and its powerful ally, the A.W.U., the Arbitration Court found itself soundly entrenched against any spasmodic or sectional revolt against its jurisdiction.

But even the worm will sometimes turn, and when the Court, in a judgment reduced the shearing-rates, the men’s advocate, W. J. Riordan, bravely told the indignant judges that the A.W.U. would “kick like an elephant.”

The same day I interviewed Riordan, then president of the A.W.U., as to the intentions of the union. He stated that the members concerned were the people to decide and if they resolved to fight, the A.W.U. executive would support them. The shearers expressed their intention to strike, but the executive sternly

admonished them for threatening to defy the sacred Arbitration Court decision and that such a strike would receive no support or assistance from the A.W.U. executive.

Curious and sceptical workers waited impatiently to see how and when the A.W.U. and its president would kick. But a wag made a significant discovery – that an elephant never kicked, it was a physical impossibility. Thus Riordan's loudly proclaimed threat to the Court was entirely harmless and meaningless, merely a Joke "full of sound and fury and signifying – nothing!"

Chapter XXIV.
Revolt Against the Labour Government.

The continual failure of the Queensland Labour Government with its subservient appendage, the Q.C.E., to honestly represent the workers or to enact Labour legislation, caused extreme dissatisfaction amongst the unions. So pronounced was this resentment, that in November, 1926, a special conference of the unions was held in Brisbane to consider the relationship existing between the industrial and political wings of the Labour movement. A motion to form an industrial section of the Labour movement was lost and a motion adopted to reorganise the industrial section on a sounder basis.

But the revolt of the unions against the Government and Q.C.E. reached its apex subsequent to the railway lockout by the McCormack Government in 1927. At a special meeting of the Trades and Labour Council on September 12, 1927, the following resolution was unanimously carried without debate:

> "That this council declares that the McCormack Government and its supporters in the A.L.P. have betrayed the working class movement and have lost the confidence of the workers. Therefore, in order to deal with the present political situation, we call upon all unions and district Labour councils to send delegates to a trade union congress to meet within a month to discuss the relations between the unions, and the workers' political party."

* * *

At the Trade Union Congress thus held in October, 1927, the first in Queensland for many years, the following resolutions are indicative of other decisions reached which clearly revealed the workers' resentment of the Labour Government's reactionaryism.

> "That in view of the failure of the Q.C.E. to safeguard the principle of unionism, challenged and violated by the Premier and his Cabinet, the Q.C.E. is deemed unworthy of the confidence of the unionists in Queensland."
>
> "That this congress recognises that the failure of the political Labour Party and the Q.C.E. is due to the reformist policy of the Australian Labour Party. It is evident in times of industrial upheaval that the interests of the people become the interests of property, therefore, congress declares that recognition of class struggle and active participation on behalf of the workers must be the basis of working class politics."
>
> "That congress declares the action of the McCormack Government in locking-out the railwaymen of Queensland, was a direct violation of a vital principle of the Labour movement, and that this Government is not worthy of the confidence of the workers."

It need hardly be noted that the A.W.U. was not represented at this congress or any of the conferences that met from time to time to deal with the crimes of Labour Parties. As the staunch friends of A.L.P. politicians, the reformist bureaucracy of the A.W.U. never yet identified the A.W.U. with any organisation or movement that did not unquestionably accept the omnipotency of the A.L.P. It was only when the Queensland Trade Union Congress foolishly adopted the card system of voting that the A.W.U. recognised the Queensland Trade Union Congress and sent its delegates. By its numerical superiority and the exercise of the card vote, the one-time militant congress,

under the dominance of the A.W.U., blossomed into a recording machine for A.W.U. opportunism and a valuable aid to the discredited political structure.

A clear appreciation of' the policy of the A.W.U. with regard to other more militant organisations was well set out at the All Australian Trades Union Congress, held at Melbourne in July 19th, 1928.

It was decided that the Congress considered the unity move made by the A.C.T.U. Executive in proposing to the A.W.U. Executive to affiliate with the A.C.T.U., and thus bring about unity of the Australian Trade Union Movement, as being entirely correct, and in the best interests of the working class as a whole.

The congress report stated "that in refusing to establish Trade Union unity in this country, the present bureaucratic officials of the A.W.U. have unmasked themselves as reactionaries who through their actions work directly into the hands of the bosses.

> "The A.C.T.U. must continue its efforts to bring about Trade Union unity, in spite of the sabotage of the handful of leaders of the A.W.U. In declaring this policy, the A.C.T.U. differentiates between the misleaders of the A.W.U. on the one hand, and the good militant and loyal trade unionists of the rank and file of the A.W.U. on the other."

This congress instructed the A.C.T.U. executive to launch an intensive campaign among the rank and file of the A.W.U., which would make clear to every worker the necessity for working class unity as the sole effective means of resisting the onslaughts of capitalism.

An important declaration issued by this congress representing all the important unions throughout the Commonwealth with the exception of the A.W.U., related to the use of "direct action." The Congress declared:

> "That the right to strike is one of the strongest weapons in the hands of the workers in their waging of the class struggle. We

> desire that this Congress declare itself in agreement with the strike policy and in spite of parliamentary legislation and court injunctions, declaring the strike illegal, that it will advise the trade unions to use and will support them in the use of the strike weapon whenever the situation and circumstances demand them."

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I had the uncongenial task of reporting for the "Daily Standard" a social function held at Redcliffe in connection with the annual A.W.U. convention, held that year (1925-26), in Brisbane. Grayndler, Barnes, Riordan, Dunstan and the official clique, were there in full force. At the luncheon speeches, these reputed leaders of Australian unionism, gave unrestricted expression to their inordinate egotism, their scornful contempt for the militant and class conscious workers who had the audacity to question the supremacy of the A.L.P. or arbitration policy.

Vituperative attacks on the "reds," threats of what the A.W.U. could and would do to these "disrupters" of the Labour movement, were the cardinal points of the speeches. Any listening stranger would have imagined that the A.W.U. represented the overwhelming majority of Australian unionism instead of about one seventh, neither did these delegates truly represent their own rank and file. It was a depressing experience for anyone who had an intelligent and honest conception of the mission and purpose of the working class movement and one wondered how long the A.W.U. incubus was going to retain its misused power.

On the return trip to Brisbane on the steamer that evening, I was sitting alone when "Clarrie" Fallon, destined to be one of the highest panjandrums of the A.W.U. oligarchy, conversed with me on the tone of the luncheon speeches. I had known Fallon as a good rebel with an enviable reputation as a "straight goer." He remarked that the old enthusiasm and selflessness of the movement seemed to be a thing of the past, also that the utterances of the speakers that day were regrettable.

I agreed, and said that although the A.W.U. speakers were supposedly representing all that was best in the union movement, not a sentence had been uttered that one would take away as an inspiration – not a word said that could fire one's imagination or help in the fight. "And I," I said in conclusion, "have to go home and write up the report." As quick as lightning he exclaimed: "It is a crime that a man like you should have to do it!"

"Well," I said, "that is the position, and the 'Jack Cade' articles are now taboo and I am silenced."

In further conversation, Fallon expressed keen resentment at this suppression and said that the "Jack Cade" articles were the finest and most valuable feature of the "Daily Standard." That at all the sugar mills and camps in the Mackay district, where he was organiser, these articles were eagerly looked forward to, closely read and debated, and were invaluable working class propaganda.

Fallon has since then chosen the easier pathway of success to reach his present apex. This one-time rebel now devotes much of his time and abuses his high position in vilifying and denouncing Communists and "Reds" whom he once was glad to hail as comrades!

On the boat that same night I had another interesting experience. "Bob" Funnell, later Labour member for Brisbane, who, as an A.W.U. organiser had ever been a devoted adherent to the Riordan-Dunstan coterie and undeviatingly opposed to my militancy, came up to me in a secretive manner. It appeared that there was a split in the camp, over some A.W.U. ballot, resulting shortly afterwards in Funnell resigning from his organising position. He half whispered to me with a furtive glance around: "Riordan is no friend of yours – or Dunstan either!" I laughed. What a revelation! I had never been under any illusion as to how Riordan or indeed any other time server or politician regarded me. How could any of the men with whom I was in continual and uncompromising hostility, possibly be anything but antagonistic to me, however friendly they might be on the surface? So Funnell's confidential news was not news at all!

After Funnell had broken with the A.W.U., I accidentally met him several times when he, removed from the charmed A.W.U. circle, could without fear of punishment or consequence, speak the truth. “You never had a fair deal from the A.W.U.,” he said, “and you are better off now you are out of it.” I informed him that naturally I knew that “fair dealing” to their opponents, to the hated “reds,” was the last thing in the world anyone would expect from the A.W.U. high priests. “When I was organising,” said Funnell, “and the ballots for A.W.U. positions were being taken, I was told to do all I could to block you from getting votes.” I said this was news to me, though I had no reason to doubt that the heads of the A.W.U. were capable of doing anything to ensure their own welfare and to confound their enemies.

These disclosures of Funnell’s afford a concrete illustration of the mentality and methods of individuals who, after they have discarded their erstwhile close colleagues, disclose some of the disreputable practices with which for years they themselves have been associated. As an open and well-known advocate of a genuine Labour movement in contradistinction to the reactionary policies of the Theodores and Riordans, whenever there was a disagreement and cleavage in this camp, the disgruntled outcasts would tell me of the intrigues and violation of principle which are such an integral part of machine politics and unionism. Strangely enough, these individuals, with an amazing lack of perception of their own ignoble role, of their acquiescence and participation in the acts they now denounce, do not realise their own guilt. They are not repentent of their own past evil partnership and company, but, for purely personal reasons, involving no principle or based on any Labour ideals, find themselves thrust into the cold. I have received many curious and interesting “confessions” relating to the inner circle. Some of the revelations I have known previously. Other events have startled but never surprised me. With my own first hand experiences of the political immorality and uscrupulousness of those in high places and their conscienceless camp followers, no exposure of further trickery can serve to increase my disgust or condemnation. These questionable converts to the militant policy who thus denounce the corruption of which they have been a part, only excite my contempt and distrust.

DEMARCATION LINE DISAPPEARS.

Keeping in step with the A.L.P. and its more and more retrogressive policy, the A.W.U., under the careful guidance of Riordan and Dunstan, developed into a semi-political organisation with a very pink tinge of unionism. The old clear-cut line that divided the "militants" from the "moderates" gradually disappeared and in its place came into existence a sordid intrigue between individuals for official positions. It resolved itself into a fight between the "ins" and the "outs" in which strange alliances of one time enemies could be observed. Of course, I could not participate in such an unholy pact, and, in fact, was for some time unaware of the "ticket" that was being run. Thieves do not attempt to dispose of stolen goods to honest people.

This was the beginning of the end of the one time division of the A.W.U. officials into two camps. Today the bureaucracy of the organisation is well entrenched and there appears to be no opposition in official circles to the now historic role of the A.W.U. as the proud champion of effete Labour Parties and capitalist Arbitration Courts.

In complete harmony with the reactionary policy of the A.W.U., the "Queensland Worker" faithfully carried on a continuous attack on militant unionism and the detested "Reds." This journal, which had so tragically fallen from its high estate, had prostituted the Socialist faith that had been its greatest glory, also, as far as it dared, slandered and discredited the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution.

At this period I was one of the members of the Board of Management of the "Worker," which also included Dunstan and Riordan, who, in actual practice, behind the scenes imposed their policy on the paper. When the board met, I attacked Hanlon, the editor, on his anti-working class writings and fiercely denounced his vicious onslaughts on the "Reds." I said I keenly resented being accused of receiving payment from the capitalist and disrupting the Labour movement. Hanlon said that his strictures on militants did not apply to me. I retorted that it was as true of me as of hundreds of other workers who were

sick to death of the cowardice and reactionaryism of official Labour and demanded something more in harmony with a bona fide Labour movement.

Hanlon said that the Board was the authority and whatever policy was laid down he would faithfully carry out. But although the extreme viciousness of the "Worker" articles were modulated, there was very little difference – the "power behind the throne" still reigned supreme.

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An echo of the past arose within the sacred precincts of Parliament House with regard to the literature distributed by the A.W.A. when McCormack, as Premier, was charged with distributing "I.W.W." and revolutionary literature throughout Queensland when he was secretary of the A.W.A.

Of course the accusation was made for political purposes by anti-Labour politicians to expose McCormack as a revolutionist, instead of the insipid, harmless Labour Premier he actually was. McCormack, obviously for several reasons, denied the terrible charge, stating that not he, but Ernie Lane and others in Brisbane had been guilty of this heinous offence.

When I saw a report of the matter in the press, I commenced to write a true history of the A.W.A. literature and how Theodore and McCormack strenuously opposed and denounced it. Then reluctantly I decided not to reveal this closed page of the A.W.A. as I now saw it would just suit McCormack's repudiation of participation and he would triumphantly exclaim: "There, you see, I told you I was not responsible for this I.W.W. literature."

The vendetta against left wing members of the Labour Movement, which has been one of the trump cards of the Australian Labour Party, Q.C.E., and A.W.U., introduced the notorious anti-Communist pledge. This unscrupulous method of keeping the righteous and infallible Labour Party uncontaminated – and untrammelled – was not designed to eliminate Communists from the Party. The Communist Party in Queensland at that period was a very negligible quantity with very few members and less influence. But, an anti-Communist pledge was a very effective weapon to either drive militants out of

the Labour Party or compel them to bow the knee to Baal and restrain their ardour. It had proved most effective in the ranks of the A.W.U., the Labour Party's most powerful ally, and there would be little doubt of its success in the political arena.

When this demand for all A.L.P. members to sign an anti-Communist pledge was first sent to the Workers Political Organisations – now termed A.L.P. branches – there was a widespread revolt against the imposition and many rejections of the pledge with scathing condemnation of the Q.C.E. were registered by the W.P.O.s. Everyone knew the real purpose of the pledge was to "purge" the party of all who were troublesome to the politicians by insistently agitating that the Labour Party be one in something more than name.

As an active member of the South Brisbane W.P.O., for many years I opposed the pledge, which was unanimously rejected at a meeting of the organisation. But the Q.C.E., with cunning knowledge and insidious propaganda, again demanded that the W.P.O.s adopt the pledge. When the matter was again considered by the South Brisbane W.P.O., I moved its rejection and showed what would be its dire results. To my surprise and disgust all the following speakers, including Myles Ferricks, M.L.A., although they denounced the Q.C.E. and the pledge in far stronger terms that I had used, said that it would be advisable to obey the Q.C.E. My motion was defeated by 30 votes to 3!

This ended my membership of the A.L.P. It seemed to me to be waste of time to remain in an organisation that was so lacking in principle and courage, as to support a vile scheme which was cunningly calculated to still further hamper the working class movement and crucify its best men and women. The fact that the members recognised to the full the outrageous nature of the pledge – and then agreed to it – made the position intolerable as far as I was concerned. Thus I severed a lifelong connection with the Australian Labour Party – nor have I since seen cause to regret that decision, rather, many reasons to strengthen it.

The anti-Communist pledge had its climax at the following Labour-in-Politics Convention, held at Southport. Tim Moroney, George Rymer (A.R.U.), and other delegates, refused to sign the pledge, not because they were members of the Communist Party or desired to join that organisation, but in uncompromising protest against this unscrupulous method to stifle all militancy. Debarred from the convention, the politicians staged a desperate fight to force the convention to adopt the pledge. In this they were successful, employing every trick, threat and devious method of which they had often proved themselves masters to whip into line the necessary majority. Many others were caught in the net so cunningly set with the inevitable result that the Queensland Labour Party today is a travesty and could with equal and more truth be termed a Fascist Party.

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In vital contrast to the self satisfied, mediocre but all powerful A.W.U. officials, the Australian Railways Union in Queensland has been fortunate in its representatives and officials. In conferences, in many fights, they stood head and shoulders above their A.W.U. and other reactionary opponents. Moroney, always a doughty opponent of the arbitration system, is generally recognised as the finest court advocate for the workers in this State if not in Australia. With a delightful sense of humour and a sparkling wit – plus a wide knowledge of the working class movement, Moroney, on many a battle field has caused the reactionaries to squirm in futile rage. I have, on the Q.C.E. and at trade union meetings and conferences, ever found myself in the closest alliance with him and never ceased to appreciate his remarkable ability and unfailing courage in his unending fight for the working class.

Another A.R.U. stalwart, George Rymer, one time President, also possessed many of the qualities of his colleague which enabled him to state his case and flagellate unmercifully his political and industrial opponents. Rymer revelled in a fight and in this respect was often more than a match for Theodore, to whom Moroney and Rymer were particularly obnoxious.

As one of the militants who came within the pledge net, “Billy” Wallace, secretary of the Painters’ Union, and honorary secretary of the old Brisbane Industrial Council, during its later period, felt compelled to resign from the A.L.P. Ready at all times to fill a breach, to take a stand, Wallace though disillusioned in many respects, can be counted as one of that heroic band of pioneers who, through all the changing years, have not changed or betrayed their class.

The least said about many union officials, of which the A.W.U. are the prime example, the better for their reputation. Their records and actions will not bear investigation from a virile working class viewpoint, but it would be wearisome and useless to elaborate on this theme or catalogue their failures.

Subject to many viscissitudes at the hands of those who saw in my efforts a distinct menace to their dominance and privileges I did not – could not – abandon my firm belief in the ultimate triumph of the much betrayed and sorely tried workers. I met an old friend, unattached to the Labour Movement, but an idealist whose ideals had been shattered on seeing the corruption of the Labour leaders. He said: “Ernie, your heart must be broken, with all your bitter disappointments.” I laughed, and remarked that fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, hearts did not break and one had perforce to carry on.

I at least had the consolation that I had not fallen by the wayside or succumbed to temptation, that I held the esteem and friendship of all from whom I valued it. I recall receiving an unexpected letter from an engineer in one of the Bundaberg sugar mills, whom I had met in Brisbane. He wrote: “I am writing to you because I want to keep in touch with the one man I know who could have climbed on the backs of the workers – but did not.”

A very dear friend, Mrs. Jeannie Scott Griffith, one of the brainiest and bravest women Mrs. Lane and I ever had the good fortune to know, on her departure for the United States, gave me a picture of a storm battered pine tree standing alone on a mountain. On the back she wrote: “Like a lone pine upon some wind swept eminence he stands, battered, but still unbroken by the storm.”

A recountal of these incidents may be egotistical but I think they contain truth. After all, one may be forgiven in stressing the one greatest solace I, and others too, enjoy, amidst a world of tragic disillusionments, the appreciation of kindred spirits, a common bond of suffering - and joy.

*** * ***

The resignation of Crampton from the management of "The Standard" had result in the appointment of Robertson to the all-powerful position of Managing-Editor. He immediately commenced to show an admiring world how to conduct a daily newspaper. With a prodigal hand he initiated a variety of stunts that ended disastrously for the unfortunate "Standard" and brought the paper into disrepute as a true Labour paper.

Probably the most famous (?) and costly of the yellow journalist species of stunts that Robertson indulged in was a beauty competition. Such competitions under ordinary circumstances are not conducive to advancing Labour's cause, particularly on the moral and intellectual standard of the community generally. But "The Standard" beauty competition was conducted by Robertson with a flair and boost that out–beautified all other beauty competitions. The final boost took place at the Brisbane Cricket Ground; it was connected with a "Back to Woolloongabba Week," and the humiliating spectacle was witnessed of Robertson, the great Pooh-bah of journalism riding in pompous egotism in a car with the crowned beauty queen, followed by the bevy of other beauties. It was a sort of bowdlerised edition of an ancient Roman circus, without even the excuse for such an exhibition. To finish off this amazing Labour demonstration, the beauty queen was dispatched to the North, under the expensive chaperonage of a manager of a picture show – for all to see – and admire!

The unions, and all decent minded Labourites, viewed this exhibition of Labour journalism with intense anger and disgust – but the directors of the "Standard" sat silent and allowed Robertson to continue his meteoric career.

The costs of this beauty venture to the “Standard” was in the vicinity of £1,000. SO notorious and disastrous were Robertson’s stunts that he was cynically – and truthfully – designated in the Trades Hall as “the stunt artist!”

Just as this Napoleon of the press had destroyed the “Standard” as a bona fide Labour paper after he had assumed the editorship, so likewise when he was made manager the financial losses were immensely increased.

When the financial position was becoming acute Robertson agreed to a voluntary proposal I made that I would resign from my full time position on the staff and on a half-time basis confine my work to union doings. This agreement worked quite satisfactorily but to my astonishment, two months later I found a curt note in my pay envelope of instant dismissal owing to “financial necessity.”

Thus after fifteen years service to the “Daily Standard” during which I had ungrudgingly given all my ability, had never spared myself and did far more than anyone else on the staff, I was dismissed.

In seeking the real reason for this drastic action which I knew would vitally and detrimentally affect the paper, it should be recalled that strong opposition was voiced against Robertson’s action when he cut out the industrial page and the “Jack Cade” articles. The unions, independent of whether they were moderate or militant, deputised and personally interviewed the editor for a period covering several years, also interviewed the directors, comprising Messrs. Carroll, McGovern, and others, who refused absolutely to give any consideration to the desires of the unions for the continuation of the industrial page of the affairs of the union movement.

Reports were regarded as a nuisance and were continuously held up from publication for two days and on one occasion for nearly two weeks, despite the continual protests of the unions.

The attitude of the Managing Editor was evidently endorsed by the Board, as all endeavours to get the Board to protect the interests of the unions in the paper were entirely ignored.

Humorously enough, I was engaged in reporting the annual Trades Union Congress, after I had been sacked, not having opened my pay envelope for a couple of days. On advice, though unwillingly, I told Riordan and strongly urged him not for my sake, but for the sake of the unions, the paper and the Labour Movement generally, to order Robertson to reinstate me as I knew the determined attitude the unions would take. Riordan, in a minute, could have ended the matter. He did not. Instead, he told the directors that I threatened that if I was not reinstated I would get the unions to declare the "Standard" black!

Apparently not too sure of the position, my dismissal was deferred for a few weeks, When I finally received it I happened to meet R. J. Carroll, one of the directors, at the Arbitration Court. "Well, Bob," I said, "I am finishing up now." "Yes," he replied in an unguarded moment, "they were determined to get you."

I did not ask him who the mysterious "they" were. He would not have told me, but it was not hard to guess who "they" were.

The unions were furious and without the slightest suggestion on my part, took a most hostile attitude towards the "Standard," from which it never recovered and which sealed its ultimate fate. The whole matter came up for review at the annual meeting of shareholders in March, 1931, at which meeting the whole of the directors were present. At that time the action of Robertson in dismissing me had not been finally endorsed by the Board of Directors. The meeting was the most representative of the unions that had been held for many years and a resolution was moved requesting my reinstatement. All of the unions, whether of moderate or militant policy, strongly supported the resolution, with the exception of the A.W.U. However, it was carried unanimously, as the A.W.U. did not exercise their vote. Not one speaker, during the course of the exhaustive debate, spoke in opposition to the motion. Instead of the unanimous decision of the unions being given effect to, the directors at their next meeting upheld the decision of Robertson and ignored the unions. There was no argument at the time or since about it not being a case of victimisation, and for that reason and only, the Building Trades Group,

and a number of the unions refused to further support the “Standard,” realising that a vital union principle was involved.

As the board had failed to honour its obligation to the unions, the unions then decided to take the only course open to them, in an endeavour to upset the decision of the board and call a special meeting in accordance with the rules of the company. At the special meeting which was held in September, the whole case was again debated, under the open threat by the A.W.U. representatives that if the unions insisted on my reinstatement, they would withdraw all their financial support from the “Standard,” which, in effect, meant the closing up of that paper. The resolution to reinstate me, to suspend Robertson and to appoint a committee of enquiry into the policy and conduct of the “Standard,” were all defeated at this special meeting. The A.W.U. had no hesitation in exercising, when occasion demanded, its card vote, which gave it a majority on all divisions.

I was then engaged by “The Daily Mail,” to report union affairs for that paper. For two years until the merging of “The Daily Mail” into the “Courier,” I enjoyed a freedom from interference or censorship that was a most welcome relief after my experience on the “Daily Standard.” When the merger took place, to everyone’s amused astonishment, I was transferred to the “Courier-Mail” to write up union news. It was said that if the “Courier” engaged me to write union news then the millenium would have arrived. But that happened, and for four years I remained on the “Courier-Mail,” until I was dismissed on the grounds that increased pressure of space precluded the publication of union reports.

I have no complaints whatever with regard to the manner in which I was treated on the “Courier-Mail.” But their treatment of the union news was damnable in almost every respect, including outrageous censorship when considered necessary. There was at all times a latent hostility to the unions which flared into thinly disguised antagonism on occasions. This attitude towards the unions I keenly resented and for three years endeavoured through the editor and other responsible members of the literary staff, to get the union news treated as it should be. But it had little permanent effect. Once, more

than usually indignant at the marked hostility to the unions, I said in the "Courier-Mail" office that if I were the unions they would never give another line of news to that paper.

TWILIGHT HOURS.

Since leaving the "Courier-Mail" in September, 1937, I have not taken any active part in the Labour Movement. I have written this autobiography during the past few months. My task is now ended. If these memoirs serve to point out some of the snares and pitfalls that lie in the pathway of all rebels, if I have unmasked hypocrites and deluders of too-trusting workers, to the advantage of the Movement, then I am well rewarded.

All my criticism and condemnation of individuals and institutions are based on my conception of the Labour Movement from the Communist viewpoint. No other is possible for me or anyone else who, with undimmed vision and intellectual honesty, realises the true meaning of the Labour Movement and in this realisation spurn with scorn those false prophets who, with unblushing hypocrisy, pose as saviours of the masses even while they degrade and prostitute every fundamental Labour principle.

It is hardly necessary for me to declare, in the light of my own lifelong belief – and experience – that Labour parties with their semi and pro-capitalistic policies, can never emancipate the workers. In the last analysis the Australian Labour Party, in common with their prototypes in other countries, are actually Fascist in their outlook and actions. For the workers who really desire the destruction of capitalist society and the establishment of the communist or socialist society, the Labour Party must be disregarded as the instrument whereby to achieve that purpose. There remains only the Communist Party, who with a very definite and clear cut programme show the only road to travel towards Labour's goal.

Rejected and scorned by official Labour today, the Communists are destined to be in the near future the corner stone and foundation of the new building which will rise, Phoenix like, from the dead ashes of the futile past.

Reflecting on my life, searching the cause of my unswerving adherence to those principles which are embodied in the Labour Movement, I find that my greatest comfort in times of viscissitude, the one unfailing source of strength and encouragement, has been derived from the people's poets, the messengers of humanity.

So, in closing this record of my life, insofar at least as I have been in close contact with the working class and their joys and sorrows, I am stressing this perennial source of inspiration, not only to me but to countless others by inserting a "Jack Cade" article – "The People's Poets": -

> "All down the history of man the poets' voice has sounded the paean of the 'Future's Day,' when the people will dwell in happiness and concord 'each for all and all for each.'
>
> "With clarity of vision and with unconquerable soul, the people's poets, however dark the night have sensed the breaking of the dawn, and sung of the days of glory that yet shall be, even though they were as those crying in the wilderness, scorned by men and persecuted by Governments even unto death itself.
>
> "The workers owe a debt of gratitude to these men and women, who, gifted far beyond most, devoted their genius to the cause of the common people irrespective of appreciation, reward, or fame. Not 'the idle singers of an idle day,' who were content to fritter away or prostitute their great gifts at the footstool of a king or in the temple of Mammon, but those noble singers
>
> "Who, through long days of labour And nights devoid of ease,
> Still heard in their soul the music
> Of wondrous melodies."
>
> "Whose brains were seared with the wrongs of the people, whose hearts were afire with white heat of passionate love for poor suffering humanity, and who, in language that will live for

all ages, gave their message of hope and promise often to a scoffing or indifferent world.

“The Shelleys, Burnses, Whitmans, of the world of poetry, are the salt of the earth. Far removed from the sordid, mundane outlook on life, the poets of the people have, careless of the cost, given to the nations thoughts and ideals which are above price, and which have inspired countless thousands in their bitter and ofttimes apparently hopeless battle against oppressors of the people. From the heights reached after many days of sorrow and tribulation, these lovers of their fellow men have visioned the promised land which, for endless years has been the El Dorado of the weary and heavily burdened toilers of the world.

“With eyes filled with the wonders and delights of the future world of mankind, with a faith unshakeable in the ultimate triumph of the people against their oppressors, those great poets of democracy proclaimed the glorious doctrine of human friendship and equality in words that entered the hearts of men inspiring them to ever press onward and upward until the goal of human justice and liberty is obtained. Without the inspiration derived from these singers of the people’s songs; without the great uplifting forces of idealism which these immortals of the human race have bequeathed to generations yet unborn, the achievements, the ever quickening march of the toilers towards the elysian fields of human brotherhood, could never have materialised. John Boyle O’Reilly truly said, ‘The dreamer lives for ever, but the toiler dies in a day.’ It has been and is today those who, with, the poet’s vision, with the poet’s passionate love for all that is beautiful in life, who, when bitter defeat, humiliation, and despair have overwhelmed the people’s cause have risen again and again from the debacle, cheering on those who have lost their faith in the ultimate

triumph of righteousness, and have – with mind and body crushed – despaired of ever again knocking at the iron gates of privilege and power.

"It matters not to the poets of humanity, who make the toilers cause their own, what their worldly circumstances may be – whether starved in an attic like Chatterton, the boy poet of Bristol, or surrounded by luxury, the message bearers give their message of hope and love to all who will read. That these noble spirits are uncorrupted by environment is proven by the lives of such lovers of the common people as William Morris, the wonderful artist-poet, and Shelley, the aristocrat, yet probably the greatest people's poet of all times, who, inspired by the epoch-making French Revolution, devoted the whole of his life and wonderful genius to the cause of the poor ones of the earth whom he loved so well.

"The basic principles of the Labour Movement are undoubtedly founded on economic rather than ethical foundations. Economical and material considerations actuated the eternal strivings of the workers in their bitter struggle to achieve emancipation. The theory of the coming co-operative Commonwealth is constructed on purely economic conceptions and system. But, over and above the economic basis of Socialism, woven like a thread of gold throughout the life and aspirations of the dispossessed permeates the idealism of the poet's song, without which even economic justice would fall far short of the true realism of human freedom.

"So, with souls illuminated with 'a light that was never yet on land or sea,' the people's poets sound the clarion call of liberty and fraternity, which, resounding throughout the universe, finds a responsive echo in every heart in every clime. And when the exultant message of the poet has fired the blood and strengthened the arm of those who today are sitting in despair

> and utter darkness, when the glorious tidings of man's high destiny is fully realised by the people, then will the coming day of human emancipation of which the poets have sung and foretold, be ushered in, and mercy, truth, and justice shall kiss one another."

* * *

In the eventide of life I find solace and contentment in the enjoyment of nature. A sun worshipper, it would be gross ingratitude not to appreciate to the full this most bounteous of all gifts. The call of the surf, the charm of the bush – the song of the birds – are all compensating factors that dull the sharp blade of adversity.

I have retained my youth, which is popularly considered as the greatest blessing one can receive. But to me it does not appeal that way, rather the contrary. To see the grey wolf of old age creeping nearer while still instilled with the passion and rapture of youth is to me an ironic gesture of fate. It is no solace to feel young when you are old with long years of disillusionment to cynically curb any egotistical estimation of one's power to ignore the flight of time, with its immovable immutability.

Still, I am content to take whatever gifts the Gods may grant, and despite all buffetings and trials, am not unmindful of my own and others blessings.

In these memoirs I have made but passing reference to my home life, to the beloved family circle which has never failed at all times to be the heart centre of my existence. Without this refuge, this haven of peace, much of the joy and strivings of life would have been impossible. Mrs. Lane made "Cosme" what it always was; a social centre of kindred spirits where foregathered at different times many of those who gave their all to the services of humanity.

With the fleeting years our four children, all most happily married, still remained an integral part of "Cosme." Excepting the eldest, Allan, sugar farming for some years at Maroochy, Dorothy, Teddy, and Alice, lived within a very short distance of "Cosme.' On Sundays the family, which now also

included a younger generation, invariably returned with laughter and joy to the home nest. This precious charmed circle remained unbroken, a veritable oasis of peace and love in a desert world of disillusionment and betrayals. Then with a cruel blow, staggering in its poignancy, the life-long domestic happiness was shattered. Alice, our youngest, born in the Argentine, died with tragic suddenness, leaving a gap that can never be filled. It is useless to philosophise in such cases of irremediable loss. One can only strive to bear the burden and grief, sustained somewhat by dear memories of many happy years of unbroken love and understanding.

Perhaps this brushing aside of the veil of one's inner and most sacred part of one's life, is out of keeping in these memoirs. That may be so; but this brief glimpse of our family life, its unforgettable gladness – and tragic sorrow – is an inseparable and supreme part of my whole life and activities, without which this record would be incomplete.

*** * ***

As the day closes, in retrospect I feel that I have had my share – more than my share – of life's joys and exaltations. To have participated in the Labour Movement, to have worked in unison with many dear comrades – unconquerable souls – this alone has been joy indeed. What matters it that our dreams of a better and a happier world are yet unfulfilled? They will be some day and "we who once were fools defeated then shall be brave and wise."

In my life's journey I have fought the fight – I have kept the faith to the utmost of my ability and understanding. I have nothing to regret, but I am deeply thankful that in some measure at least I have had the good fortune, through sometimes fortuitous circumstances, to spread the gospel of discontent and help in the sowing of the seed of Communism.

I realised in my younger days with Karl Marx that "Capitalism is the most terrible scourge of humanity. It fattens on the misery of the poor, the degradation of the worker and the brutalising of his wife and children. Just as Capitalism grows so grows also pauperism, that millstone round the neck of

civilisation, the squalor of great cities and the presence of deep poverty seated hard by the gate of enormous wealth."

Thus I became imbued with an abiding and bitter hatred of the whole capitalist system and its evil work that remains with me to this day. Seeing in Communism the one hope of world redemption, the one unanswerable challenge to present day society, I was double-armed for the battle for human freedom, for the destruction of economic exploitation.

With this faith – this passionate belief in the supreme right of the workers to seize economic as well as political power, any departure from this fundamental basis of all working class advancement has ever roused my undeviating hostility. Is it any wonder that I and many others to whom the Labour Movement is the most sacred thing in life – is inexplicably bound with unbreakable bonds to Socialism-Communism, should denounce and condemn Labour's betrayers?

"They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin," and with astounding audacity, Labour's representatives have, whenever the exigencies of circumstances were powerful enough – never hesitated to abandon or subvert the ideals and principles of the Movement.

With Walt Whitman, "I am for getting all the walls down – all of them." Anything short of that is but a clashing of brass cymbals – a cynical reversal to the old discredited methods of play politics.

There is still for me, as for others who desire to help in Freedom's fight, ample opportunity. Perhaps I ought to still remain in the firing line and bear my share as I am well able to. But after the storm and stress one yearns for calm, far from the tumult and the shouting, the noise of battle. And I must confess, without attempting to justify passivity – that I "long for rest" – and am lazing my days. Carrying out the "Right To Be Lazy," I am steeped in the quiet beauty of our home, with frequent visits to the surf. While my conscience reproves this withdrawal from the fight, I find at least some excuse

and justification in the fact that for many years I have not faltered nor spared myself – and that I may – though with some misgivings – take my rest.

*** * ***

These reminiscences, incomplete and discursive as they are, will, I trust, awake a responsive echo in the hearts of many good friends and comrades who also have climbed the heights of Calvary in pursuit of truth, scorning the temptations that beset their path. May this record of the past bring to them precious memories of the fight which, though seemingly lost, is yet won. The communion of fellowship which is the greatest glory of the Labour Movement, still burns unquenched in the hearts of all such, and we meet again and clasp hands on a common ground - in a common cause.

To the younger generation my experiences may serve as a useful guide in the present and coming days of strife. The wiles of Labour politicians – the futility of fearful and reactionary Labour leaders have been revealed in this record, and the lessons I and others so bitterly learned should preclude any further waste of time and enthusiasm in vainly endeavouring to make figs blossom and fruit on barren trees.

My philosophy of life with all its tempestuous outpourings, its oft times agonising moments, have yet brought me joy and contentment. It has never failed me in the darkest hours, but has ever strengthened and comforted me. I temperamentally shrink from “wearing my heart on my sleeve for daws to peck at,” but I have honestly endeavoured in these memoirs to frankly record intimacies of my life in many directions.

In closing this all too unsatisfying story of my life – even heart – I feel the human creed of that great lover of Humanity, Ingersoll, aptly sounds the need of the present day: “Justice is the only worship. Love is the only priest. Ignorance is the only slavery. Happiness is the only good. The time to be happy is now. The place to be happy is here. The way to be happy is to make other people so.”

“LET THERE BE LIGHT.”

Catalogue of Educational Propaganda Books.

(See page 138)

The following catalogue of books, bearing on the working class fight for a regenerated society, has been compiled by the Literature Committee elected at the Rockhampton Conference of the A.W.A. last January, 1913. The committee realise the urgent necessity that exists for propaganda based on the economic and ethical principles of the Labour movement, and this is the reason why this attempt has been made to place in the hands of the workers the thoughts and aspirations of the intellectuals and writers of the Forward Movement.

The catalogue is of necessity limited, as there is great difficulty in securing prices, etc. Still it covers a wide range, and all the books are of a very high literary and economic value.

There is a great dearth of such books amongst the booksellers of Australia, and at present many will have to be obtained from Europe and America, which means a delay of three or four months from the date of ordering. A number, however, can be procured in Australasia.

Money must accompany orders (which will be immediately acknowledged). Postage is not included in the listed prices, which in some instances, however, may be reduced.

The committee believe that this effort to concentrate and circulate books of this character will bear good fruit, and shortly evolve into a larger and more systematic sphere than is possible at present. Individuals as well as branches, etc., will be attended to on receipt of orders, as it is desirous to assist all seeking knowledge and not to restrict it to any section of workers.

No profit is made out of this scheme, and all the work in connection with it is cheerfully volunteered, all that is asked in return, is for the workers to avail themselves of this opportunity to acquire knowledge and strength, and by

active co-operation make it of permanent and invaluable assistance to the Labour cause generally. The committee will welcome enquiries, and do everything possible to assist those who are anxious to help in this too long neglected work.

BOOKS WORTH READING

Economics and Sociological

Soul of Man under Socialism.-Oscar Wilde 1/3
My Country Right or Wrong.-G. Herve 1/-
Studies in Socialism.-Jaures 1/6
Fabian Essays on Socialism 1/6
Fabian Tracts (complete set, bound) 4/6
Socialism and Superior Brains.-B. Shaw 1/-
Socialism and Religion.-Fabian Society 1/-
Political Economy for Plain People.-Smith Adams 1/-
History of Trades Unionism-Sydney Webb 7/6
Fields, Factories and Workshops-P. Kropotkin 1/-
The Struggle for Existence.-Mills 10/6
The Old Order and the New.-Morrison Davidson
The Gospel of the Poor
Annals of Toil (4 volumes)
Co-operative Commonwealth.-L. Gronlund 2/6
Our Destiny.,-L. Gronlund 2/6
Political Justice.-Godwin 2/6
The Evolution of Property-P. Lafargue 2/6
The Ethics of Socialism.-Belfort Bax 2/6
The Religion of Socialism.-Belfort Bax 2/6
Outlooks from the New Standpoint.-Belfort Bax 2/6
Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure.-Ed. Carpenter 2/6
England’s Ideal. — Ed. Carpenter 2/6
Work and Wages. — Thorold Rogers 2/6
Strikes and Social Problerns. — J. S. Nicholson 3/6
Contemporary Social Problems. — A. Loria 2/6

Economic Foundations of Society. — A. Loria

The Communist Manifesto. — Marx and Engels 2/3

Woman, Past, Present and Future. — A. Bebel

The Common Sense of Socialism. — Spargo, 4/-

Revolutionary Essays. — P. Burrowes 4/-

The Class Struggle. — Kautsky 2/3

Socialism, Utopian and Scientific.-F. Engels 2/-

The Social Revolution. — Kautsky 2/-

Ethics and the Materialistic Conception of History. — Kautsky

Materialistic Conception of History. — Labriola 4/-

The Evolution of Property. — Lafargue 2/-

The Right to be Lazy, etc. — Lafargue 2/-

Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome. — Bax and Morris 2/-

Socialism: Positive and Negative — R. Rives La Monte 2/-

What Are We Here For? — T. Dundas Todd 2/-

War: What For? — Kirkpatrick 4/6

Mutual Aid.-P. Kropotkin

The Labour Unrest, — F. Henderson 2/6

The Case for Socialism. — F. Henderson2/6

Socialism and Positive Science. — Enrico Ferri 1/6

Collectivism and Industrial Evolution. — Emile Vanderveld 1/6

Child and State. — Margaret McMillan 1/6

The Coming Force. — F. Rose 1/6

Sabotage. — Emile Pouget 2/-

The American Farmer — Simons 2/-

The Common Sense of Socialism. — J.Spargo 4/-

Social Unrest. — Brooks 6/-

Socialists at Work — R. Hunter 6/

Origin of the Family.-F. Engels 2/-

Critique of Political Economy. — Karl Marx 4/-

Capital (3 volumes). — Karl Marx. Per volume

Memoirs and Biographical

Memoirs of a Revolutionist. — P. Kropotkin

John Ruskin. — F. Harrison 2/6

William Morris. — A Noyes 2/6

Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life. — J. Holyoake 3/-

Life of Robert Owen — Lloyd, Jones

Jean Paul Marat. — B. Bax 2/6

How I Became a Socialist. — Hyndman, Morris 1/3

Memoirs of Marx. — Liebknecht 2/-

Tolstol: His Life and Work 2/-

Life of Victor Grayson 2/-

Debs' (Eugene) Life, Writings, and Speeches 4/-

Karl Marx: His Life and Work.-J. Spargo 8/6

Robert Burns and the Common People. — W. Stewart 2/-

Walt Whitman: A Study. — M. Tupper 4/-

Poetry, Etc.

Shelley 2/6

W. Whitman 2/6

Lowell 2/6

Burns 2/6

Ballads and Lyrics of Socialism. — E. Nesbit 1/-

Historical

History of the French Revolution. — Kropotkin 7/6

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