

110th ANNIVERSARY

of the

Labor Council of New South Wales

INTRODUCTION

This booklet does not pretend to be a comprehensive study of the history of the Labor Council of N.S.W. It is no more than a sketch, reporting on some significant events which have occurred over the last 110 years.

In the space available it would be impossible to describe the rich history of the Labor Council of N.S.W. But there are other reasons why this account can only be brief and inadequate: apart from Bede Nairn's book *Civilising Capitalism*, there are few books which discuss the Labor Council's history. There are significant gaps in what follows with less attention given to the post-World War One period compared to earlier history. Perhaps this booklet will stimulate a reader to write a detailed account of the "parliament of the union movement" in N.S.W.

Finally, a note on the Council's names. Originally it was known as the Trades and Labour Council of N.S.W. It was disbanded in July 1894 and reformed as the Sydney District Council of the Australian Labour Federation, then from 1900 as the Sydney Trades and Labor Council and from 1908, the Labor Council of N.S.W. To avoid confusion, this text will use the term Labor Council throughout.

PRODUCTION

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FORMATION

On 25th May, 1871, a small band of men drawn from six unions in the colony of New South Wales formed the Trades and Labor Council of New South Wales.

Earlier that year the Amalgamated Society of Engineers circularised 15 trade unions about the need for a forum for unions to meet, debate issues and discuss general trade questions.

The meeting marked a turning point in industrial relations and, although the possibility then seemed remote, a major social institution was created.

Prior to 1871, trade union activity fluctuated markedly. Groups of workers did meet together, sometimes to discuss their grievances, sometimes to declare themselves a union or trade society; but this always occurred with difficulty. In the 1830s and 1840s some unions, like meteors, sprang up, briefly lighted the sky and disappeared.

The *Sydney Gazette* of 21st January, 1840 published a leading article pointing out that there were Common Law provisions available against combinations of workers and warning that the strikers in a local dispute were liable to criminal action. Subsequently several compositors who were on strike were sentenced to two months hard labour for their actions.

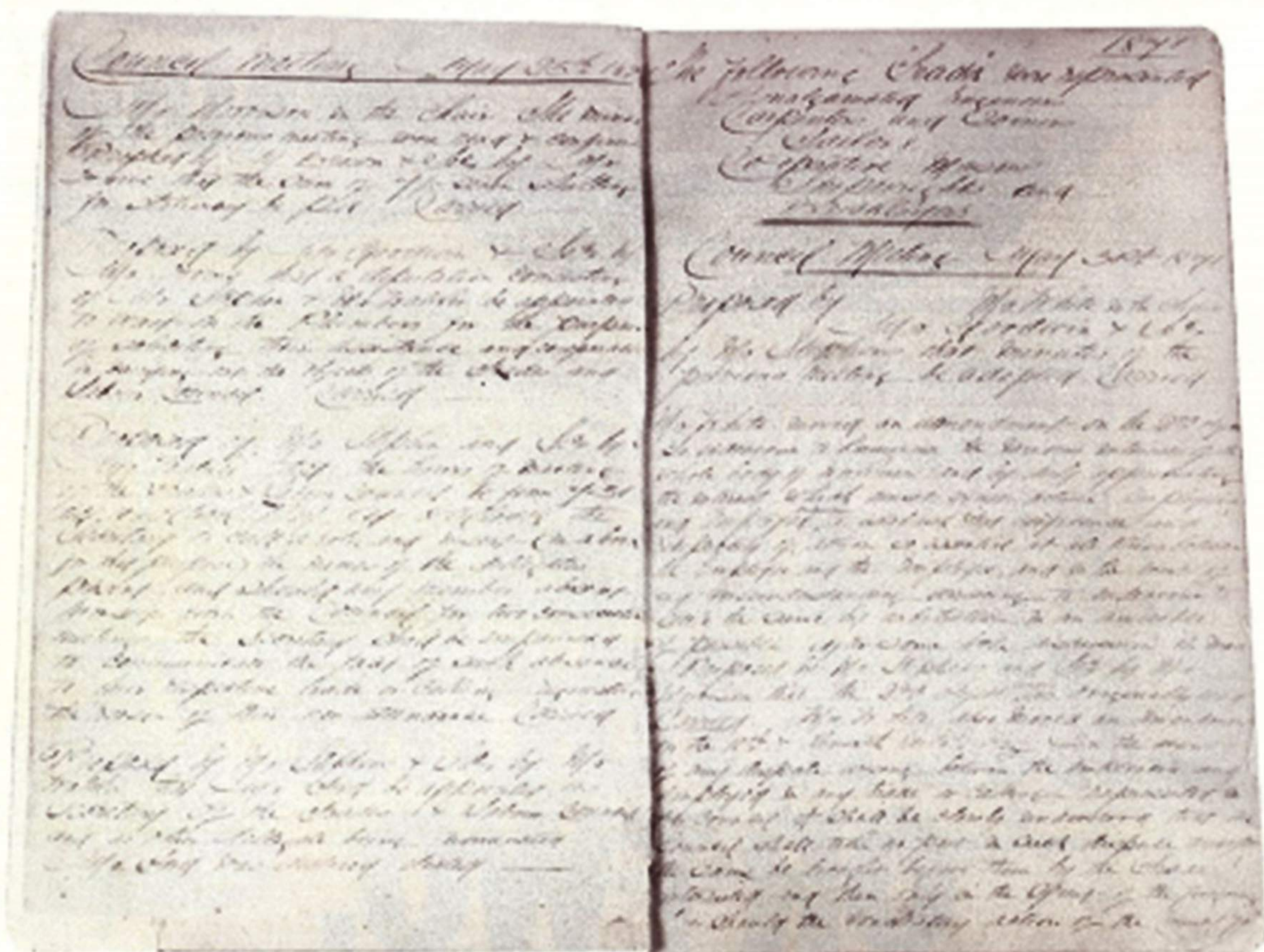
The orthodoxy of the times held that trade unions were a conspiracy in constraint of free trade, and any restraint to free trade was illegal.

After gold was discovered in 1856, a rush to the countryside to prospect, quarry and dig for the earth's riches brought great changes to Australian society. The shortage of skilled labour in the major towns and emerging cities led to the importing of skilled labour from the British Isles.

Some of these new immigrants fled to the bush to join the mad rush for gold, but that was not their contribution to Australian unionism! They brought with them ideas about unionism in their homeland. Some could reveal that in 1855 the Friendly Benefits Act was carried in Westminster. It extended legal protection to union funds so that they could no longer be stolen or embezzled with impunity.

The growth of secondary industry and the expansion of the pastoral industry laid the foundation for a new society, and the cracks which wrought changes to economic and social life.

Inflation and the erosion of the value of wages, hours of work, questions of training skilled workers and methods of improving



their skills were the matters which drove many workers to form their own unions and trade societies. By 1862 many skilled trades had formed unions. In the late 1860s, 1870s and early 1880s bush labourers, miners, semi-skilled and unskilled trades formed their unions.

And so the need for a representative body of unionists arose and the Labor Council was founded.

EARLY ACTIVITY

Francis Dixon played a prominent role in the formative years of the Council's existence. He brought with him skills developed in membership of the Eight Hour System Extension and General Short Hour League of which he was a former Secretary. The League operated between August 1869 and May 1871.

Disputes over shorter hours have been a common concern of the Labor Council ever since.

A serious dispute in the iron trades figured prominently in the Council's activities in 1873, when Dixon was Secretary of the Council.

In his history of the Labor Council of N.S.W., *Civillising Capitalism*, Bede Nairn wrote of Dixon's leadership:

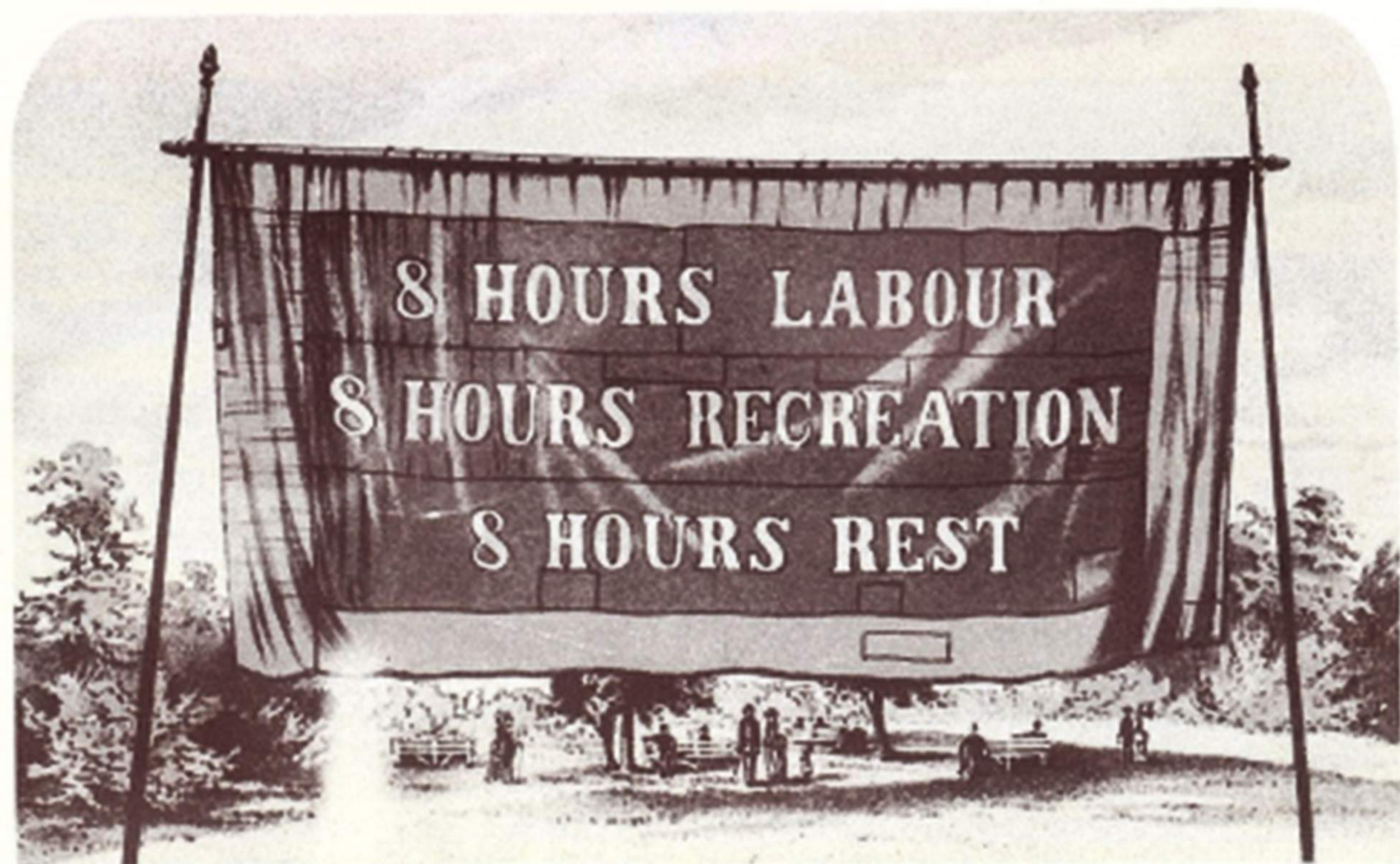
"Dixon's achievement mirrored the rising power of the Trades and Labor Council, which influenced the formation of some seventeen new unions in 1874, ten of which joined the Council to give it, by the end of the year, twenty-five affiliations out of some forty-one unions in the colony. They all sought the eight-hour day. Within the existing social framework the Trades and Labor Council has evoked a degree of working class self-realisation and solidarity."

Perhaps the most important achievement in the Council's first decade was the organisation of the first Inter-Colonial Trades Union Congress in 1879, presided over by Francis Dixon.

INTER-COLONIAL TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Mr. William Edmunds, a delegate from the Carpenters and Joiners Progressive Society stated, in opening the 1879 Inter-Colonial Trades Congress, "I will now call your attention to one of the greatest undertakings ever entered into on this side of the line for the working man — that is, the opening of the Working Men's Congress."

The Congress was held in Sydney in October 1879 in the Lecture Hall of the Mechanics School of Arts.



8 Hour Day Banner.

The topics submitted and debated at the Congress included:

- i The extension and consolidation of the Eight Hours System.
- ii Legalisation of trade unions.
- iii Encouragement of Native Industries.
- iv Education.
- v Workers' Compensation.

William Roylance, who was at this time Secretary of the Labor Council, was also Secretary of the Congress. He acknowledged the importance of political action to achieve the ultimate objectives of the trade union movement.

"The object of such assemblies, wherever they are held, is to bring the aggregate strength and influence of the Trades Societies to bear upon the various Legislatures, so that the latter shall be compelled to devote a fair proportion of their time and energy to measures bearing directly on labour questions."

Many of the delegates when speaking on the motion calling for the extension of the eight hour day vividly described their harsh working conditions. Mr. W. Davies, a coal-miner, stated that:

"As a boy, he had been taken to the pit at 4 o'clock in the morning, and kept there till 6 in the evening. That was before the laws of 1855 came into force in England. Since he had been in the colony, he had also suffered from long hours, but he sincerely hoped those times would not come again."

Delegate Atkinson from the Shipwrights Provident Union of New South Wales warned:

"Some of the employers would be only too glad to grind them down under the old system again. Under that system a man went to work in the dark and returned in the dark, and only saw the faces of his wife and children in the sunlight about once a week."

During the debate on the issue of the legalisation of trade unions, delegate White from the Labor Council reflected on some still timely truths.

"If it was a conspiracy for men to combine to get the best price for their labour, surely it was conspiracy for men to combine to raise the price of the necessaries of life."

He also stated that in countries which oppressed trade unions "by the hand of tyranny, other societies sprang up of a secret nature and hellish character."



William Roylance, Secretary of the Labor Council and Secretary of the First Inter-Colonial Trade Union Congress, 1879.

Delegate Garrard from the Eight Hours Conference of Iron Trades Society argued that trade unions were performing a good service by providing for unemployment, tool, sick, funeral, accident and superannuation benefits.

Delegate White on the question of protection and fostering of native industries successfully moved an important resolution:

"That this Congress urgently impresses on the various Governments of these colonies the necessity of regulating their fiscal policy so as to develop the resources of Australia, and to give encouragement to colonial industry."

The issues of free trade and protectionism featured significantly in this debate.

Mr. Edmunds, delegate from the Carpenters and Joiners Progressive Society expressed himself strongly in favour of protection to native industries. He instanced cases where the importation of foreign articles (which could have been produced in the colony) had caused numbers of men to be dismissed from work.



Inter-Colonial Trade Union Congress leaders, 1879.

Many of the issues covered at the Congress — the legality of trade unions, the right to take industrial action, the future of manufacturing industry — are timeless. The Congress, and those that followed, were important in concentrating the Labor Council's attention on issues vital to the future of the union movement.

THE PERIOD PRIOR TO FEDERATION

The Labor Council was dominated by two major questions during its first thirty years: how could it hope to influence government? and, what was the best means to settle industrial disputes? One question led to the formation of the Australian Labor Party, the other to the development of conciliation and arbitration.

Only three years after its foundation, the Labor Council ran Angus Cameron, its Secretary, for a seat in Parliament. In 1874 Cameron won a seat in the electorate of West Sydney and for the first time the voice of labour reverberated in the chamber of the Legislative Assembly of N.S.W.

A trickle of independents drawn from the union movement joined Cameron in the elections which followed. These included E.W. O'Sullivan, President of the Labor Council in 1883, who was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1885.

But these successful candidates faced difficult dilemmas. As parliamentarians they had to deal with matters wider than industrial concerns; consider aligning with certain parliamentary groups in the hope that their support would lead to more favourable industrial legislation; wrestle with the potent forces of protectionism and free trade; communicate to the trade unions their views and discuss with the unions and the Labor Council questions of policy and tactics.

The election of unionists considerably improved the status of the Labor Council. Unions were not to be sneezed at: they could marshal votes which could determine the government of N.S.W.

Cameron and the other "labour independents" could advise the Labor Council about the foibles of Ministers, and the points that might be made in deputations to Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Labor Council also grew in status through its conciliation role with employers and its power to give its stamp of approval to strikes — a reluctant weapon limited to intractable disputes.

In 1888 an important event in the centenary of the settlement of Australia and the union movement took place: the laying of the foundation stone of the Sydney Trades Hall by the Governor, Lord Carrington.

The Labor Council had established a committee to consider erecting and maintaining "meeting rooms for the artificers, operatives and others in and around Sydney". However in November 1883 the committee disbanded having got nowhere. A new committee was formed and on 14th December, 1883, the Trades Hall and Literary Institute — completely independent of the Labor Council — conducted its first meeting. This body captured the imagination of the unions and the community and raised the finances for the construction of the Trades Hall.

At the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone on 29th January, 1888, Mr. West, the President of the Trades Hall, was reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald* to have said:



E.W. O'Sullivan



Angus Cameron

"I may tell you that in the past, trade unionism was not looked upon favourably by men in power, except, perhaps, as a means of extorting from those who were opposed to them all they possibly could, but such is no longer the case. [hear, hear]"

Sir Henry Parkes observed on the same occasion:

"Sir Robert Peel, in one of his greatest speeches, in alluding to the working classes, called them the great class that lay at the foundation of other classes; and it is easy to see — a moment's reflection will conduct you to that issue — that no other class could exist if it were not for the working class. [cheers] When I have approached this noble city which has been called into queenly existence within 100 years — when I have approached this noble city from any elevation and seen the brilliant wilderness of stately buildings extending for miles and miles — and when I have reflected that every brick and every stone and every trowel of mortar which went to erect these noble buildings was due to the working classes, then I have realised that wise observation of the great Peel — that you are the foundation of every class in society." [renewed cheering]

These brilliant speeches could not obscure the forces determined to break the backs of the unions.

Between 1890-1894 a series of strikes, during the great depression of those years, changed the course of Australian history.

In 1890 the maritime workers in N.S.W. came out in support of the maritime workers in Melbourne who had gone out on strike in August, 1890 over employer hostility to the Marine Officers' Association's decision to affiliate with the Melbourne Trades Hall Association.

In the same year the Australian Shearers' Union, the forerunner to the Australian Workers' Union, faced a battle, not simply about wages or conditions, but over its survival.

The Pastoralists' Association asserted the right to employ non-union labour and make a contract of employment in whatever terms "freely" negotiated between employer and employee. The desperate economic plight of many unemployed shearers drove them to accept employment for low wages, below anything acceptable to the Australian Shearers' Union.

W.G. Spence's *History of the A.W.U.* records the turmoil of these years.

Strikes erupted all over the country. In Broken Hill police attacked strikers, and the wives of the strikers attacked scabs in a bitter dispute over the rights of unionism.

Broken Hill women attack scab labour, 1891.



Henry Lawson



In his discussion of the industrial events sweeping the country, Spence states that:

"The policy of the Union from its inception was conciliation. Copies of our rules and proposed agreement were sent to pastoralists a season ahead in all new country organised, and they were asked to meet us or suggest amendment. Accustomed to rule as he liked, not only over his shearing floor but over the people of his neighbourhood, the lordly squatter did not take kindly to the coming change. A considerable number saw the wisdom of being friendly, but a very large number thought they could ignore the Union, and never dreamt that men would hang together. With the exception of the Bourke district, the Union tried to introduce the system of engagement through the offices of the Union. Many sheepowners agreed to it, and were well satisfied with the teams of men sent to them. Engagement in this way would keep the men away from the shed and would enable them to be sure of a start when they got there. Determined opposition on the part of the Riverina pastoralists soon found the weak-kneed members of the Union, and the fight had no sooner begun than the Executive of the A.S.U. had to change its tactics."

The battle between squatter and unionist, scab and unionist raged on throughout the 1890s.

I don't care if the cause be wrong,
Or if the cause be right —
I've had my day and sung my song,
And fought the bitter fight,
In truth at times I can't tell what
The men are driving at,
But I've been Union thirty years
And I'm too old to rat.

Henry Lawson

May 26th 1894

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pledge practically identical with the one now presented. Mr. Holman thereupon stated, with the concurrence of his confederates, that had such a proposal been made at the conference (November), he would have recommended its adoption. If the gentlemen have not abandoned their former position, there need be no barrier to a pacific settlement.

Yours faithfully
Hugh Cook

Form of Pledge submitted to Mediators by Messrs Cook & Brewster

I hereby give my pledge that if not selected as a candidate for Parliament by this Council, I will not oppose the properly selected candidate. I will further if elected to Parliament vote with the party on all planks of the Labor Platform. I will loyally support the elected leader in all attempts to carry these principles into Law.

Signed,

Mr. Cook had assumed that the members who had elected him as leader would endorse this pledge if the Mediator Committee approved of it. But he believed that Mr. Cook had spoken on behalf of members who had never seen this pledge. Mr. Cook had supplied him with the names of 15 of the Party whom he thought were agreeable to the pledge he submitted, the names of whom were as follows:—

Messrs Cook, Black, G. D. Black, Linnell, Gutter, Danahy, Duvally, Edlin, Cogan, Gardiner, Hells, Houghton, Hincks, Langwell, Nicholson, Ross, Williams & Brewster. — Three of the members referred to were out of the city at the time, Messrs Williams, Ross, & Langwell, who could not be bound by Mr. Cook. In his Mr. Brewster's opinion, practically only two persons Messrs Cook & Brewster, could be bound to adhere to the submitted pledge, as neither of them could give the mediators a proper assurance that the 3 absent members together with other members mentioned would agree to their pledge. As he had previously stated he believed that there were from 8 to 12 of the members who would be loyal to Labor & he had endeavored to persuade them not to come out at once & stand by the League. He had arrived at the conclusion that there were some men on both sides who had not intention of co-operation. He however trusted that although the efforts of the mediators had failed steps would still be taken to bring the two conflicting parties together before the forthcoming general election. He was sorry this mission had not met with better success.

Report Received

The Labor Council meetings were scenes of intense debate over the issues raised by these disputes. Delegates criticised the State Government for supporting the employers.

On 7th November, 1890, Peter Joseph Brennan, a prominent delegate, moved the following historic resolution:

"That the Parliamentary Committee be instructed to consider at its next meeting the advisability of bringing forward Labor candidates at the next general elections, and the said Committee draw up a Labor platform and submit same to Council."

This resolution gave birth to the Australian Labor Party. In June 1891 a snap election resulted in the success of 35 Labor candidates in the 141 member Legislative Assembly.

What were the circumstances that led the fledgling trade union movement to establish its own political party? And why had its efforts met with such spectacular success?

The world as it existed in N.S.W. at that time included, for unskilled labour, a twelve hour day — seven days a week.

In 1893 a survey of Melbourne revealed that shop assistants and waitresses were working for up to ninety hours a week, for wages which came to about a penny an hour. Similar conditions existed in N.S.W. Women workers toiled for wages half those of men. Children were found working in factories for no wages at all — a savage form of child care.

A shearer would have to work for "ten hours or more a day, in a stinking shed with an iron roof, where temperatures were often well over 100 degrees. At night he went to a rough bunkhouse and tried to sleep on flea-ridden sacking stretched across a couple of poles. The food was dirty and monotonous — tea,

bread, golden syrup and interminable mutton chops. Washing facilities and toilet facilities were primitive, medical care virtually non-existent. Cuts and scratches were treated with the "tar" used for the sheep, and epidemics of diarrhoea were frequent." (Quoted from J. Child, *Unionism and the Labor Movement*.)

These inhumane conditions and the harsh defeats of the union movement convinced it to enter politics.

The *Bulletin* reflected in a commentary on the 1891 election result, that the Labor Party had obtained its great support because it:

"wants to wipe out the great art and swindle of politics, by taking the direct vote of the whole people on all important questions; it wants no imported Governors nor borrowed Generals nor hollow military pomp, no foreign titles nor foreign capitalists, and no foreign loans, no cheap labour or low-priced and diseased emigrants from the slums of Europe and Asia, no more religious feuds, no National Anthem nor similar doggerel, no Upper House and no more party government. It wants co-operation in place of capitalism, national insurance instead of relief works and benevolent asylums, a universal eight hours' system."

The raw reformers of 1891 were soon embroiled in an issue of fundamental importance: were they bound by caucus decisions?

This issue inflamed Labor Council meetings as delegates attacked some parliamentarians for letting the movement down.

Between 1891-1894 discussion on these matters affected many meetings of the Labor Council.

In 1894, on the motion of W.A. Holman, the Labor Electoral League Conference decided that every Labor candidate must be pledged "... to vote on every occasion specified ... as the majority of the parliamentary Labor Party may in caucus decide."

The battle over this question led to the defection from Labor's ranks of many politicians and the emergence of a more united party.

Conciliation and arbitration was the other important issue to dominate Labor Council proceedings in this period.

At the Inter-Colonial Congress of 1889 it was said that "the evils resulting from strikes and lockouts are such that it should form a part of the duty of every trade unionist never to resort to them without having first offered arbitration."

In the 1890s the popularity of the argument that a third party should judge a dispute if the contestants could not agree led to the conciliation and arbitration process being developed in all the States. Unions were ambivalent in



J.C. Watson, former President of the Labor Council, Prime Minister of Australia, 1904.

their attitudes — many distrusted the idea of judges deciding an issue about which they might know nothing.

Federal Labor Leader J.C. Watson, a former President of the Labor Council and Prime Minister in 1904, summed up these reservations in his 1903 speech in support of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Bill:

"I might mention that about twelve years ago I was not very enamoured of the idea of compulsory arbitration. It seemed to me that considering the class bias which prevailed in the legislatures of those days, and bearing in mind that the bias was, to some extent, reflected in the appointments to the Judicial Bench, it was not a wise thing for us, when we had some chance of winning by means of a strike, to hand over to a body in which we were unrepresented the power to determine all the industrial troubles which arose."

The Parliamentary Labor Leaders defended their right to persuade the Government to amend the legislation rather than opposing it holus bolus. McGowen and Holman argued that they had ameliorated the worst aspects of the Bill and that the labour movement should accept the law, abide by it and seek to change the legislation by electing a Labor Government.

In 1910 the first N.S.W. Labor Government, headed by Premier McGowen, was formed. The unreformed Legislative Council proved a

stumbling block, however, to the Government's industrial and social reforms.

In 1910 the first stable Federal Labor Ministry was elected under Prime Minister Andrew Fisher.

Trade unionists were well represented in both State and Federal Cabinets. Important administrative positions were held by union officials and a new enthusiasm gripped the labour movement: the State could now be used to usher in new reforms in social and economic relations.



Wharf Labourers leaving the Oddfellows' Temple, Elizabeth Street, Sydney after a strike meeting, 1909.

In this period militant critics of compulsory arbitration and reformist politics began to be heard; some of their spokesmen rose to leading positions of power within key unions. The Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W. or "wobblies" as they were popularly known) were formed in Australia in 1907, two years after their foundation in the United States. The "wobblies" stimulated ideas of aggressive socialism, militant industrial action and the formation of One Big Union to cover all union-

ists. They saw their role as one of converting unions to instruments for the development of a socialist state.

Many were active in the forums of the Labor Council where they provided fresh ideas for debate. However, the I.W.W.'s rousing slogans found little favour among mainstream unionists who believed in the constitutional path of electing Labor governments to power so as to implement favourable industrial, social and economic policies.



THE GOAL: GRAND INTERNATIONAL MATCH FOR MAYDAY 1924
 SOCIALIST SCORERS V. CAPITALIST SCORCHERS.
 Socialist (centre forward) "want to keep it all to y'self, do you? -
 well, that's our goal, anyway" * * * * *

A TYPICAL LABOR COUNCIL MEETING

On 30th July, 1914, the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* carried an article which has rarely been repeated: a detailed description of what takes place at a typical Labor Council meeting. It is worth quoting at length from this article:

“From the ground floor to the top story, every stairway is thronged as the meeting hour approaches. All kinds of avocations are represented. There are the well-dressed engineers and the less-fashionable labourers; the trim clerks and the boisterous wharf men; boilermakers listening, with hand to ear, to a mate who is not by any means whispering — for a few years at this craft usually means deafness; plasterers, each with a corn on his thumb from the constant handling of the trowel, young men, active and athletic, and old men, bent and screwed

We only struggle for our right,
Our foes their hate will rue,
If they attempt a knightly fight
With the Knights of Labour true.

Bernard O'Dowd
(quoted in the *Recorder*, April 1867)

by many years of manual labour; unionists in the pride of life, full of ideas of “the new unionism”, and the “old hand” who declines to listen to new-fangled views — such ‘wild notions’ were reckoned of no account when he was a young man, yet these foolish fellows are advocating them with the matter of fact air that should come only after many years of experience . . .

“The weekly meeting of the Sydney Labor Council is in its way a remarkable gathering. From 100 to 200 delegates fill the chairs, which are arranged on each side of a wide central passageway. At one end of this the President is enthroned on a dias, below him, “on the floor of the House”, the Secretary at his table. At the other end of the room the Vice-President listens, with finger on the bell, for the buzz of conversation that disturbs the speakers’ eloquence

"And, if the weekly parliament of the unions has enlarged its sphere of influence to include the Governments of the State and Commonwealth, the individual union is also constantly increasing its area of operations. From mere matters of wages and conditions it has passed on to the stage where it insists on announcing to the employer that its members desire alterations in the conduct of his business -- that only a dozen bricks must be carried in a hod, or that only forty are to be wheeled in a barrow."

In a significant observation, the article also stated:

"The common idea that the officials ferment the labour troubles that arise is seldom borne out in experience. Not often is it to

Liberty! name of warning!
Did you feel your pulses beat?
As ye marching, moved this morning
All down the cheering street?
In your Federated freedom,
In your manliness allied,
While the badges of your labor
Were the banners of your pride.

Marcus Clarke, *An Australian Paean* — 1876

the interest of the secretary or president to "stir things up". When he does, it is because he knows that the members want a certain action to be taken, and, if he does not take it, he will receive at their hands a castigation for neglect of duty. The secretary knows that any serious disturbance spells uncertainty; that a mistake in judgment at a critical moment may cause acute dissatisfaction, and that a reshuffle of the cards may mean that he will lose his job. Thus officials usually spring from the less radical members, or, if they reach office through preaching radical doctrines, they soon steady down -- and denounce the budding radical of the next era as a 'red ragger', a 'crank' and a 'disruptionist'."

In conclusion the article proclaimed:

"The floor of the union is a school of debate in which all matters discussed are taken seriously. The one shilling increase is of great import to the man getting eight shillings a day, and the half-hour sliced off the working week is of equal moment to him. Nowhere else but in Parliament is

there so wide a range of subjects dealt with, as in the union. Associations of all kinds write for financial and moral support. Hospitals, social purity leagues, temperance societies, the Sunday Freedom Association, and various educational bodies approach it, sometimes with permission, in the form of a deputation. Each matter has to be definitely settled. The subject is discussed on its intrinsic merits; the question of finance comes up; will the exchequer stand the strain of a donation? No wonder the ordinary union official can express himself clearly—on any occasion, and with commendable brevity, upon nearly any subject of the day. He may not always be grammatical, but he lets one know what he means. Sometimes a matter is originated in the union. It is referred to a committee, brought back in the form of a report, discussed again, the report amended, and then sent on to the Labor Council or Labor Federation, to be further amended, and finally referred to all the unions concerned for endorsement. The final result may not be the best possible, but it embodies the majority view, and the discussion and rediscussion represent an enormous educational effect. There are unionists who may be said to have gained their entire education in the union."

But this education in a school of "hard knocks" was not sufficient for many delegates. Two years earlier in 1912, Dave Stewart, a delegate to the Labor Council from the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners had moved that the Labor Council appoint a committee to report on the advisability of sponsoring a scheme for working class education.

In 1913, arising from a report to the Labor Council from this committee, the Workers Educational Association of N.S.W. was formed. The W.E.A. ran classes on industrial law and liberal education, popularising among workers an interest in educational matters.

Writing in the Labor Council's circular on education in March 1913, Stewart stated: "The worker requires education, not only for the fuller life which education gives, and which should be the right of all mankind to enjoy, but he needs it that he may be able to grapple wisely with the many problems of his own position as a worker."

The formation of the W.E.A. illustrated the progressive approach of the Labor Council to further the interests of its members.



Dave Stewart, Founder of the W.E.A.

THE W.E.A.'S FIRST YEAR

Esmond Higgins, in his short history of the W.E.A., *David Stewart and the W.E.A.*, comments:

"Apart from his negotiations with the Government and the University, Stewart's main concern in 1914 was to win more trade union support for the W.E.A. Whatever he might have hoped, he did not find that workers generally shared his passion for education or wanted to build their own educational agency. Only a few individuals opposed the W.E.A. on the "Independent Working Class Education" principles favoured by the National Council of Labour Colleges and the Plebs League, which rejected any education provided by the Universities and financed by the State as likely to seduce workers from their responsibilities in the class struggle. There were, however, many who thought it was enough to leave all educational activity to the State and more still who saw no reason why workers should bother with non-vocational education. 'What the hell does a brickie's labourer want with culture?', asked the Secretary of the Builders Labourers' Union."

WORLD WAR ONE

On 2nd October, 1915, William Holman, Premier of N.S.W., spoke in praise of the Labor Council at the Eight Hour Day Dinner in Sydney. "If ever I cannot meet that body with a clean conscience and with clean hands, that moment I will cease to be Premier of the State."

World War One raised an issue that divided and split the Australian Labor Party and the trade union movement. Conscription wrecked the Federal and N.S.W. Labor Governments

with both Prime Minister Hughes and Premier Holman crossing over to the anti-Labor side of politics. Holman thus disproved his prediction of October 1915.

The story of this split has been told many times, so there is no need to recount it here.

In 1917 the Labor Council issued a declaration on "War and Recruiting" which stated the reasons why the Labor Council was not in support of the recruiting campaign and its support for an immediate armistice.



Sydney men who had been called up for service under the Commonwealth Defence Act.



N.S.W. LABOR COUNCIL'S DECLARATION RE THE WAR AND RECRUITING.

That this Council, after careful consideration of the war, and the issues involved, and being fully seized with the momentous nature of such issues, declares:—

(1) That careful consideration should be given to the question pressed by Lords Morley, Brassey, Loreburn (ex-Chancellor of England), Farrer, Beauchamp, and Lansdowne, namely: "Is it worth while indefinitely to prolong the awful struggle, with its lamentable sacrifice of life, and the waste of resources not easily to be replaced?"

(2) That we deeply regret that the Federal Government ignored the Peace proposals of the P.L.L. Conference last June, and this Council's endorsement in January last of the preamble of those proposals, and demand "that the Allied Governments immediately initiate negotiations for Peace."

(3) That the secret treaties of the Allied Governments, as published in the press—disclosing designs of territorial aggrandisement; the placing of an army of approximately 80,000 armed men in Ireland; the Allied Governments' attitude towards the working-class Government in Russia; Mr. Hughes's speech before the manufacturers of this city, in which he thanked God that Germany had plunged the world into this war; and the fact that all anti-Labor forces are in favor of the war and its continuance, justify grave doubts regarding the contention that the Allied Governments are fighting solely for liberty, justice, and democracy.

(4) That the Allied statesmen's rejection of Chancellor von Hollweg's Peace offer (December 12/16), President Wilson's "Appeals to belligerents" (December 22/16, and January 24/17), the Pope's appeal (August 2/17), Germany's Peace offer (December 25/17), and the Allied Government's refusal of passports to Labor Leaders to attend the Stockholm Peace Conference (August, 1917), and the failure of the Allied statesmen to initiate Peace negotiations enable the German militarists to persuade the German workers that the Allied Governments are more concerned about rendering Germany impotent as a competitor in the world markets than in securing an early and just Peace.

(5) That the economic resolutions of the Paris Conference, the demand for the annexation of the

German colonies, the declarations in favor of "crushing Germany," and other imperialistic utterances of bellicose statesmen and publicists have strengthened, and are still strengthening, the German ruling class, and have prolonged, and are still prolonging, the war.

(6) That as all modern wars are caused by the conflicting interests of different sections of the capitalist class, a "conclusive" or "permanent Peace" is not possible under Capitalism.

(7) That the secret conference of English, French, and German financiers in Switzerland last September, for the purpose of devising means to control Labor after the war, proves that they place their class interests and the safeguarding of Capitalism above the welfare of suffering humanity.

(8) That the Federal Government's further attempt to introduce conscription since that secret conference, and its refusal to grant Mr. Foster a passport to Russia, have an evil significance—especially when combined with the wholesale suppression of Labor-Socialist literature and free speech, and the censorship, which is far worse than the English censorship.

(9) That the promises of the Nationalist Governments at the Recruiting Conference should be carried out as acts of justice: we refuse to accept them as bribes for lives.

(10) That the bleeding of the manhood of the white races to death, thereby forcing many millions of women to endure a life of celibacy and hard and uncongenial work, is a crime against civilisation.

(11) That the peoples of the belligerent nations are war-weary and long for Peace.

(12) That the greatest service we can render the men at the Front, their loved ones at home, and humanity in general is to do all in our power to stop the war.

Therefore, whilst fully expecting anti-Labor forces to misrepresent and calumniate our action, we refuse to take part in any recruiting campaign, and call upon the workers of this and all other belligerent countries to urge their respective Governments to immediately secure an armistice on all Fronts, and initiate negotiations for Peace.

LIBRARY OF ALAN

13 JUN 1972

MITCHELL LIBRARY



The Worker Print, St. Andrew's Place, Sydney.

The Labor Council was involved in the protracted transport strike of 1917. The Labor Council issued a report on this dispute which referred to the Electrical Trades Union, in July 1917, drawing the Labor Council's attention to the introduction of the "card system".

The report continues:

"The men ceased work at Randwick State Workshops on 2nd August, 1917, owing to the introduction, without due notice, of what is termed the Card System, a new system of recording amount of work done by each individual employee on each part of the various jobs. It was contended by the men that it was the Taylor Card System in use in the Ford Motor Car Workshops in America, and which has been described as a speeding-up system of the very worst type, and as such repudiated by the Trade Unionists of America. The Chief Railway Commissioner, on the other hand, contended that it was not the Taylor Card System, but merely an improvement upon the various costing systems in use throughout Australia."

From this beginning, erupted a major dispute leading to the jailing of strikers, the sacking of unionists and the creation by the public transport authorities of a scab union. In war-time the unions were under siege.

In 1917 the Labor Council declared itself in favour of a scheme for a "one big union" but this idea did not get very far. Only the miners changed their name to Workers' Industrial Union of Australia (Mining Department) as a gesture to the one big union idea.

The Domain, 15 August 1917

Minute by ^{ACTING} the Premier.

RAILWAY AND TRAMWAY STRIKE - GOVERNMENT'S FURTHER
RESOLUTIONS AND APPEAL FOR VOLUNTARINESS

With the concurrence of Cabinet I am sending the following further manifesto and appeal:-

TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW SOUTH WALES-

The Executive of Britain and her Allies have succeeded in plunging Australia into a General Strike.

For the time being they have crippled our Country's efforts to assist in the Great War.

AT THE BACK OF THIS STRIKE LIE THE I.W.W. AND THE REPUTATION OF DECEIT AND TRICKERY.

Without realising it, many Trade Unions have become the tools of Statists and Revolutionaries.

A great conspiracy has been operating for the past few years to prevent Australia rendering further assistance to Britain and her Allies.

Every strikers is playing a game for Statists. Every strikers is stopping from day to day the hands of the I.W.W. and marching to their death.

THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT ASHAMED TO WARN.

All strikers who volunteer for work will be accepted as strikers, and will be enrolled as members of new Unions registered under the Trades Unions Act.

We are for Australia and the Allies!

George W. Fuller
Acting Premier.

THE GARDEN YEARS

The Labor Council affairs in the inter-war years were charged with the powerful personalities of two men: Jock Garden and J.T. Lang.

Garden had been a member of the I.W.W., and Labor Council archives show him as having issued tickets for the Workers Industrial Union of Australia.

<p>Workers' Industrial Union of Australia 17-0261 [redacted]-20. No 2051 Province of N.S.W. Mining Dept. Mr. John Stanton Address Ardethan Division Issued at Sydney Date 6-10-1920 Issued by J. S. Garden Secretary.</p>	<p>Workers' Industrial Union of Australia. (O.B.U.) [redacted] 1920-21 PROVINCE OF N.S.W. No 2052 Mining Department. M of Is a Member of the above while loyally upholding the Principles of Industrial Unionism Issued at Date Issued by Membership Ticket £1 This Ticket Expires September 30th, 1921, and must be renewed by that date.</p>	<p>A W.I.U. Mining Dept. [redacted]-1920 [redacted] B W.I.U. Mining Dept. [redacted]-1920 [redacted] C W.I.U. Mining Dept. [redacted]-1920 [redacted] D W.I.U. Mining Dept. [redacted]-1920 [redacted] E W.I.U. Mining Dept. [redacted]-1920 [redacted]</p>
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In the early 1920s, when Secretary of the Labor Council, Garden joined the Communist Party of Australia (C.P.A.), which he had helped to form. In 1926, after the Communists were proscribed by the A.L.P., Garden resigned from the C.P.A. and in 1929 was readmitted to the A.L.P. But many of those around him were communists: in the late 1920s and early 1930s Jack Kavanagh, organiser of the Labor Council, and Jack Ryan, research officer, were leading C.P.A. members. Both, however, were expelled by the C.P.A. in the early 1930s. In 1922, the Labor Council affiliated to the Red International of Labor Unions (R.I.L.U.) — the international communist union federation. This affiliation was terminated in the middle 1930s.

The late 1920s and early 1930s were a period of economic stagnation and depression. In 1927 the Labor Council and the A.L.P. issued a pamphlet setting out opposition to Prime Minister Bruce's anti-trade union legislation.

The pamphlet stated:

"Bruce's discredited Referendum Proposals, which the people of Australia rejected in 1926, aimed at controlling the Trade Unions in the interests of the employers.

"The present Arbitration Bill seeks to do the same, and is in consequence a violation of the expressed will of the people of this country.

"The central feature of Bruce's 1926 Referendum proposals was the power to disband Trade Unions.

"The central feature of Bruce's 1927 Arbitration Bill is the power it confers on the Court to disband Trade Unions.

"Notice how this drastic Bill progresses in easy stages from giving the Court the power to cancel the registration, to granting the extraordinary power to disband any Trade Union."

Ultimately this campaign led to the defeat of the Bruce Government and the formation in 1929 of the Scullin Cabinet, the first Labor Government since the split of 1916.

The early 1930s was a period of disillusionment with the processes of conciliation and arbitration.

In 1931 Jock Garden wrote in the Labor Council's pamphlet *Arbitration Exposed*:

"One school regards the Arbitration System as an essential and logical development of the industrial relations between employers and workers which has replaced the haphazard relations of other countries with an organised system, and which, until recent

NO COMPROMISE!

ORGANISE
AGAINST...

Bruce's Anti-Trade

Union Bill.

PRICE 1d.

Issued Conjointly by the A.L.P. and Labor
Council of New South Wales

Tonylin & Wignone, Printers, 1-3 Goulburn St., Sydney.

Bruce's Anti-Trade Union Bill, 1927

years at least, has conferred certain advantages on all concerned.

"The other school of thought points out that the system of Arbitration would never have been permitted to be established in Australia by the ruling class unless it were designed to check the growing demands of the workers for a more adequate share of the ever-increasing result of their labour, and that the introduction of the system has resulted in:

1. The robbing of the workers of those increases which, on a rising market, they could have enforced by the exercise of their industrial strength.
2. The wholesale reduction of wages and lowering of living standards during the depression on a scale that would have been impossible without the machinery provided by the Courts.
3. The emasculation of the Trade Unions consequent upon their reliance upon Court decisions in place of the organisation and exercise of their industrial strength.

"Both these schools of thought are today, and have been for a number of years, united in the conviction that the Arbitration System has been seized upon by the ruling class for the purpose of carrying out the policy of the banks, financiers and the large scale industrialists, as exemplified in the proposals of Sir Otto Niemeyer and the Premiers' Plan, for the systematic degradation of the living standard of the Australian workers."

This bitter commentary represented the low ebb of relations between the Labor Council and the arbitration system. The coal and

timber strikes of the late 1920s and the economic depression shattered previous relations.

In January 1929 the Labor Council *Bulletin* stated:

"The timber merchants, aided by the press, are busily engaged in putting up a wail about the impossibility of carrying on the industry, unless the workers are prepared to accept longer hours and lower wages."

This wail was enough to convince the Commission which was persuaded that longer hours and a weaker award would prop-up the timber industry.

LABOR COUNCIL BULLETIN

31/1/29.

No. 20

Published
Weekly.

Weekly Bulletin Issued By
The Labor Council of N.S. Wales.

The Timber Merchants, aided by the Press, are busily engaged in putting up a wail about the impossibility of carrying on the industry, unless the workers are prepared to accept longer hours and lower wages.

At the same time they are also asserting that, owing to the fall off in the demand for timber due to the introduction of steel into the building industry, as well as the development of substitutes for wood in many other articles of use, that the return on the capital invested is not sufficient to justify the carrying on of the industry unless the workers are prepared to accept worse conditions.

We would like to know in what way the going back to the 48 hour week is going to benefit the thousands of workers who earn their living in the Timber industry. Assuming the statement re the lessened demand owing to the introduction of steel being correct, a return to the 48 hour week by the Timber workers would result in the throwing out of work of a considerable number of them.

The fact of the matter is that the boom in the industry has dropped, and that it is no longer able to pay the huge dividends which were common during the post war period. The capital of the larger companies would - if subject to close investigation - prove to be inflated, and those who possess these inflated stocks are desirous of still skimming the cream from the industry.

The balance sheets of the only company appearing in the financial register show that the shareholders in that company have received back two pounds for every one invested, even if we accept the figures of the reputed capitalisation.

And don't forget that they still own the plant and are still expecting the workers therein to keep on turning over a surplus to them, although they take no part in production.

It is time the worker woke up to the skin game that is played upon them. As a result of their labors they have built up huge establishments; paid for them out of the surplus existing over their wages and the operating costs; are still expected to go on producing even more of a surplus, even to the extent of working longer hours and accepting lower wages.

Industry in this as in other countries, has arrived at a stage where, if the workers are not to be driven down to an extreme poverty basis there must be a drastic reorganization in industry. The idea that the condition of the worker - his wife and family - have to be forced down in order to enable an idle parasite class to exist in luxury is one which can not be tolerated.

That competition in industry is becoming keener is apparent to everyone. What is not so apparent is that this competition arises from the increased productivity of the workers together with the fact that the wage received by the worker is much smaller, relative to production than formerly.

If the workers were receiving the value of the commodities they produce they would be able to occupy a house by themselves instead of having to share one with some other worker. This would call for more houses and there would be no glut upon the Timber or any other market.

It is obvious that the employers are not likely to suggest any such re-organisation. It is therefore the duty of the workers to organise to defeat any move to reduce wages or lengthen hours at the present time and also to organise for the purpose of eliminating capitalist control of the industries.

The 1929 Lukin Award, so named after Mr. Justice Lukin's decision on the Timber Industry, led to a strike lasting nearly a year. The Timber Workers' Union was smashed as a major force.

The Labor Council produced a pamphlet on the Lukin Award.

The pamphlet condemned the Commission's decision to increase working hours to forty-eight, and angrily stated:

"It is calculated that this longer working week would increase the number of unemployed timber workers by ten per cent, which is equivalent to throwing 2000 workers on the scrap heap.

"Statistics have indicated that by lengthening the working week the life of the worker is correspondingly shortened. Lukin's action, therefore, in introducing the longer working week is equivalent to **KILLING 20,000 WORKERS YEARS BEFORE THEIR TIME.**"

But these protests got nowhere: the timber workers were badly defeated.

Our parents toiled to make a home,
Hard grubbin 'twas and clearin'.
They wasn't crowded much with loads
When they was pioneerin'.
But now that we have made the land
A garden full of promise,
Old greed must crook 'is dirty hand
An' come ter take it from us.

So we must fly a rebel flag,
As others did before us;
And we must sing a rebel song,
And join in rebel chorus,
We'll make the tyrants feel the sting
O' those that they would throttle;
They needn't say the fault is ours,
If blood should stain the wattle.

Henry Lawson

The Lukin Award Provides:

1. An increase from 44 to 48 hours per week, with reduced pay.
2. Reductions in wages up to 18/- per week for men.
3. Reductions in wages of boys up to 26/- and over.
4. Increasing the number of apprentices from 1 apprentice to 8 men, to 1 to 4 men.
5. Employing cheap, unskilled, and inexperienced labor on dangerous machines.
6. Introducing the piece-work system without any safeguards as to the rates to be fixed.

Support the Timber Workers

for

It Will Be Your Turn Next!

A SURVEY OF THE LUKIN AWARD

WHICH REPRESENTS CAPITALISM'S

SHOCK ATTACK

ON THE

TIMBER WORKERS

Price, 1d.

Issued by Labor Council, Trades Hall,
Sydney.

The Labor Daily Limited, 4 Brisbane St., Sydney.

N.S.W. Labor politics and the Labor Council were greatly affected by the career of Jack Lang, Premier of N.S.W. from 1925-1927 and 1930-1932.

The story of Lang's power over the labour movement is well known. Limited space precludes raking over old coals in this booklet.

Under Garden's leadership a powerful alliance was forged from 1926 between the Labor Council and Lang. But during Lang's turbulent Premierships criticism arose concerning Lang's alleged dictatorial style.

By the middle 1930s a complete breach had occurred between Lang and the Labor Council. On 1st August, 1936, the Labor Council held a Conference, the report of which declared:

"The Conference convened by the Labor Council (the central organisation of the Trade Union Movement) held on Saturday, 1st August, 1936, was the outcome of dissatisfaction existing in the A.L.P. against the dictatorial control at present operating to the detriment of the Movement.

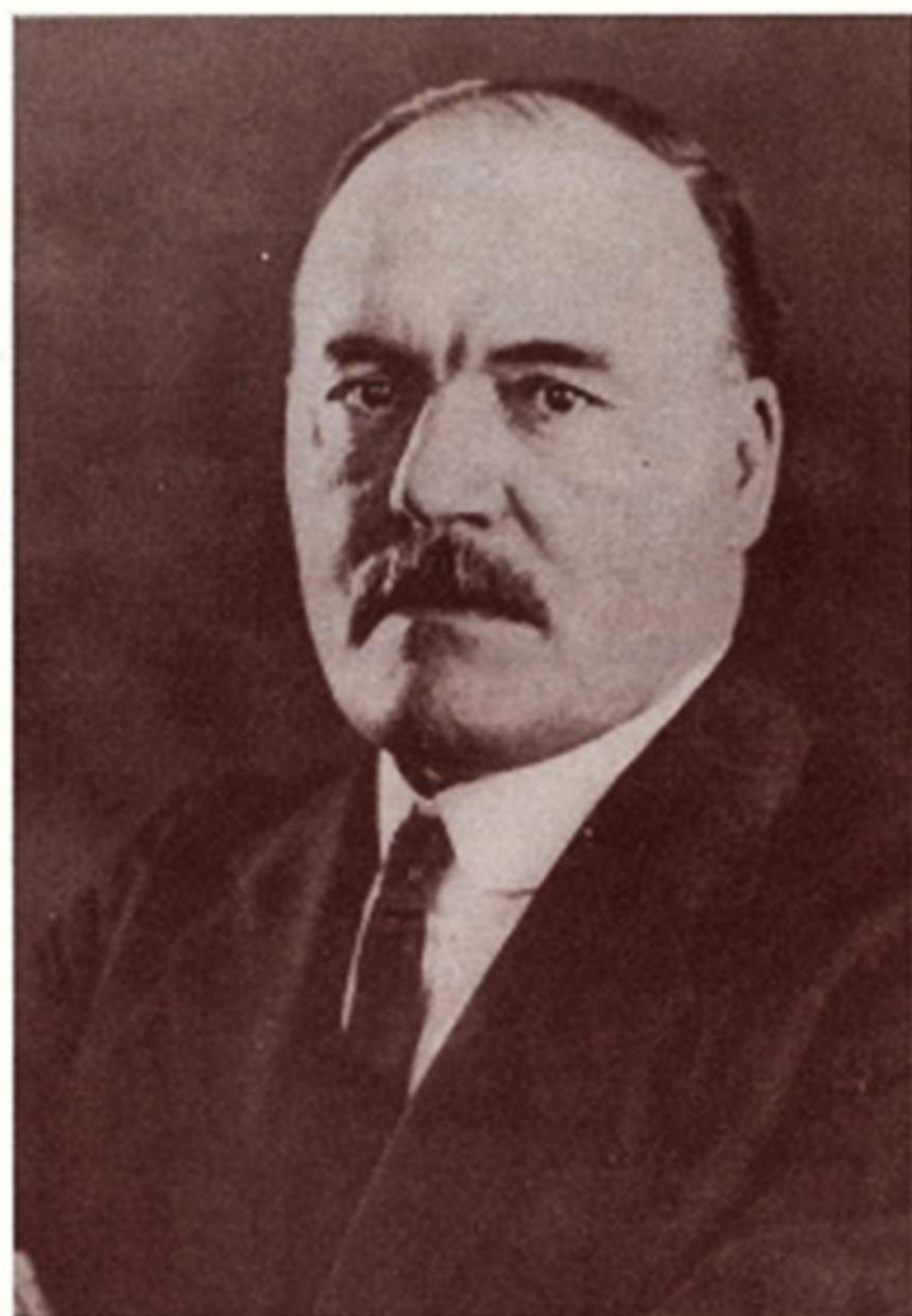
"The democratic control, for which the Party was once famed, no longer exists, hence the demand by the rank and file for greater local autonomy.

"The vitriolic attacks by those in control of the *Labor Daily* upon the Labor Council and Trade Union officers were resented by the delegates to Conference.

"The only crime that can be levelled against them is that they demanded a return to democracy as against the autocracy now dominating the Movement.

"The present disunity was the outcome of an attempt by the oligarchy to take control

of 2KY Broadcasting Station — but the Industrial Movement decided that Labor's free expression should remain under the control of the Trade Unions, therefore Garden had to pay the penalty and was expelled by the Executive under the guise of disruption."



Jack Lang.

DAILY NEWS LEVY FUND.19 Mr. Nº 9401 £ : :	<small>Labor Daily Ltd., Printers. — (40-Hour Week) — 2032</small>	DAILY NEWS LEVY FUND19 Received from the sum of Save the Daily News! Issued on behalf of Trade Union Movement. R. A. KING, Secretary, Labor Council. C. NELSON, Chairman, Board of Directors. £ : :
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Raffle Ticket Book used for *Daily News* fund-raising.

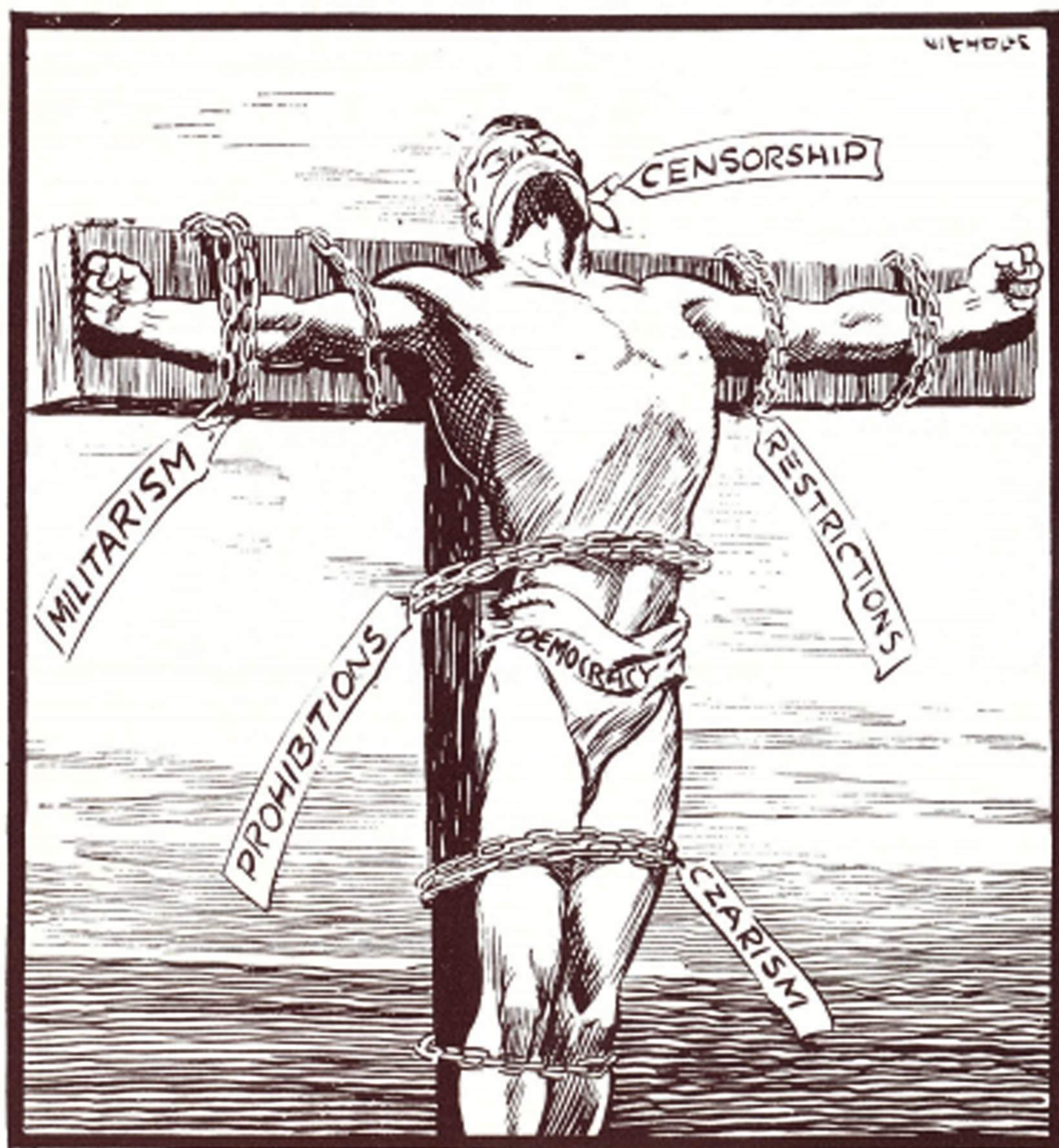
Garden was then the Federal M.H.R. for Cook. Throughout the later half of the 1930s, the N.S.W. labour movement was split between various factions.

The Labor Council retained control of radio station 2KY and the *Labor Daily* remained in the hands of Lang's supporters before going into liquidation. The Labor Council set up a rival newspaper, the *Daily News*, levying unions for the purpose and raising finances through raffles. But it was not enough: this publication ceased circulation by early 1940.

The unions were also concerned at denials of civil liberties during the 1930s. The semi-fascist New Guard was one of many threats that were opposed by organised labour.

By the advent of World War Two, divisions in the N.S.W. labour movement were partly papered over, partly healed, and greatly influenced by the feeling that there had been enough blood-letting to last a generation.

DEMOCRACY! IN DANGER!



Workers of all lands, Unite! You have nothing to lose
but your chains.

From Labor Council pamphlet
Defend Democratic Rights, 1935

WORLD WAR TWO

Co-operation between unions and the Federal Government, despite initial hesitancy on both sides, developed significantly during World War Two.

The Government nominated unionists to sit on wartime committees and boards. Early in 1940, the Labor Council of N.S.W. opposed the Menzies' Government's proposal to establish panels for nine groups of industries to deal with production and industrial matters. This was due, to some extent, to opposition to co-operating with a conservative government and apathy to the demands of war.

The formation of the Curtin Labor Government markedly changed trade union attitudes to the war. The Labor Council of N.S.W. was partly paralysed by divisions between the influential communist delegates who saw the war as imperialist in origin, and those reliving the conscription issue of the 1914-1918 war.

Curtin's courageous commitment to changing Labor policy on conscription, and the invasion of the U.S.S.R. by Germany were major factors in the Labor Council becoming wholly identified with the war effort.



Australian Jungle Fighter.

John Curtin with General Douglas MacArthur.



The Labor Council's commentaries on 2KY reflected this changed attitude. Sid Jordan, an official of the Labor Council, pronounced in a 1943 commentary:

"Every one of us, day after day, does something which, in the strict sense of the term, impedes the war effort. How many of us are living the austere life the Government has appealed for and which is necessary for a one hundred per cent effort? One could well ask, 'who will cast the first stone?'"

Labour historian Lloyd Ross has commented on the reorganisation of union-government relations in these years as follows:

"The results of this variegated pattern of co-operation and consultation depended

largely on the individuals concerned. Consultation was real, but seldom extended to the rank-and-file. Opposition, which would have developed if the trade union movement had not been consulted, was forestalled. However, few creative ideas were produced by the union movement, and few experiments or policies outlasted the war. Trade unions co-operated with governments, partly because the needs were obvious and urgent, partly because the governments were sympathetic to union demands and sensitive to union reactions; but the basic rhythms of union policies and actions were only modified."

Many Labor Council delegates served with the Australian Forces in Europe, Africa and the jungles of Asia.

Wednesday, March 31st.

No. 75

SID JORDAN'S
VIEWS ON THE NEWS

2KY
THE VOICE OF LABOR

3d

Publication of the News Commentary given by
SID JORDAN
on
STATION 2KY
at 8.00 p.m. every Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
Registered at the G.P.O. - Sydney, for
transmission by post as a periodical.

POST WAR YEARS

After 1945, the Labor Governments in Canberra (under Chifley) and in Macquarie Street (under McKell), the Labor Council was seized with expectations of creating a new social order.

A major campaign was launched on the "40 Hour Week". Labor Council speakers emphasised the discrimination between manual and clerical workers. Many white collar workers worked less than 44 hours, whereas blue collar workers generally put in 44 hours. Several pamphlets were produced which set out the economic arguments favourable to the 40 hour week campaign.

In 1947 the State Labor Government, as a result of Labor Council initiatives, legislated for the 40 hour week to apply to state awards. This precipitated the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission's decision to grant a 40 hour week in federal awards.

The number of strikes increased, but not at the same level as in the immediate post-war period following World War One. Demands for improved wages and conditions were made, modified, then pressed upon industries.

A major disturbance occurred in 1949 when miners in N.S.W. struck in protest at the Coal Industry Tribunal's delays in hearing their wage claims. The Miners Federation was controlled by the Communist Party of Australia

which was extremely powerful in many unions at this time. The Federal and N.S.W. Labor Governments condemned the strike, which became a battle between the C.P.A. and the Labor Governments.

The Labor Council of N.S.W. supported the Chifley Government's decision to send in troops to work the mines and thereby break the strike. Deep antagonisms were created within the union movement between communist union officials and the Labor Council leadership which strongly opposed them.



Joseph Benedict Chifley (1885-1951), became Prime Minister after the death of John Curtin, shortly before the defeat of Japan.



Front cover of Labor Council pamphlet *Women and the 40 Hour Week*.

Whatever the political differences, the Labor Council continued to conscientiously represent its affiliates, whatever their political complexion.

In the 1950s the Labor Council, with the A.C.T.U., led a campaign for equal wages to be paid to women in the workforce.

Mr. Jim Kenny, the Secretary of the Labor Council wrote in 1958 that "during the last three years equal pay has moved forward to a talking point of everyday affairs". Referring to legislation introduced by Premier Cahill, and the Premier's efforts to convene meetings at the Federal level over this issue, Mr. Kenny stated: "Mr. Cahill's action has dramatically lifted these half-hearted 'pow-wows' from jungle level into outer space. All our ingenuity and wit will now be required to control our satellite, keep it safely within orbit — that is, eventually get equality into the pay packets of the female earth dwellers."

The Labor Council's Equal Pay committee resolved in early 1958 that "the A.C.T.U. be requested that in all future basic wage claims to incorporate the common basic wage irrespective of sex".

Support for equality of opportunity and equal pay by the Labor Council had a major, if glacial, impact in changing attitudes within trade unions and on the Arbitration Commission.

In the early 1960s the Labor Council waged a major campaign on unemployment and social service payments. Leaflets were produced — some in different community languages.

This reflected the changing composition of the workforce. Many unions now covered large numbers of migrant workers.

Throughout the 1960s, a period of economic fortune, the Labor Council co-ordinated incremental improvements in wages and working conditions.

For example, in 1962 the Council mounted a campaign for better annual leave entitlements for workers covered by Federal awards. A pamphlet issued by the Labor Council on this subject stated:

"In N.S.W. the glaring injustice of the refusal to increase annual leave under Federal awards is apparent to all. A minimum of three weeks annual leave was won by the unions for all workers in N.S.W. under State awards when the Labor Government introduced special legislation in 1958 . . . more than half of the workers in N.S.W. already have what the Commission claims the economy cannot provide."

The Commission shortly afterwards admitted these arguments based on anomalies and merit and conceded three weeks annual leave.

This incident follows a familiar pattern: the success of the Labor Council in convincing the State Government of the merits of particular industrial legislation leads to a 'flow-on' federally.

**Migrant Workers Sign The Trade Union
Petition For Full Employment**

The New South Wales Labor Council are asking electors to sign a petition to be presented to the Menzies Government. The petition asks for action to help find jobs for the unemployed, to double social service payments, sickness, unemployed and old-age pensions, more money for housing, hospitals, schools and public works.

**Lavoratori Italiani Firmate Questo &
Petizione Dei Sindacati Australiana**

Il Consiglio del Lavoro del N.S.W. domanda a tutti di firmare la petizione per poterla presentare al Governo di Menzies. La petizione chiede per:
Una azione positiva per aiutare i disoccupati cercando di trovare un'occupazione.
Aumentare la quota di sussidio per i disoccupati, per i pensionati e per i malati.
Stanziano più capitale nelle costruzioni di case, ospedali, scuole, strade ecc. ecc.

METANAΣΤΕΣ ΥΠΟΓΡΑΨΑΤΕ ΑΥΤΗ ΤΗΝ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΗ

Το Συμβούλιο Κέντρο Μισθ Μελβούρνης, καλεί όλους να υπογράψουν αυτήν την έκκληση προς την Κυβέρνηση Μίντλες. Η έκκληση ζητά δράση από την Κυβέρνηση, προτείνοντας: να βρεθούν θέσεις εργασίας για τους άνεργους, να αυξηθούν οι αποδοχές ασθενών, των ανέργων και των ηλικιωμένων, να δοθούν περισσότερα χρήματα για να κτιστούν περισσότερα σπίτια, νοσοκομεία και σχολεία κ.λπ.

**IMMIGRANTEN UNTERZEICHNET
DIESES GESUCH**

Der Arbeiterrat (Labor Council) von New Süd Wales bittet jedermann ein Gesuch, das der Menzies Regierung unterbreitet wird, zu unterschreiben. Diese Forderungen lauten auf damit man hilft den Arbeitslosen Arbeit zu geben.
Krankenzuschuss Arbeitlosen — Unterstützung und Altersversorgung zu verdoppeln mehr Geld für Häuser, Hospitäler, Schulen und öffentliche Bauten.

AUTHORISED BY THE LABOR COUNCIL OF N.S.W., TRADES HALL, SYDNEY.
J. G. FARR, PRESIDENT. R. G. HARRIS, ACTING SECRETARY.
"Melbourn Herald" Print, 216a, Outborough Street, Sydney



Jim Kenny

Why the 40 Hour Week?



MORE JOBS FOR SERVICEMEN.
BETTER NATIONAL HEALTH.
HAPPIER, HEALTHIER HOMES.
MORE TIME WITH FAMILY.



PREVENTS UNEMPLOYMENT.
GREATER LEISURE.
ATOMIC ENERGY IS COMING.
DECREASES SICKNESS AND
ACCIDENTS.

BIG 40 HOURS PROCESSION • DEMONSTRATION - DOMAIN,
2.15 p.m., SUNDAY, DEC. 9. 1945
(PROCESSION ASSEMBLES HAY STREET.)

During the Secretaryship of Ralph Marsh, the Labor Council produced a booklet on consumer affairs, entitled *Consumers Are Us*. It was largely authored by Assistant Secretary John Ducker, who succeeded Marsh in 1975. It stated:

"The Labor Council of New South Wales first set up its Consumer Affairs Committee on the recommendation of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, early in 1968.

"As democrats, we wanted everyone in our society, no matter how high or how humble his position, to be given full freedom of choice in his consumption of goods and services. As unionists, we realised that the value of a pay rise can be doubled if the people receiving it know how to spend it effectively."

In 1971 the Labor Council moved out of the Trades Hall and into new premises - around the corner in the Labor Council Building in Sussex Street. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Labor Council broadened its role. An ethnic affairs officer and an arts and cultural affairs officer were appointed in 1978. In 1980, a drug and alcohol co-ordinator was appointed and in 1981, a women's advisory officer.

These appointments were largely due to the imagination and efforts of John Ducker and his successor, Barrie Unsworth.



Above: John Ducker.
Below: Ralph Marsh, flanked by Senator Joe Fitzgerald, with Senators Lionel Murphy, Doug McClelland and Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, 1973.



MODERN ROLE

Today the Labor Council can be described as follows:

Unions pay a fee based on membership. There are 120 affiliates, representing nearly a million unionists.

The Labor Council meets at 7.00 p.m. every Thursday night — it is "The Parliament of the Trade Union Movement".

Unions elect, through their industry group, a representative to the Labor Council Executive which meets prior to the weekly Labor Council meetings.

Delegates to Labor Council elect a secretary, assistant secretary and two organisers who are full-time officers.

The Secretary of the Labor Council is Barrie Unsworth and the Assistant Secretary is John MacBean. The two Organisers are Les Bain and Chris McArdle. Their main responsibilities are in the industrial field (summarised in detail further on).

Affiliates, also, are served by these officers, plus other appointed Labor Council officials — compensation officer, industrial officer, education and publicity officer, ethnic affairs officer, arts and cultural affairs officer, drug and alcohol co-ordinator and women's advisory officer.

The Compensation Officer, Tom Reynolds, is concerned with occupational health and safety issues as well as workers' compensation matters. He has been responsible for suggesting amendments to the Workers' Compensation Act and in putting forward recommendations

to the N.S.W. Enquiry into Occupational Health and Safety. Tim North, the Industrial Officer, represents the Labor Council in industrial research and advocacy where required by affiliated unions.

Arts and Cultural Affairs Officer, Norman Little, is involved in ensuring that demonstrations of crafts, exhibitions of the arts and performances by dance groups and musicians make their way to the workplace. He was responsible with A.C.I. for the joint funding of a mural in the A.C.I. canteen at Waterloo, Sydney.

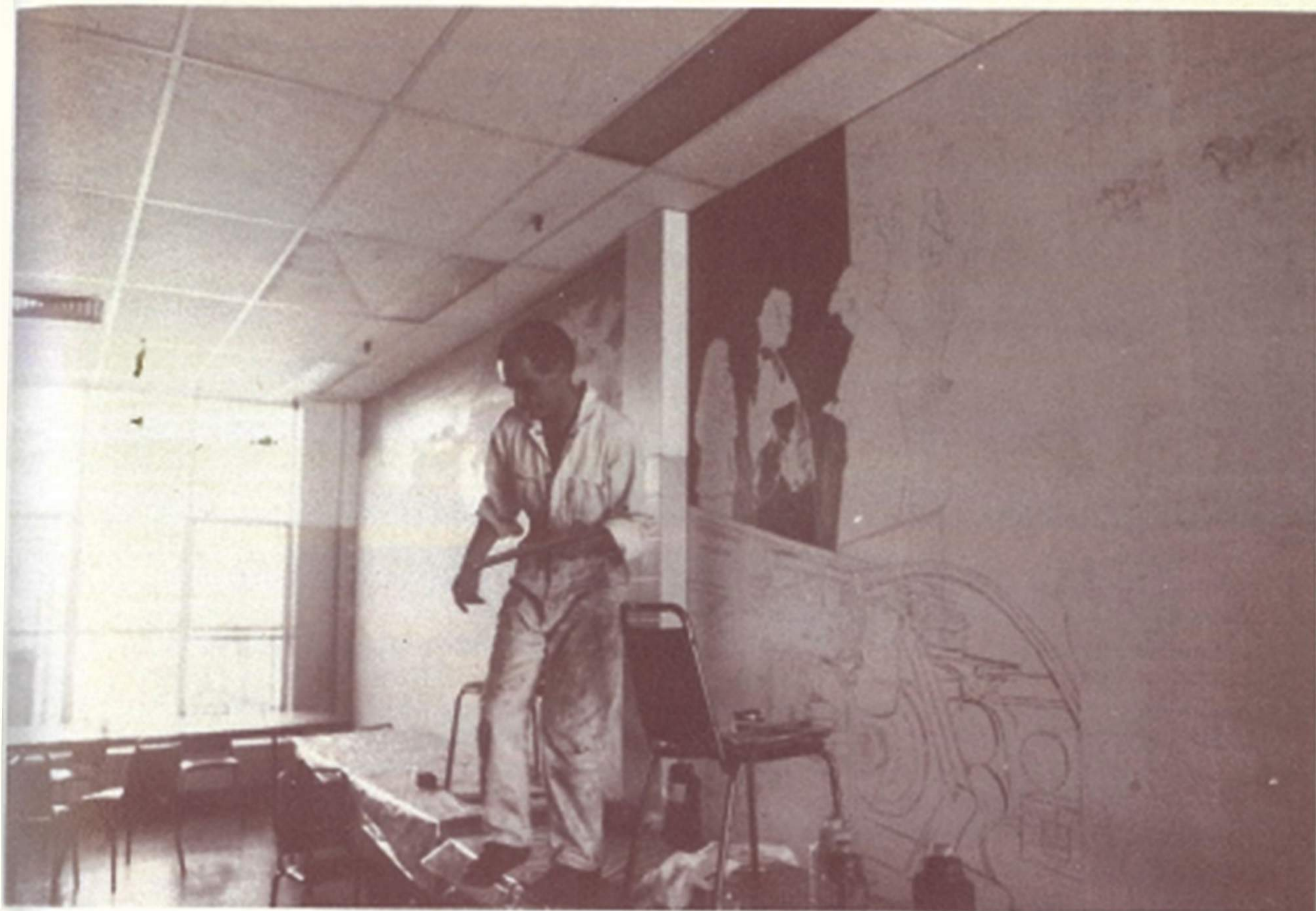
Carlos Gonzalez, the Ethnic Affairs Officer, is ensuring that translating and interpreter services are available for unions; he is engaged in the task of promoting equality of opportunity for migrants in industry and the trade union movement. Education and Publicity Officer, Michael Easson, conducts trade union training courses and frequently visits schools and community groups explaining the role of unions in society.

John Toohey, the Drug and Alcohol Co-ordinator, is attempting, through education seminars and wide contacts throughout the union movement, to aid the prevention of alcohol and drug problems. Beryl Ashe, the Women's Advisory Officer, is aiding the campaign to eliminate discrimination against women workers by going out into the workforce explaining their rights and opportunities.

In addition to these services, unions receive the protection and assistance that come from being part of a strong organisation.



A typical Labor Council meeting.



Artist painting mural at A.C.L., Waterloo.

The Labor Council is also part of the A.C.T.U. (or national trade union) structure. It implements A.C.T.U. policy in N.S.W. It has a direct representative on the A.C.T.U. executive, which is composed of 21 members.

Any union affiliated to the A.C.T.U. must also affiliate with the Labor Council of N.S.W.

The Labor Council's main industrial functions are as follows:

1. The Labor Council organises industrial campaigns where a number of unions are involved. Some examples are:
 - Campaigns in the State Rail Authority on workshop re-organisation.
 - Negotiations for steel industry award — over 20 unions involved.
 - Waterfront and shipbuilding industry agreements.
2. Handling industrial disputes referred to the Labor Council. Some examples are:
 - Oil industry disputes.
 - Matters having State-wide implications.
3. Lobbying Governments on behalf of unionists. Some examples are:
 - Industrial legislation.
 - Submissions to the Industry Assistance Commission on manufacturing industry.
4. Settling disputes and differences between unions, for example demarcation disputes.

For 110 years, the Labor Council of N.S.W. has had a distinguished record of achievement in promoting unionists' industrial objectives in a progressive and socially advantageous manner. But we cannot rest on our laurels. A lot more needs to be done. Let us, together, get on with the job.



Barrie Unsworth

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