# USE OF THESES

# LABOUR AND POLITICS IN VICTORIA, 1885-1914

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This thesis is my own original work

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# CONTENTS

# ILLUSTRATIONS

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ADB | Australian Dictionary of Biography |
| AIME | Australian Institute of Marine Engineers |
| AIMU | Agricultural Implement Makers' Union |
| AMA | Amalgamated Miners' Association of Victoria |
| AMEA | Amalgamated Mining Employees Association |
| ANA | Australian Natives' Association |
| ASE (MDC) | Amalgamated Society of Engineers (Melbourne District Committee) |
| ASL | National Anti-Sweating League |
| ASU | Amalgamated Shearers' Union of Australasia |
| AWNL | Australian Women's National League |
| AWU | Australian Workers' Union |
| Brewers and Maltsters | Brewers' and Maltsters' Employes Association |
| Bricklayers | Victorian Operative Bricklayers' Society |
| Carters and Drivers | Federated Carters and Drivers Industrial Union of Australia (Melbourne Sub-Branch) |
| CC | Central Council |
| CE | Central Executive |
| CPD | Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates |
| CPP | Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers |
| CTU | Federated Clothing Trades Union of Australia (Victorian Branch) |
| DD | Doctor of Divinity |
| FAIB | Factories Act Inquiry Board, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers* |
| GLU | General Labourers' Union of Australasia |
| ITLUC | Intercolonial Trades and Labor Union Congress |
| ITUC | Intercolonial Trades Union Congress |
| IWW | Industrial Workers of the World |
| MDC | Metropolitan District Committee |
| ML | Mitchell Library, Sydney |
| MLA | Member of the Legislative Assembly |
| Moulders | Iron Moulders Friendly Society of Victoria, Melbourne Branch |
| MPA | Master Printers' Association |
| MTS | Melbourne Typographical Society |
| NBAC, ANU | Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University |
| NCRL | National Citizens' Reform League |
| NLA | National Library of Australia |
| NRPL | National Reform and Protection League |
| NSW | New South Wales |
| Painters | Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union |
| PAV | Protectionist Association of Victoria |
| PEC | Protestant Electors Committee |
| PKIU | Printing and Kindred Industries Union |
| Plasterers | Victorian Plasterers' Society |

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|---|---|
| PLC | Political Labor Council of Victoria |
| PLL | Political Labor League of New South Wales |
| Plumbers | United Operative Plumbers' and Gasfitters' Society of Victoria |
| PLP | Parliamentary Labor Party |
| PPL | Progressive Political League |
| PUV | Pastoralists' Union of Victoria |
| RCFS | Royal Commission on the operation of the Factories and Shops Law of Victoria, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers* |
| RCOGM | Royal Commission on Gold Mining, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers* |
| RCS | Royal Commission on Strikes, *New South Wales Parliamentary Papers* |
| RWU | Rural Workers' Union of Australia |
| SDF | Social Democratic Federation of Victoria |
| SDL | Social Democratic League of Victoria |
| SDP | Social Democratic Party of Victoria |
| SFA | Socialist Federation of Australasia |
| Shop Assistants | Shop Assistants and Warehouse Employees Federation of Australia (Victorian Branch) |
| Silk Hatters | Silk Hatters' Union |
| SOA | Australasian Steamship Owners' Federation |
| SPLP | State Parliamentary Labor Party |
| STL | Single Tax League |
| Stonemasons | Operative Stonemasons Society of Australia (Victorian Branch), Central Lodge |
| Tailors | Tailors' Trade Protection Society |
| THC | Trades Hall Council (Melbourne) |
| TLC | Trades and Labour Council |
| UFTS | United Furnishing Trade Society |
| ULLP | United Labor and Liberal Party |
| ULP | United Labor Party |
| UMA | University of Melbourne Archives |
| VEF | Victorian Employers' Federation |
| VEU | Victorian Employers' Union |
| VLF | Victorian Labour Federation |
| VOBU | Victorian Operative Bootmakers' Union |
| VPD | Victorian Parliamentary Debates |
| VPP | Victorian Parliamentary Papers |
| VRC | Victoria Racing Club |
| VREMA | Victorian Railway Employees' Mutual Association |
| VRU | Victorian Railways Union |
| VSL | La Trobe Library, State Library of Victoria |
| VSP | Socialist Party of Victoria |
| VSSO | Victorian Steamship Owners' Association |
| WOC | Women's Organising Committee |
| WFPA | Women's Federal Political Association |
| WPA | Women's Political Association |
| WPL | Workers Political League |

# CITATION

I have provided the full bibliographical details of books and journal articles the first time they occur in each chapter and have used abbreviated titles thereafter.  For other sources, full details are given the first time they occur in the thesis and then abbreviated references.  Full details of all references are to be found in the bibliography.

# SPELLING

I have followed the custom of using the spelling "Labor" to refer to the Party and "labour" to the broader movement, comprising the unions, the Labor Party and other groups and individuals who identified closely with the aspirations of organised labour.  In direct quotations, the original form and spelling have been preserved.

For the sake of consistency, the modern spelling of "Ballarat" is used throughout this text rather than "Ballaarat".  "Ballaarat" was used as the official spelling of the state and federal seats.

# ABSTRACT

This is a thesis about the development of labour politics in Victoria in the period between 1885 and 1914. The emergence of the Labor Party is a central theme, but the evolution of the Party is related to the broader political process in which it was involved. Labor's relations with unionism, liberalism and socialism as well as the anti-Labor forces moulded its character. The Labor Party was a field in which competing aspirants for political authority utilised various political languages in the political struggle.

Before 1895, most unionists envisaged only minimal state intervention in industrial relations. They believed that the main struggle for the rights of labour should be carried on outside the parliament. In the years between 1885 and 1890, there was a formalisation of industrial relations which enhanced the status of the Trades Hall Council by increasing its importance in the settlement of industrial disputes. In the 1880s and 1890s, relations between capital and labour acquired broader political meanings than before, a process which was a precondition for the emergence of a Labor Party.

The Party which emerged in Victoria in the 1890s differed from its counterparts in the other colonies in its organisational form, ideology, and political strategies. There was no stable extra-parliamentary organisation to which parliamentarians could be held responsible. The Labor Party did not pursue an independent working-class political strategy, but remained attached to the Liberal Party. At the same time, working-class candidates consolidated an *ouvrieriste* political tradition whose central tenet was that the interests of the working class could only be properly represented in parliament by those who had belonged to a trade.

In the early 1900s, in the context of an anti-Labor political mobilisation, there was a growth of support for Labor and a formalisation of Party

organisation. The Labor leadership consolidated the Party organisation. In this period, the major theme of labour political discourse was the advantages of voting for a pledged candidate. This appeal met with only limited success, since traditional ways of understanding political representation were firmly entrenched among electors.

By 1914, the Labor Party had strong union support, but this was a relatively recent phenomenon. Union support for the Party grew slowly between 1900 and 1914, with little progress before 1909. With the development of the state wages board system and compulsory arbitration in this period, however, industrial relations were further "politicised". Relations between capital and labour became enmeshed in party conflict, contributing to political alignments. In the labourism which emerged after 1900, there was an emphasis on working-class political agency, derived from both socialism and unionism, but there were also strong continuities between Victorian liberalism and labourism. The Labor leadership mobilised voters by appeals to populist collectivities as well as through the language of economic class. These populist cross-currents not only provided a sense of continuity with an earlier colonial liberalism, but were a way of resolving tensions in Labor's diverse constituencies and mobilising discontent for party political purposes. The emphasis in labour political discourse on universal categories, however, tended to marginalise female activists by ignoring the political significance of gender difference. In 1914, the Party was dominated by men, and its agenda tended to emphasise the concerns of its male constituents.

...I hope to assist in the cause of elevating humanity - To make the  world better to give men and women a better chance in Life - to work out in their being what God intended they should be is a noble ideal...

(J.G. Barrett)

Victory to the strongest is the law to which we all conform...No picturing of ideals; no roseate visions of the future, no tears, or sympathy, or talk of human love can count.  When the division is called the numbers alone tell the tale.

(Tom Tunnecliffe)

Sources: J.G. Barrett to H.B. Higgins, October 19, 1897, Higgins Papers, National Library of
       Australia, 1057/22.
       Tom Tunnecliffe, *The Problem of Poverty*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, p.16.

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# INTRODUCTION

Why did we leave our own old homes,
Where lie our honored fathers' bones,
To free ourselves from lazy drones -
And taste the sweets of liberty.

(By an early member of the Land League)[1]

This is a thesis about the emergence of the Labor Party in Victoria. In the nineteenth century, Victorians regarded their colony as one of the Empire's greatest achievements. In less than fifty years, they had created "Marvellous Melbourne", a monument to British civilisation and colonial progress.[2] Moreover, the sheepwalk of the 1840s was transformed into "an El Dorado and an Arcadia combined" in the imagination if not quite in the reality.[3] The gold rushes produced an enormous influx of young immigrants, mainly British, who permanently changed the demographic, cultural, economic and political landscape of the colony.[4] By 1891, Victoria had a population of 1 140 000.[5]

Victoria was granted responsible government in 1856. Manhood suffrage in Legislative Assembly elections and the secret ballot existed from 1857, but plural voting was still permitted and electoral districts were unequal.[6] The property qualification for Assembly candidates was abolished in 1857 and payment of Legislative Assembly members was instituted on a

[1]Melbourne Trades Hall Papers, ML MSS 308/9X.
[2]Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, Odhams Press, London, 1963, ch.7.
[3]David Goodman, 'Gold Fields /Golden Fields: The Language of Agrarianism and the Victorian Gold Rush', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 90, April 1988, p.19.
[4]Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1977. For some of the demographic effects of the gold rushes, see A.R. Hall, 'Some Long Period Effects of the Kinked Age Distribution of the Population of Australia 1861-1961', *Economic Record*, vol.39, March 1963, pp.42-52.
[5]H.H. Hayter, *General Report of the Census of Victoria*, 1891, p.53.
[6]Serle, *The Golden Age*, pp.264-6; Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*, Melbourne University Press in Association with the Australian National University, Carlton, 1970, p.31.

temporary basis in 1870.[7] The Legislative Council had a restricted franchise based on property and education.[8] It was an elected body which could not be threatened with "swamping", the practice of appointing a large number of members to overcome its intransigence, nor could it be challenged by a double dissolution. The Council was an impregnable bulwark of conservatism. In 1865 and 1878, conflicts between a democratic Assembly and the Council raised the spectre of civil strife, but the power of the Upper House remained unassailed.[9]

The Council's conservatism was highlighted by the strength of its natural foe, liberalism, which flourished from the 1850s. According to Alfred Deakin, the gold rushes produced "men with a far wider and more advanced liberalism than had been acclimatised before the gold era".[10] As Stuart Macintyre has suggested, the liberal "model of the autonomous, self-sufficient individual assumed the capacities of reason and moral responsibility, both to guide desire and emancipate the bearer from the tyranny of impulse". Liberalism emphasised "popular sovereignty" and in Victoria, it came to be associated with opposition to the aristocratic pretensions of the pastoralists and merchants.[11] Liberals embraced tariff protection, land reform, free, secular and compulsory education, payment of members and democratic reform of the Council as policies which would

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[7]Serle, *The Golden Age*, pp.208-10, 264-6; Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, p.32.

[8]Originally, members had to own £5000 worth of freehold property. Electors were required to own £1000, or leasehold of a similar value, or be a graduate of a university in the British dominions, or a lawyer, doctor, clergyman, or army or navy officer. See Serle, *The Golden Age*, p.148.

[9]Geoffrey Serle, 'The Victorian Legislative Council, 1856-1950', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 22, 1954, pp.186-203.

[10]J.A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography, Volume One*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1965, p.105.

[11]Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p.5.

advance British civilisation in the antipodes, encourage progress and enhance freedom.[12]

The liberal tradition had great symbolic importance in Victorian politics for decades after George Higinbotham railed against the "wealthy lower orders" who dominated the Legislative Council.[13] The Melbourne Trades Hall Council chamber contained both a painted portrait and a bust of the great politician and jurist.[14] Labor lawyers and parliamentarians Frank Brennan and Maurice Blackburn revered his name while for the *Australasian Typographical Journal*, Higinbotham's death in 1892 was "the hardest blow as yet administered to Trades Unionism".[15] There were, however, other more conservative versions of Higinbotham, since W.H. Irvine, the anti-Labor Victorian premier (1902-4) identified strongly with him.[16]

Victoria had its own radical pantheon to which the first generation of Labor Party radicals paid homage. In 1898, the socialist Bernard O'Dowd described Francis Longmore, a demagogue of the 1870s, as "a lover of his mind who manifested his great love by his phenomenal hatred of the enemies of his mind, the Gracchus of Australian agrarian law".[17] The socialist newspaper, the *Tocsin*, honoured the memory of the early colonial radical James Grant as an opponent of the squatters and a sincere land reformer.[18] Other liberals lost popularity when they gained a reputation for

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[12]La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin, Volume One*, p.107.

[13]Vance Palmer, *National Portraits*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1954, p.87.

[14]W.E. Murphy, 'Victoria', in John Norton (ed.), *The History of Capital and Labour in all Lands and Ages*, Oceanic Publishing Co., Sydney, 1888, pp.136-7.

[15]Kevin Ryan, 'Frank Brennan: A Political Biography', unpublished MA thesis, La Trobe University, 1978, pp.15-17; Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, pp.2, 214; *Australasian Typographical Journal*, January 1893, p.2324. See also E.J. Holloway, 'From Labour Council to Privy Council', unpublished typescript, n.d., pp.13-15, E.J. Holloway Papers, NLA MS 2098; Randolph Bedford, *Naught to Thirty-three*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1976 (first published 1944), pp.319-20.

[16]Bedford, *Naught to Thirty-three*, pp.316-19.

[17]Bernard O'Dowd, 'Funeral Oration for Francis Longmore', unpublished manuscript, n.d. [c.1898], O'Dowd File, Merrifield Collection, VSL.

[18]*Tocsin*, December 10, 1903, p.1.

# A DEMOCRAT

George Higinbotham

Edward E. Morris, *A Memoir of George Higinbotham:*, Macmillan, London, 1895 (National Library of Australia).

expediency or hostility to the labour movement. In the eyes of working-class radicals, Berry never quite recovered from his participation in the coalition ministries of the 1880s and acceptance of a knighthood while Deakin's role in the calling out of the military in the maritime strike had similar effects.[19] The *Age* proprietor David Syme's hostility to the Labor Party from the late 1890s produced much bitterness, yet when he died in 1908 the Labor politician Dr. William Maloney "eulogised the great work he had achieved for democracy...". Maloney, however, "felt deep regret that he should have antagonised the Labor party, which was the exponent of the ideas he had so sedulously disseminated in his intellectual prime".[20]

These comments suggest a continuity between Victorian liberalism and twentieth century labourism which historians have recognised but never properly investigated.[21] I shall argue in this thesis that labourism was a reformulation of radical liberalism in a new political context rather than a manifestation of the political opportunism of a Labor Party leadership devoted to the capture of power in a parliamentary democracy. This approach parallels the work of historians of British radicalism such as Alastair Reid, Eugenio Biagini, Pat Thane, Duncan Tanner, Jon Lawrence and Patrick Joyce. They have emphasised the continuities between nineteenth-century popular radicalism and early socialist and labour politics.[22] Reid has argued that labour politics should be seen as a "dynamic

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[19]*Ant*, October 22, 1891, p.4; December 17, 1891, p.5; February 11, 1892, p.5; *Age*, November 25, 1885, p.5; September 17, 1897, p.5.

[20]*Labor Call*, February 20, 1908, p.8.

[21]Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986, pp.186-8; Bob Gollan, 'The Ideology of the Labour Movement', in E.L. Wheelwright & Ken Buckley (eds.), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism: Volume One*, Australia and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, 1975, pp.206-7.

[22]See essays in Eugenio F. Biagini & Alastair J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991. See also Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1978; Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991; Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone 1860-1880*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.

recomposition of popular radicalism in adaptation to a new political environment" rather than "an entirely new departure in working-class politics".[23] This revisionism is part of a broader post-Marxist project which questions the priority which earlier labour historians gave to class. British historian Gareth Stedman Jones has been an important influence on these historians. He has argued for the prefigurative role of political language in the construction of "interest", rejecting the notion of politics as the struggle of "conflicting social groups or classes whose opposing interests will find rational expression in the political arena".[24] The latter conception presupposes a set of objective interests which have a being prior to language and political struggle. For Stedman Jones, political discourse itself has a determinant role. He thus treats the Labour Party "as a vacant centre - as a space traversed or tenanted by groups possessing different and sometimes incompatible political languages of widely varying provenance, a changing balance of forces and their discursive self-definitions...".[25] Some radical revisionists have entirely rejected class as a tool of historical analysis, while feminist historians have offered a different kind of critique, questioning the priority given to class structure and consciousness by labour historians.[26]

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[23]Alastair J. Reid, 'Old Unionism reconsidered: The radicalism of Robert Knight, 1870-1900', in Biagini & Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism*, p.243.

[24]Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.21.

[25]Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, p.22.

[26]William M. Reddy, *Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Historical Understanding*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987; Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988. See also Marilyn Lake, 'Socialism and Manhood: The Case of William Lane', *Labour History*, 50, May 1986, pp.54-62; Bruce Scates, 'Socialism, Feminism and the Case of William Lane: A Reply to Marilyn Lake', *Labour History*, 59, November 1990, pp.45-58; Marilyn Lake, 'Socialism and Manhood: A Reply to Bruce Scates', *Labour History*, 60, May 1991, pp. 114-120; Bruce Scates, 'Socialism and Manhood: A Rejoinder', *Labour History*, 60, May 1991, pp.121-4; Marilyn Lake, 'The Independence of Women and the Brotherhood of Man: Debates in the Labour Movement over Equal Pay and Motherhood Endowment in the 1920s', *Labour History*, 63, November 1992, pp.1-24; J. Damousi, 'Socialist Women in Australia, c.1890-c.1918', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1987; Joy Damousi, 'The Gendering of Labour History', Roger Joyce Memorial Lecture, unpublished typescript, History Institute of Victoria, 1992.

In Australia, there has been less discussion of the continuities between liberalism and labourism than in Great Britain, although work by Stuart Macintyre, Peter Beilharz and Jeffrey Rich has been suggestive.[27] The Old Left historians of the early Labor Party - Brian Fitzpatrick, Lloyd Churchward, Robin Gollan and Ian Turner - were conscious of the existence of a radical lineage in Victoria. In *Radical and Working Class Politics* (1960), Gollan described the Victorian premier Graham Berry's 1877 land tax as

> important in the evolution of radical policy towards the land. It was the first of the land-tax measures which were to become increasingly popular in all colonies in the last decade of the century and after.[28]

Unfortunately, this recognition remained peripheral to his explanation of the development of the Party, and the Old Left historians saw labourism as a manifestation of the reformist retreat from socialism and working-class interests. There were, however, some differences among the Old Left historians in their interpretations of the emergence of the Labor Party. I shall suggest two major lines of interpretation. Gollan, Churchward and Turner regarded the formation of the Labor Party as an outcome of increasing class consciousness, manifested in the emergence of the "new unionism" of shearers and miners, and the influence of (mainly socialist) currents of political opinion on the labour movement.[29] Gollan thought that the failure of an independent Labor Party to emerge in Victoria, and the inability of the Party to make an impact comparable with its New South

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[27]Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*; Jeffrey R. Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers and Unions 1856-90', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1993; Peter Beilharz 'The Young Evatt - Labor's New Liberal', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 1993, pp.169-170. See also earlier work by Stuart Macintyre, 'Early Socialism and Labor', *Intervention*, 8, March 1977, p. 83.

[28]Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, p.65.

[29]Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, chs.6-7; Lloyd Churchward, 'Introduction', in R.N. Ebbels & L.G. Churchward (eds.), *The Australian Labor Movement 1850-1907*, Cheshire-Lansdowne in association with The Noel Ebbels Memorial Committee, Melbourne, 1965, pp.13-30; Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900-1921*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp.31, 55.

Wales counterpart in the 1890s, were due to the conservatism of the craft union-dominated Trades Hall Council; the strength of the alliance between the working class and the liberal protectionists; and the weakness of the links between the Party and the union movement.[30] This explanation of the peculiarities of the Victorian situation has been criticised by historians such as John Rickard, Carlotta Kellaway, Celestina Sagazio and Bruce Scates. They argue that Gollan underestimated the radicalism of urban unionists, who actually pioneered the direct representation of labour. The so-called "new" unions were no more committed to political action than the "old", nor did they necessarily represent a more powerful sense of class consciousness. The distinction between "old" and "new" unionism was itself exaggerated by the Old Left. Moreover, it is evident that the Trades Hall Council regarded itself as a working-class institution, and that it provided class leadership in the maritime strike and the formation of the Labor Party.[31]

The Old left historians, like their non-Marxist radical nationalist forebears, believed that the Australian bush had played a pivotal role in the formation of national character, which they assumed to be essentially collectivist. The Old Left historians accepted that the new unions played a significant role in the formation of the Labor Party, and they are largely absolved from the charge of economism because of the greater class consciousness of their members and their receptiveness to socialist and

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[30]Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, pp.141-144. For a more recent account which largely follows Gollan's interpretation, see Lindsay Tanner, 'A Protracted Evolution: Labor in Victorian Politics 1889-1903', *Labour History*, 42, May 1982, pp.40-53.

[31]John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, pp.42-52, 115-120; C.J. Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance, 1855-1889', unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1973; Celestina Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party, 1885-1894', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1984; B.C. Scates, 'Faddists and Extremists: Radicalism and the Labour Movement, South-eastern Australia 1886-1898', unpublished PhD Thesis, Monash University, 1987.

other radical ideas.[32] It is the bush unions which are the bearers of the collectivist ethos in Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958). Ward's assessment of the origins of the Labor Party followed that of Randolph Bedford, the *Bulletin* journalist and Labor politician.[33] Bedford believed that the Labor Party "had its beginning in the bush, where the real Australia is".[34] Gollan, Turner and Churchward also attribute to the bush unions a significant role in the formation of the Labor Party, which was later corrupted by the sectionalism, parochialism and craft consciousness of the urban unionists and the opportunism of the Labor politicians.[35] According to Gollan, the Labor Party, lacking any guiding theory, and increasingly independent of the unions, adopted "purely opportunist policies". He acknowledges Labor's debt to Deakinite Liberalism, but suggests that this dependence was only possible because Labor had abandoned its working-class supporters and was courting the middle class.[36] The quest for power corrupted Labor.[37]

This interpretation might be criticised on several grounds. Firstly, it assumes that liberalism is essentially an ideology of the middle class and that the Labor Party's adoption of "liberal" policies was a betrayal of its natural working-class constituency. However, Gollan's research led him to remark that "union leaders regarded the [Liberal Party leader Berry's] Reform and Protection League as their political party".[38] He was aware of working-class support for radical liberalism in the 1870s. In this thesis, I suggest that Labor's "retreat" into liberalism was less a case of opportunism

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[32]Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, p.105.
[33]Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, pp.226-7.
[34]Bedford, *Naught to Thirty-three*, p.240.
[35]Churchward, 'Introduction', pp.13-17; Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, p.31.
[36]Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, pp.206, 208.
[37]Vere Gordon Childe, *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia*, F.B. Smith (ed.), Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1964, p.80; Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, p.26.
[38]Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, p.84.

than a reformulation of the Victorian liberal tradition in such a way as to uphold labour's claims to a greater share of the country's wealth. The Party's strategy recognised the strength of liberalism among electors of all classes, including wage-earners. One outcome of this process of recomposition was labourism, an ideology which sought the modification of market outcomes to the advantage of the working class and other "producers" by the state through an independent Labor Party.[39]

The centrality of the concept of labourism to the argument in this thesis demands an early working definition of the concept. While some historians have treated labourism as economism by another name (or the opposite of socialism), I have used the term in a different sense, to denote a broader set of attitudes to political involvement which sustained support for an independent Labor Party committed to constitutional methods and the amelioration of the conditions of those on the lowest rungs of society.[40] Labourism acquired from socialism and the practices and policies of trade unionism a stronger emphasis on the independent political role of labour than had been present in earlier forms of radical politics, especially liberalism. The relationship of labourism to working-class identity remained indistinct, however, because the Labor Party also inherited from colonial liberalism the populist idea of a union of the classes against class privilege. Labor embraced the liberal idea of popular sovereignty and provided it with a radical turn, largely abandoning the middle-class liberal fear of unrestrained majority rule. Labourism, as I have treated the concept here, was more than the political expression of working-class identity or the interests of the union movement. It was a reformulation of the concept of

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[39]Stuart Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1989.
[40]John Saville, 'The Ideology of Labourism', in Robert Benewick, R.N. Berki & Bhikhu Parekh (eds.), *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1973, pp. 213-226; Macintyre, 'Early Socialism and Labor', pp.81-2. For a recent critique of the concept of labourism, see Terry Irving, 'Do we still need the concept of labourism?', unpublished typescript (in possession of the author), n.d., 1993.

citizenship which, in the hands of the labour movement, was inscribed with class language and given broader social and economic meanings.

The use of the concept of labourism in this thesis is not intended to imply the existence of a homogeneous Labor Party, nor a labour movement with a settled ideology or political language.[41] Indeed, it is a central argument of this thesis that Labor was contested ground, a field in which competing aspirants for authority utilised various languages in the political struggle. By 1910, however, there was a broad coherence in Labor policy and strategy. The Party was committed to arbitration, tariff protection, and a white Australia while an emphasis on the role to be played by an independent Labor Party and a strong union movement were salient characteristics of labour politics.[42] Political activists who decided to work for change from within the Party had to accept the constraints imposed by the Party's commitment to the parliamentary road. The Party's democratic faith in popular sovereignty meant that it could only act with the people's consent and while a majority of electors refused to accept radical change along the lines favoured by the socialists, it was difficult to avoid a gradualist approach.[43] Some activists, such as Harry Scott Bennett, tried to resolve this dilemma by leaving the Party in order to educate the masses in the principles of socialism. A more common response was that of Bob Solly, who identified with the "will of the people" and settled down to an undistinguished parliamentary career.

The interpretation of the emergence of the Labor Party in this thesis emphasises the continuities between Victorian liberalism and labourism where the Old Left saw mainly disjuncture. It is also noteworthy that the argument diverges from the revisionist interpretation of John Rickard in

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[41]It is partly this danger which has prompted Irving's critique of labourism (Irving, 'Do We still need a concept of labourism?', esp. p.4).

[42]Jim Hagan, *The History of the A.C.T.U.*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1981, p.14.

[43]W.G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker Trutees, Sydney, n.d. [first published 1909], p.381.

his *Class and Politics* (1976). Where Rickard sees in the fusion of 1909 and the federal election of 1910 the triumph of class politics manifested in the emergence of a two-party system, Labor versus anti-Labor, the same events might rather be seen as an indication of Labor's success in appropriating the language of radical liberalism as its own.[44]

There is an alternative radical interpretation of the development of the Labor Party. Ironically, in the light of his populism, radical agrarianism and identification with the bush legend, Brian Fitzpatrick did not accept the idea of a Labor Party corrupted by urban craft unionism. He saw Labor's accommodation with capitalism as a consequence of its emergence in the period after 1890, the age of "uncertainty, doubt and distrust" when "accommodation with the powerful was the utmost that any other group might reasonably hope for".[45] The Labor Party emphasised "nation-building through a capitalist economic system" at the expense of socialism and had "enlisted industrial workers, under banners attractively splashed with socialist slogans for the task of Australian nation-building for others' profit".[46] This dimension of Fitzpatrick's interpretation sets him apart from Gollan and Turner, and foreshadows Humphrey McQueen's assessment of the Party in *A New Britannia* (1970). For McQueen, the Labor Party, as "the highest expression of a peculiarly Australian petit-bourgeoisie", was doomed from the outset.[47]

**The Question of Class**

The Old Left historians exaggerated the significance of class consciousness at the expense of other popular identities. These often intersected with the

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[44]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, ch.8.
[45]Fitzpatrick, *The Australian People, 1788-1945*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1951, p.218.
[46]Fitzpatrick, *The Australian People*, pp.37, 41.
[47]McQueen, *A New Britannia*, p.251.

language of economic class in political discourse to modify its meanings radically. As Patrick Joyce has suggested in relation to nineteenth century Britain, "class could be fitted into other, sometimes older, versions of consensual social relations".[48] He suggests that populism might be a useful concept for understanding the political consciousness of working people in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Populist language mobilises people on the basis of appeals to popular identities such as "the people", "the battlers" or "the producers". The enemy is less likely to be capital than the "monopolist" or the "money power".[49] The prominence of these categories in labour discourse suggest the inadequacy, but not necessarily the redundancy, of class as a tool for understanding social and political identity. The emphasis in labour populism on the virtue of productive labour often appealed to a sense of class identity among manual labourers yet a similar formulation, in certain contexts, buttressed the Labor Party's efforts to build a broad populist alliance which included farmers, clerks, housewives and business people. Gollan recognised the significance of populism as an influence on the early Labor Party in Australia, but he did not pursue the implications of his discovery for the question of class identity, confining his attention mainly to William Lane and the influence of Ignatius Donnelly's *Caesar's Column* on the labour movement.[50] The shortcomings of the Old Left's treatment of populism are suggested by Ian Turner's portrayal of the supporters of the initiative and referendum (a radical constitutional policy associated with populist politics) as advocates of a lost cause who attached themselves to the Labor Party but were inevitably discarded as the Party consolidated its position. He ignores the seriousness with which the

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[48]Joyce, *Visions*, p.29.
[49]Peter Love, *Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism 1890-1950*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984. For a further discussion of populism, see also ch. 10, esp. pp. 371-2.
[50]Robin Gollan, 'American Populism and Australian Utopianism', *Labour History*, 9, November 1965, pp.15-21.

initiative and referendum was regarded by Party members who cannot be marshalled under the disparaging banner "sectional enthusiasts".[51]

The approach to the study of the early Victorian Labor Party which I have outlined here has its difficulties. If we dissolve labourism in liberalism, we are still faced with the problem of explaining the emergence of a Labor Party. Moreover, there is a danger in this argument of obscuring class and the role of socialism. Socialist ideology was a significant influence on the Victorian Party after 1900. Moreover, Labor Party leaders were not the ghosts of the middle-class radicals George Higinbotham and Wilson Gray, even if it is unlikely that they would have hurried to deny the charge.

Labor parties are based on working-class industrial organisations (unions). The Party appealed to electors as "ordinary working Australians" and its program sought to enhance the status of unions and, by implication, to improve the condition of labour.[52] Consequently, I have located the development of the Labor Party in the context of changing industrial and political relations between employers and workers, emphasising the role of institutional forces - unions, employer organisations, and the state - in the emergence of the Party and the broader process of class formation. As Jonathon Zeitlin has argued, institutions are not mere reflections of "the objective interests of pre-existing social groups".[53] They are the structures through which workers and employers define their identities and interests. It follows that there can be no simple or direct relationship between social structure and politics. While some political scientists have argued that politics should be regarded as an autonomous sphere of human activity, the political process ought not to be divorced from its social and economic

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[51]Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, p.21.
[52]Judith Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, Macmillan, Sydney, 1992, p.31.
[53]Jonathon Zeitlin, 'From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, Vol. 40, No. 2, May 1987, p.178.

setting.[54] In his interpretation of the emergence of the New South Wales Labor Party, Raymond Markey assumes that "the social and economic environment" gave rise to working-class organisation and ideology, and that an emphasis on "the material conditions of class" is the key to an understanding of political development.[55] The approach which I have followed in this study of Victorian labour politics, in its emphasis on the political process, is rather different to Markey's materialist interpretation, which owes much to vulgar Marxism. The concept of class has a role to play in this account of the development of Victorian labour politics, but the treatment will diverge from that in Markey's study. Like the Old Left historians, Markey tends to follow the distinction between "class in itself", or economic class defined by a relationship to the means of production and "class for itself", which corresponded to class consciousness.[56] There is, however, as E.P. Thompson has suggested, another way of understanding class: as a cultural formation. He rejected the sharp distinction between "class in itself" and "class for itself" and the static conception of class on which this distinction depended. His alternative was to advance an understanding of class as a cultural formation and a process. Thompson's approach had the virtue of recognising the historical significance of culture, institutions and social practices in their own right.[57]

This emphasis on agency and historical contingency defies a settled conception of class, a simple designation of who is "in" and "out". This

[54]Giovanni Sartori, 'From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology', in Seymour Martin Lipset (ed.), *Politics and the Social Sciences*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1969, pp.65-100; P. Loveday, 'Emergence: Realignment and Consolidation', in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin & R.S. Parker, *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1977, p.487.

[55]Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, p.10.

[56]Markey, *The Making*, p.10. See also Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, xiv.

[57]E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Penguin, Middlesex, 1980. See also 'History From Below', *The Times Literary Supplement*, April 7, 1966, pp.279-80; 'The Peculiarities of the English', in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, Merlin Press, London, 1980, pp.35-91.

does not mean that class is open to any meaning. The idea of class belongs
to a particular historical epoch: the period of the Industrial Revolution and
since.[58] If class is to have any meaning in an actual historical context, its
uses have to fall within the boundaries set by traditional usages,
contemporary social experiences and practices, and political culture and
institutions. Class language is therefore historically and culturally specific.
There is room for subjectivity, however, since class is dependent for its
social and political meaning on human agency in the process of political
struggle. At the same time, the concept of class cannot be totally plastic.
Historians have often ascribed class consciousness to actors whose sense of
belonging to a collective defined by involvement in wage labour, or manual
labour, or exploitative social relations, or poorly paid work, co-existed with
other senses of identity. Class is not always present where there is
oppression, nor is class consciousness to be found wherever working people
engage in struggle in capitalist societies.

In this thesis, I emphasise the role of language and institutions in the
construction of working-class identity. Suburban communities, trade
unions, political organisations, working men's clubs, sporting clubs, and
even illegal betting shops and pony tracks were theatres for the expression of
working-class consciousness. The state, through arbitration courts and
wages boards, promoted a sense of class identity by institutionalising
"capital" and "labour" as classes with conflicting, yet reconcilable interests.
Moreover, the existence of a Labor Party, enmeshed in the everyday
struggles of political life, mediated a variety of collectivities and experiences
and provided a space for the expression of class identity. Whatever political
affinity was felt by miners and railway men, bootmakers and felt hatters,
wharf labourers and tailoresses was constructed through languages and

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[58]Asa Briggs, The Language of "Class" in Early Nineteenth-Century England', in *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs: Volume 1: Words, Numbers, Places, People*, The Harvester Press, Brighton, Sussex, 1985, pp. 3-33.

institutions which evolved in the process of political struggle. Labour activists and leaders mobilised their potential supporters by appeals to the "masses", the "people", the "producers", the "democrats" and, increasingly from the 1880s, to "labour" or "the workers". It is the process of political mobilisation which is the subject of this thesis. Labour historians, whether orthodox or revisionist, have assumed the common interests of working-class people to be the foundation of the Labor Party. This is only part of the story. Labor parties had to build alliances within classes as well as between them in order to win political power.[59] Labour politics was thus an expression of policies, institutions and political languages which constituted a "working class" as a political actor in its own right without closing off the possibility of co-operation with other "wealth producers" committed to progressive reform and loyal to the Party organisation. If Labor were to achieve electoral success, the idea of a "popular national alliance" had always to be borne in mind by the Party leadership.[60]

**The Thesis**

The thesis comprises ten chapters. In chapters one and two, I discuss relations between capital and labour in various industries in late nineteenth century Victoria in their ideological and institutional dimensions. Chapter three is about the emergence of the Labor Party from the mid-1880s up to 1900, considering the reasons for the resilience of traditional relationships, patterns, and institutional forms. Chapter four is devoted to the emergence of an independent Labor Party in the period 1899-1904. Labor parties might be distinguished from social democratic parties in the peculiar initiatory role which trade unions play in the formation of Labor parties, and the

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[59] Alastair J. Reid, *Social Classes and Social Relations in Britain, 1850-1914*, Macmillan, London, 1992, p.36.
[60] Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, p.34.

continuing relationship between unions and Labor parties through direct affiliation. This relationship (in the period 1900-1914) is the subject of chapter five. In chapter six, I focus on the rural unions and the reason for Labor's inability to gain strong electoral support in the country districts. Chapters seven and eight deal with the emergence of labourism from two perspectives: the Labor Party's relationship with liberalism and its attitude to socialism. The following chapter is an exploration of the relationship between religious sectarianism, class consciousness and gender identity through a study of the Labor Party's relations with the Catholic Church, the liquor trade and gambling interests. In chapter ten, I utilise the concept of populism in a further exploration of the relationship between liberalism and labourism.

This is not a study of parliamentary politics. There are already several admirable, if incomplete, studies of parliamentary politics in Victoria and the Commonwealth in the period 1885-1914.[61] They have been useful references, but I am concerned here primarily with political organisation and consciousness. Local government receives less attention in this thesis than it deserves. Labor branches regarded participation in municipal politics as an important dimension of their activities but the Party enjoyed only limited success in municipal politics up to 1914. I have not attempted to provide a general chronological narrative, preferring a thematic approach as a means of developing my argument. Labour politics in the years between Federation and the Great War receives more attention than the 1880s and

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[61]E.H. Sugden & F.W. Eggleston, *George Swinburne: A Biography*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1931; Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party'; Kay Rollison, 'Groups and Attitudes in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 1900-1909', unpublished PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 1972; C.P. Kiernan, 'Political Parties in the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1901-1904', unpublished MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1954; M.G. Finlayson, 'Groups in Victorian Politics, 1889-1894', unpublished MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1963; H.S. Broadhead, 'The Australian Federal Labour Party 1900-1905', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1959.

1890s, since the colonial period has already aroused considerable interest among political historians.

It has become fashionable to denounce traditional labour history's narrow institutionalism and to welcome the development of a social history of labour which focuses less on unions and more on work, less on political parties and more on working-class culture.[62] The new social history has had a beneficial impact on Australian labour history. We know much more about working-class life in the 1990s than the labour historians of the 1950s and 1960s. This influence, however, has had some unfortunate and perhaps unforeseen consequences. For example, historians writing about working-class culture have often paid insufficient attention to the role of language in the construction of social and political identity. This thesis is a history of an institution, the Victorian Labor Party, but it is a history of an institution as a process rather than a thing, as contested ground rather than conquered territory.

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[62]Raelene Frances & Bruce Scates, 'Is Labour History Dead?', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 100, April 1993, pp.470-481.

# CHAPTER ONE:

# THE WORKING CLASS IN
# URBAN INDUSTRY, 1885-1900

## Introduction: Capital, Labour and the State

The interdependence of capital and labour was a dominant theme in labour
discourse in the late nineteenth century.[1] In their relations with the
employers, workers perceived points of conflict as well as grounds for
compromise and co-operation, and their industrial strategies reflected their
ambivalent attitudes to capital. Unionists distinguished between "fair" and
"unfair" employers, and formed alliances with the decent masters who
observed union conditions against "sweaters" who degraded the trades.[2] It
is thus difficult to generalise about class relations in Victoria because they
were characterised by both working-class quiescence and resistance,
employer paternalism and industrial conflict.[3]

In the 1880s and 1890s, there were significant changes in the
organisation of work and relations between employers and workers in many
industries which had powerful ramifications for labour politics. As
industrial relations became more formalised in the 1880s, the unions were

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[1]Second Intercolonial Trades Union Congress (ITUC), *Official Report*, Walker, May & Co.
[Printers], Melbourne, 1884, p.66; Third Intercolonial Trades' Union Congress, *Official Report*,
Baston & Co. [Printers], Sydney, 1885, pp.18, 99; Sixth Intercolonial Trades and Labor Union
Congress (ITLUC), *Official Report*, Tasmanian News [Printer], Hobart, 1889, pp.59-60; *Trades
Hall Gazette*, October 6, 1888, p.6.

[2]J. Hagan, *Printers and Politics: A History of the Australian Printing Unions 1850-1950*,
Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1966, pp.59-60; Raelene Frances, *The
Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria 1880-1939*, Cambridge University Press,
Melbourne, 1993, p.34.

[3]Richard Price, 'The Labour Process and Labour History', *Social History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1983,
pp.57-75; Patrick Joyce, 'Labor, Capital and Compromise: A Response to Richard Price',
*Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1984, pp.67-76; Richard Price, 'Conflict and co-operation: a
reply to Patrick Joyce', *Social History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1984, pp.217-224. Patrick Joyce,
'Languages of Reciprocity and Conflict: A Further Response to Richard Price', *Social History*,
Vol. 9, No. 2, 1984, pp.225-32.

incorporated into "a recognised estate in society".[4]  Meanwhile the "Labour

Question" (a banner under which contemporaries marshalled any issue

with implications for the relations between labour and capital) achieved a

greater prominence in political discussion.  The problem of how to bring

order to relations between capital and labour agitated the minds of

Victorians liberals, who believed that class had to be managed if society were

to be based on social harmony and civilisation rather than conflict and brute

force.[5]  In 1889, some of them formed a Capital and Labour Federation

League "on the confident assumption that it is possible to remove or greatly

diminish the present deplorable friction in the operations of the great

industrial forces of the world".[6]  Employers and union leaders saw the use of

strikes and lockouts as the antithesis of civilised behaviour but unionists

were unwilling to abandon the strike as a weapon of last resort.

Before the mid-1890s, there was no significant group in colonial society

prepared to use the state to transform class relations.  Most industrial

legislation was intended to protect those unable to defend themselves in the

labour market, mainly women and children, and to enforce a minimum

standard of health and safety for workers.[7]  Victorian liberals, while rejecting

a dogmatic *laissez-faire* ideology, accepted the orthodoxy that state

intervention in the market ought to be kept to a minimum to preserve

individual liberties.  Moreover, union leaders did not seriously question

this assumption.  Their main political objective before 1895 was to secure a

favourable environment for union activity.  They envisaged only minimal

state intervention in industrial relations, and believed that the main

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[4]Richard Price, *Masters, Unions and Men: Work Control in Building and the Rise of Labour 1830-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, p.220.

[5]Consider the *Age* 's comment (August 30, 1890, p.8): "At present the relations subsisting between capital and labor are inchoate, and to reduce them to exact order will be the work of at least several generations".

[6]B. Cowderoy, *On the Relations of Capital and Labour: Co-operation-Profit Sharing*, Capital and Labour Federation League, Melbourne, 1889, p.1.

[7]Stuart Macintyre, *Winners and Losers: The pursuit of social justice in Australian history*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.43-9.

struggle for the rights of labour should be carried on outside the parliament.[8]   The legislative enactment of an eight hour day was probably their most adventurous policy from the point of view of state intervention in industrial relations.   There was, however, an encouraging precedent for the proponents of this policy because an amendment of the Mines Act in 1877 had provided for a maximum day of eight hours for miners.[9]

The depression of the 1890s halted the development of a formalised industrial relations system and encouraged unionists and liberals to revise their attitude to state intervention in civil society.   There was a trend towards unilateral regulation of industrial conditions in which employers reduced wages and removed the restrictive practices which the unions had built up in the "long boom" (1860-1890).   In many industries, union resistance to these policies led to bitter conflict, shattering the liberal faith that relations between employers and workers could be civilised if voluntary institutions were created which encouraged them to recognise their mutual dependence and resolve their differences.   The liberal founders of the state wages board system had modest aims and intended that the measure only apply to women and children in a few sweated industries. However, partly as a result of radical and labour pressure, the wages boards had become the foundation of a state industrial relations system by 1900.[10] By this time, many Victorian liberals also supported state compulsory arbitration as a way of restraining the human impulses evident in the bitter industrial conflicts of the 1890s which, in their view, threatened to tear the

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[8]ITUC, *Official Report*, 1885, p.11.
[9]*Victorian Parliamentary Debates (VPD)*, XXVI, July 10-11, 1877, pp.114, 133-4; *VPD*, XXVII, November 13, 1877, p.1429; 'An Act to provide for the Regulation and Inspection of Mines', 20th December 1877, No. DLXXXIII, in *Acts of Parliament of Victoria 41 Victoria, 1877-8*, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1878.
[10]John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, pp.94-6, 103-7.

community asunder.[11]  The union movement incorporated these policies

into its political program because most of its leaders accepted that state

industrial tribunals would compensate for their weakened bargaining

position.[12]

## Urban Industry and Unionists in the 1880s

By the 1880s, a manufacturing sector engaged primarily in import

substitution had developed in Victoria.[13]  Manufacturers supplied goods to

the local market with the encouragement of the state which provided tariff

protection.  Some historians have suggested, however, that the Victorian

tariff was a mixed blessing which actually hindered manufacturing

development.[14]  By 1890 there were about 56 000 employees (16.5 per cent of

wage and salary earners) in Victoria's manufacturing industries,

concentrated in Melbourne and to a lesser extent in Ballarat, Bendigo and

Geelong.[15]  Meanwhile, Melbourne's spectacular boom of the 1880s led to

expanded opportunities for employment in building, and the manufacture

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[11]Stuart Macintyre, 'Neither Capital nor Labour: The Politics of the Establishment of Arbitration', in Stuart Macintyre & Richard Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration: The Origins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration 1890-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, pp.178-200.

[12]P.G. Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment: An Historical Assessment', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1967, chs.3, 6, p.274.

[13]T.G. Parsons, 'Some Aspects of the Development of Manufacturing in Melbourne 1870 to 1890', unpublished PhD thesis, Monash University, 1970, pp.84, 97, 101-2; G.J.R. Linge, *Industrial Awakening: A Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788 to 1890*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1979, ch.8.

[14]Parsons, 'Some Aspects of the Development of Manufacturing', pp.242-3; Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, p.260; G.D. Patterson, *The Tariff in the Australian Colonies 1856-1900*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968, chs. 2, 5, 8, 11-12, 14.  An alternative view is advanced by W.A. Sinclair ('The Tariff and Manufacturing Employment in Victoria, 1860-1900', *Economic Record*, 31, May 1955, pp. 100-104) who argues that tariff increases raised manufacturing employment levels, and led to the growth of larger enterprises and the entry of a greater proportion of the manufacturing workforce into the most heavily protected industries.  He argues that in the 1860s and 1870s at least, the tariff "stands out as the most important single factor making for manufacturing development" (p.103), although it had a negligible impact in the 1890s.

[15]N.G. Butlin, *Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing 1861-1938-9*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962, pp. 160-3; Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, ch.9; H.H. Hayter, *General Report of the Census of Victoria*, 1891, Table 74.

of building supplies. About 27 000 male employees (over 9.5 per cent of male wage and salary earners) were engaged in building and construction in - 1891.[16]

There were, in the "long boom", limited opportunities for journeymen to become masters.[17] Some large employers had previously been tradesmen, many having arrived in the colony during the gold rushes of the 1850s. Compositors frequently became the owners of small newspapers and jobbing offices.[18] T.G. Parsons suggests that many boot manufacturers, encouraged by high tariffs, went into business with capital of about fifty pounds. These ventures, however, often ran into difficulties in this intensely competitive industry.[19] In the building industry, the step from tradesman to sub-contractor was not large in the boom conditions of the 1880s, but failure was as likely as success for the ambitious journeyman.[20] Still, the belief that a man could "better himself" in Victoria was the cornerstone of a liberal polity. Victorians believed that there were no social barriers to personal advancement in their colony; the absence of an aristocracy based on hereditary privilege would lead to the development of an aristocracy of

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[16]Hayter, *General Report of the Census of Victoria*, 1891, Table 74; *Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8. This figure includes the employed and the unemployed, but excludes employers, and the self-employed.

[17]United Furnishing Trade Society (UFTS), Minutes, October 29, 1885, in Federated Furnishing Trade Society of Australasia Collection, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University (NBAC, ANU) T 58/1/3; September 20, 1888, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/4; United Operative Plumbers and Gasfitters Society of Victoria (Plumbers), Minutes, February 20, 1906; May 29, 1906; May 14, 1907, in Plumbers and Gasfitters Employees Union of Australia Collection, NBAC, ANU T 17/1/2; Iron Moulders Friendly Society of Victoria, Melbourne Branch (Moulders), Minutes, January 7, 1881, in Federated Moulders' (Metals) Union of Australia Collection, University of Melbourne Archives (UMA) 2/1; Silk Hat Makers, Minutes, October 14, 1886; January 3, 1887; December 19, 1887; August 27, 1890; December 15, 1890, in Federated Felt Hatters' Employees' Union (Victorian Branch) Collection, UMA 1/1.

[18]Melbourne Typographical Society (MTS), Minutes, April 14, 1888; June 9, 1888; September 21, 1889; Printing and Kindred Industries Union Archives (PKIU); Hagan, *Printers and Politics*, pp.58-9.

[19]Parsons, 'Some Aspects of the Development of Manufacturing in Melbourne', pp.230, 543.

[20]Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984, pp.72-85; Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers', pp.34-5.

merit. Trade unions celebrated the social advancement of their members as the fulfilment of a natural aspiration.[21]

Most factories and workshops were still small in the 1880s but some large enterprises had developed by this time in the iron trades, agricultural implements, brick production, boots, clothing, brewing and food processing. The government railway workshops at Newport and Port Melbourne employed hundreds of men by 1890.[22] Moreover, the average size of enterprises in Victoria was increasing, from 14.5 operatives per establishment in 1876-7 to eighteen in 1886-7.[23] According to Eric Fry, the "workshop was giving way to the factory", but he adds that small workshops and large factories continued to co-exist.[24] Economic historians have suggested, however, that the increasing scale of Victorian industry in the 1880s was not matched by growing productivity. In many manufacturing industries - such as boot and clothing manufacturing - there was stagnation in the later 1880s as tariff protection and overcompetition discouraged technological innovation and hindered the development of export industries.[25]

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[21]UFTS, Minutes, October 9, 1890, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/5; Victorian Operative Bootmakers' Union (VOBU), Minutes, May 7, 1883, in Australian Boot Trade Employees Federation Collection, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/1; Amalgamated Society of Engineers, Melbourne Local District Committee, [ASE (MDC)], Minutes, February 26, 1889; March 5, 1889; January 4, 1890, in Amalgamated Engineering Union Collection, UMA; *Australasian Typographical Journal*, February 1895, p.2532.

[22]E.C. Fry, 'The Condition of the Urban Wage-Earning Class in Australia in the 1880s', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1956, pp.56-63; K.D. Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers in Australia 1852-1920*, Department of Economic History, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1970, pp.19-20.

[23]Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, p.273.

[24]Fry, 'Condition of the Urban Wage-Earning Class', pp.60-3.

[25]N.G. Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development 1861-1900*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1964, p.210; Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, p.272. An alternative view is advanced by A.R. Hall, in *The Stock Exchange of Melbourne and the Victorian Economy 1852-1900*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1968. Hall argues that while the Victorian economy was increasingly vulnerable to changes in the rate of British capital inflow in the 1880s, the economy was basically sound until 1890 and there was no serious distortion in the rate of growth or pattern of investment (pp.119-24).

Many contemporary observers, however, attributed the growth of Victoria's manufacturing industries to tariff protection.[26] The economic effects of the tariff have been discussed exhaustively by historians and need not detain us here.[27] It is the social and political meanings of protection which are relevant to this argument. Protection was associated in the popular imagination with liberalism, civilisation, democracy and resistance to the pastoralists and merchants. The tariff's proponents argued that it would benefit the whole community while free-trade was the policy of a selfish sectional interest.[28] Protection was an expression of the determination of a free people to create a society which would be a working man's paradise and the envy of the old world.[29] Tariff protection also expressed and reinforced notions of a community of trade between master and man, who shared a common interest in the preservation of the trade against foreign competition.[30] As one unionist declared in defence of protection, "[w]hat did it matter to them if the capitalist got a higher interest on his money so long as they got some of it".[31] Trade unionists identified protection with production and free-trade with monopoly and the middleman.[32] A member of the Boilermakers and Ironshipbuilders Union

> looked upon free trade as a monopoly; protection sought to break down that monopoly, by taking it out of the hands of a few merchants and distributing it amongst the whole community.[33]

[26]Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, pp.102-7.

[27]Patterson, *The Tariff in the Australian Colonies*, chs. 2, 5, 8, 11-12, 14; Parsons, 'Some Aspects of the Development of Manufacturing ', pp.207-43; Sinclair, 'The Tariff and Manufacturing Employment in Victoria', p.103; Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, pp.245-61.

[28]See the trade union leader W.A. Trenwith's comment that the "only person injured by protection was the merchant prince who lives in almost fabulous luxury...", in Fourth Intercolonial Trades Union Congress, *Official Report*, Burden & Bonython, Adelaide, 1886, p.25.

[29]Randolph Bedford, *Naught to Thirty-three*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1976 (first published 1944), p.80.

[30]Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, p.41.

[31]E.C. Vernon (Corporation Labourers), ITUC, *Report*, 1886, p.23.

[32]ITUC, *Report*, 1885, p.44.

[33]J. Cameron, ITUC, *Report*, 1885, p.39.

Labour leaders appropriated protectionism and gave it more radical political meanings which upheld labour's claim for a larger share of the colony's wealth.

The first unions in urban industry were formed in the 1850s, in the building, engineering and printing trades.[34] They were small unions of skilled workers, many of them British immigrants and ex-Chartists, who valued respectability and self-improvement, and identified with liberalism. The building unions campaigned successfully for the eight hour day in the 1850s.[35] The defence and extension of the eight hours system was the rallying point for the labour movement in the second half of the nineteenth century and each year, the trades celebrated eight hours day on 21 April as a "grand festival of labour" with a procession, fete and banquet.[36] In the early 1890s, they planned to erect a monument near Parliament House to commemorate the boon. The proposal, which was never carried out as a result of the depression, expressed the liberalism of the union movement, including the masculinist assumptions which underpinned the ideology:

> The group depicts the march of Intelligence and Labor. Intelligence is represented by a female figure, bearing a lighted torch in her right hand, to symbolise her illuminating power. The Scales of Justice - the only weapon she has used in all her great social victories - are suspended from her girdle. The figure is winged, to typify her celestial

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[34]June Philipp, 'Trade Union Organisations in New South Wales and Victoria, 1870-1890', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1953, pp.14-32.

[35]Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*, Melbourne University Press in Association with The Australian National University, Carlton, 1970, p.71; Helen Hughes, 'The Eight Hour Day and the Development of the Labour Movement in Victoria in the 1850s, *Historical Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 36, May 1961, pp.396-412; Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1977, pp.212-15, 243-6; Brian Fitzpatrick, *A Short History of the Australian Labor Movement*, Rawson's Bookshop, Melbourne, 1944, pp.31-33; *The British Empire in Australia: An Economic History 1834-1939*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, pp.209-11; J. R. Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers and Unions 1856-90', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1993, pp.142-9.

[36]K.S. Inglis, *The Australian Colonists: A Exploration of Social History 1788-1870*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, pp.121-2.

origin; the wings encompass and throw their protecting shade about the figure of Labor, marching by her side, resolute male figure striding boldly and fearlessly forward, with a hammer over his shoulder and a wedge in his right hand...[37]

Victorian artisans were assertive, even militant, when demanding that their rights be recognised by the employers, yet they accepted that capital and labour had mutual interests, including a common stake in the productive process.[38] Victorian working men's utopia was a universal peace between capital and labour, but it had to be a peace on labour's terms.[39] Benjamin Douglass, a pioneer Victorian trade union leader and the English-born son of a Chartist, regarded "capital as a mere tool of trade" and bemoaned the "undue inequalities" between capital and labour which he attributed to competition. This could be countered "by combination and the force of moral suasion".[40] In 1888, H.A. Harwood, a radical furniture maker, declared that the working man

> demands a fair share of the capital which his hands and brains produce. He has no objection to the employer obtaining an adequate interest on his capital, and an ample remuneration for his skill and enterprise, but when these are provided for the balance must be distributed in the shape of wages...[41]

The "true position of labor", Harwood argued, "should be one held in respect, not as at present, despised and looked upon as a mere implement, or

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[37]*Age*, April 21, 1891, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Papers, Mitchell Library (ML MSS) 308/3.

[38]The secretary of the THC in the 1880s, W.E. Murphy, was also a member of the Chamber of Manufacturers. See *The Victorian Chamber of Manufacturers, Membership Receipt*, in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[39]Alastair J. Reid, 'Old Unionism reconsidered: The radicalism of Robert Knight, 1870-1900', in Eugenio F. Biagini & Alastair J. Reid (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp.214-43.

[40]ITUC,*Report*, 1884, p.51.

[41]*Trades Hall Gazette*, September 15, 1888, p.5.

machine, to be used as a convenience and then cast aside".[42] Unionists

regarded labour as the basis of industry and civilisation.[43] Walter Hurrell,

the leader of the Millers' Union, wrote that

> Capital should recognise the rights of Labour for a fuller participation in
> the profits accruing from that which it produces, and moderate its
> demands, and the workers should recognise that, properly organised,
> they would be in a position to obtain in a peaceful and constitutional
> way, redress of just grievances and recognition of their moderate
> demands...[44]

According to this view, unionism would benefit both employers and

employees by civilising capital.  Harwood hoped

> that the time is not far distant when Capital and Labor shall walk hand
> in hand like brothers, sharing the toils and hardships, the profits and
> prizes, of the industrial world.[45]

At the 1884 Trade Union Congress, Henry Elmslie (Stonemasons) had

objected to the Trade Union Bill introduced into the Assembly earlier in the

year because "employers of labour were denominated 'masters', and

that...involved a very undesirable class distinction".[46] This was a claim for

recognition of the equal status of labour with capital, and did not imply that

labour should be subordinate.  Unionists believed that capital and labour

could participate in the market as social equals.  As W.A. Trenwith of the

Bootmakers' Union (VOBU) remarked, "employers and employed stand on

absolutely equal terms - the one wishing to buy labor, and the other having

it to sell".[47]

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[42]*Trades Hall Gazette*, September 15, 1888, p.8.
[43]ITUC, *Report*, 1884, p.51; Report, 1885, pp.67-8; *Proceedings of the Seventh Intercolonial Trades and Labor Union Congress of Australasia*, 1891, p.66, NBAC, ANU E 97/20.
[44]Walter Hurrell, *Unionism: Capital and Labour, As Exemplified in the Milling and Baking Industries*, Spectator Publishing, Melbourne, 1893, p.130.
[45]*Trades Hall Gazette*, September 15, 1888, p.9.
[46]ITUC, *Report*, 1884, p.68.
[47]ITUC, *Report*, 1886, p.67.

Before the late 1890s, most unionists accepted a political economy which understood labour as "merchandise" or a "commodity".[48] As one unionist declared "a workman's labour is his capital...wages are the interest paid for that capital...".[49] According to this view of labour as a form of property, unionism was a vend used by the workers to maintain the price of their labour.[50] This formulation, which was derived from *laissez-faire* political economy, provided legitimacy to union struggles for control in a capitalist economy and a liberal polity because it represented the relationship between capital and labour as a matter of economic exchange. The ideology was not, however, a mere cloak used by labour to conceal a more ambitious assault on the citadel of capital. Most unionists believed that a free market, tempered by the humanising activities of the unions and the tariff, guaranteed their liberties. As Trenwith declared in 1884, labour was

> the commodity they had to offer in the market in exchange for living, and if they found it getting into excess of the demand they must take steps to meet it.

Moreover, Trenwith linked the struggle over hours to the broader question of work control, arguing that shorter hours were necessary to "reduce the quantity of their labour in order to maintain the balance and defeat the march of machinery".[51] Similarly, Amos Yewdall (Stonemasons) argued that by "reducing the hours of labour they would spread the work among a greater number of people, and so reduce the danger of the evil of over production".[52]

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[48]ITUC, *Report*, 1884, p.81.
[49]B. Thompson (Cigar Makers), ITUC, *Report*, 1885, p.99.
[50]See W.E. Murphy's comment, *Argus*, February 5, 1886, p.6.
[51]ITUC, *Report*, 1884, p.81. See also ITUC, *Report*, 1885, pp.64-5.
[52]ITUC, *Report*, 1884, p.79.

Like their labour counterparts in Great Britain, Victorian unionists assumed that the market was the appropriate site for the determination of wages and conditions. The separation of "trade" and "politics" was never complete, however, because unionists realised that their success depended on the maintenance of an economic and political environment which allowed them to "fight the battles of labour" in the industrial arena.[53] As Macintyre has suggested, they wanted the state to "hold the ring within which labour and capital could reach agreement".[54] Policies such as the reduction of immigration and the legalisation of trade unions aimed to create an environment in which labour could bargain successfully with the employers. Labour leaders accepted that if workers took advantage of the opportunities for combination provided in a liberal polity, they could stand on an equal footing with employers in the labour market.

## Industrial Relations

Industrial relations theorists have described the basic strategy of the craft union as "unilateral regulation".[55] A union adopted a set of rules and informed employers that they were to be observed in future. If an employer refused to accept union conditions, his shop would be struck, pickets formed, and unionists prevented from working there until society rules were observed. In some cases, unionists would simply leave the offending employer and find work elsewhere; the shop would henceforth be regarded as a non-society establishment. Under these circumstances, a strike was typically a minor and local event and negotiation between masters and men was not a conspicuous part of the process. More formalised procedures were

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[53]ITUC, *Report*, 1885, p.84.
[54]Macintyre, *Winners and Losers*, pp.46-7.
[55]Allan Flanders, 'Collective Bargaining: A Theoretical Analysis', in *Management and Unions: The Theory and Reform of Industrial Relations*, Faber & Faber, London, 1970, pp.213-40. See also Price, *Masters, Unions and Men*.

not a prominent feature of Victorian industry until the 1870s and 1880s and even then, collective bargaining co-existed with other strategies such as unilateral regulation, even within a single industry or union.[56]

Recent work on the "long boom" has modified the picture of widespread working-class prosperity painted by an earlier generation of historians. Jenny Lee and Charles Fahey have emphasised the seasonal character of the colonial economy which produced irregular earnings, especially for unskilled labourers in the casual labour market. They argue that the "boom" had an uneven impact on the working classes.[57] While this historical revisionism suggests that the image of Australia as a working man's paradise has been overdrawn, N.G. Butlin's argument that the labour market favoured wage-earners before 1890 remains true, even if he exaggerated the advantages that wage-earners enjoyed.[58] Before the depression, many unions were able to rely on labour shortages to win concessions from their employers. The degree of work control they exercised, however, should not be exaggerated since boom conditions encouraged many unions to concentrate on higher wages and shorter hours at the expense of an attempt to significantly reduce other dimensions of managerial control over the organisation of work. Union control was limited in most trades because of the weakness of the apprenticeship system and the large scale of economic expansion in the 1880s, which encouraged the employment of "improvers" (tradesmen who had not served an apprenticeship) and unindentured youths. The building trades were perhaps most seriously affected by this process, which militated against the development of a stable system of industrial relations in the building

[56]T.G. Parsons, 'An Outline of Employer Organizations in Victorian Manufacturing Industries 1879-1890, *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 14, 1972, pp.23-8; Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers', pp.256-64.

[57]Jenny Lee & Charles Fahey, 'A Boom for Whom?': Some Developments in the Australian Labour Market, 1870-1891', *Labour History*, 50, May 1986, pp.1-27.

[58]Noel G. Butlin, 'Colonial Socialism in Australia, 1860-1900', in Hugh G. Aitken (ed.), *The State and Economic Growth*, Social Science Research Council, New York, 1959, p.63.

industry. The Operative Stonemasons' Society, a powerful craft union, had no great difficulty enforcing most of its claims in the 1880s via traditional methods but other unions in the industry could not contend with the subdivision of labour and the widespread employment of improvers and youths.[59] Indeed, the practice of sub-contracting, which was common in the massive expansion of 1880s, weakened union power throughout the building industry.[60]

The unions in other industries were no more successful in advancing job control. The Melbourne Typographical Society (MTS), unable to resist the widespread use of unindentured boy labour, could not establish a system of craft control outside the metropolitan morning newspaper offices.[61] Similarly, the Tinsmiths' Society accepted improvers as members, tolerated piece-work, and was unable to enforce a minimum wage in the 1880s. These concessions were necessitated by the subdivision of labour and the weakness of a union whose members, as deskilled tradesmen, enjoyed only limited

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[59]Operative Stonemasons Society of Australia, Victorian Branch (Stonemasons), Minutes, December 23, 1885; December 29, 1885; January 15, 1886; January 16, 1886; January 18, 1886, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/7; *Trades Hall Gazette*, June 29, 1889, p.7; Fifth Intercolonial Trades Union Congress, *Report*, Warwick & Sapsford [Printer], Brisbane, 1888, p.82; *Age*, September 11, 1890, p.5; Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers', p.248; Operative Painters and Decorators' Union of Australia, Victorian Branch (Painters), Minutes, January 17, 1889, UMA 1/1. In 1888, the carpenters and joiners, divided between an Amalgamated Society, a Progressive Society and non-unionists, were unable to agree to a set of demands to press on their employers. See *Age*, December 1, 1888, p.10; *Age*, January 16, 1889; January 30, 1889, clippings in Melbourne Trades Hall Papers, ML MSS 308/12. The nature of the differences between the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners and the Progressive Society of Carpenters and Joiners is not entirely clear. The Amalgamated Society was affiliated with the British Amalgamated Society while the Progressive Society was a purely Australian organisation (although it might have included British immigrants). By the late 1880s, the Amalgamated Society was the larger organisation. It was also more militant. In 1888, it considered the use of the strike weapon to enforce the forty-four hour week. The Progressive Society, however, refused to strike and was only willing to request the employers to concede a forty-five hour week.

[60]Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers', chs. 4, 5, 8.

[61]R.T. Fitzgerald, *The Printers of Melbourne: The History of a Union*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons in Association with the Printing and Kindred Industries Union, Melbourne, 1967, pp. 4-5, 24-30, 38; Hagan, *Printers and Politics*, pp.62, 70, 72. See also MTS, Minutes, January 31, 1880; June 26, 1880; July 3, 1880; July 31, 1880; August 28, 1880; February 10, 1883; January 19, 1884, PKIU Archives.

bargaining power.[62]  The Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE) encompassed a small, highly-skilled section of the engineering industry, yet it achieved only moderate control over industrial conditions before it enforced a closed shop in 1890.  Improvers and labourers formed a large proportion of the workforce and there was no proper system of apprenticeship.[63]

The 1880s were a transitional period in the emergence of an industrial relations system in which a rudimentary system of collective bargaining developed in some industries, but co-existed with unilateral regulation and limited state intervention.  Traditional union strategies of striking individual shops were still employed by unionists in an effort to regulate their trades unilaterally.  By 1890, however, many unions had become at least partially enmeshed in collective bargaining machinery.  The evidence from Victoria in the 1880s indicates that Mark Bray and Malcolm Rimmer's comment that unions "rarely engaged in collective bargaining" requires some revision.[64]  The situation in the building and printing industries, however, generally confirms their assessment.  There was little collective bargaining here in the 1880s due to the magnitude of the boom, the fragmented character of the industry, and the lack of unity among both employers and employees which prevented the development of stable industrial organisations.[65]  Meanwhile, collective bargaining machinery developed in the printing industry in the early 1880s with the formation of a Master Printers' Association (MPA) involving the larger firms.  As James

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[62]*Argus*, January 9, 1890, p.4; January 25, 1890, p.11; February 7, 1890, p.4; February 10, 1890, p.9; February 12, 1890, p.8.

[63]Jeff Rich, 'Engineers and Work in Victoria c.1860-1890', unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1986.  See also *Age*, September 20, 1890, p.7.

[64]Mark Bray & Malcolm Rimmer, 'Compulsory arbitration versus managerial control: industrial relations in Sydney road transport, 1888-1908', in Stuart Macintyre & Richard Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration: The Origins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration 1890-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, p.231.

[65]Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers', pp.221, 256-64; *Daily Telegraph*, January 15, 1886; January 18, 1886; February 9, 1886; *Age*, January 26, 1886, clippings in Melbourne Trades Hall Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

Hagan has shown, however, the strength of the Typographical Society in the late 1880s led it to virtually abandon collective bargaining in favour of unilateral regulation.[66]

In manufacturing and maritime transport, there was some collective bargaining before 1890. The process of formalisation was most advanced in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. These operatives lacked the bargaining power to regulate industrial conditions unilaterally and had little to lose from participation in more formal collective bargaining procedures. At the same time, recognition by the employers as bona fide actors in the industrial relations system was an important source of legitimacy for these unions.[67] Indeed, some of the fiercest conflicts over work control in the 1880s and 1890s occurred in the boot industry, in which semi-skilled operatives predominated. The Victorian Operative Bootmakers' Union (VOBU) was formed in 1879.[68] In 1883, it met some employers in conference and reached an agreement on prices and apprenticeship, but strikes occurred late in 1883 as the VOBU attempted to enforce general compliance.[69] In 1884, the VOBU decided to make a stand against outwork, which was widespread in the industry, and recognised as an impediment to union control.

The 1884-5 lockout was a protracted struggle which involved over 1400 operatives.[70] The disputants agreed to conciliation, but the employers' refusal to allow Trenwith, the VOBU leader, to participate in negotiations

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[66]Hagan, *Printers and Politics*, pp.64-5, 69-71.

[67]Allan Flanders, 'What Are Trade Unions For?', in *Management and Unions: The Theory and Reform of Industrial Relations*, pp.43-4.

[68]There had been a United Victorian Bootmakers' Trade and Benefit Society which was active in the early 1870s. See Henry Mayer, *Marx, Engels and Australia*, Sydney Studies in Politics: 5, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1964, p.20.

[69]VOBU, Minutes, March 6, 1883; October 2, 1883; October 15, 1883; November 19, 1883; December 10, 1883; December 17, 1883, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/1.

[70]Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974. pp.106-8; W.E. Murphy, 'Victoria', in John Norton (ed.), *The History of Capital and Labour in all Lands and Ages*, Oceanic Publishing Co., Sydney, 1888, p. 161; Frances, *The Politics of Work*, pp.47-9.

led to the withdrawal of the Union.[71] The VOBU also rejected the employers' request for arbitration, evidently suspicious of a procedure which allowed an independent arbiter rather than the union itself to decide whether outwork should be permitted.[72] Conciliation, on the other hand, left the Union free to employ direct action in an effort to abolish outwork. A conference was arranged between the Employers' Union (VEU) and the Trades Hall Council (THC) from which Trenwith was excluded, and it reached a compromise which provided that outwork be abolished after 31 December 1885. Meanwhile, outwork would be regulated by a joint committee of employers and unionists. Union representatives were not to be permitted in the factory without the permission of the owner.[73] This was a settlement which preserved important features of employer control in an economic climate which was not entirely favourable to them. It is thus not surprising that the employers came to see advantages in conciliation and arbitration.[74]

In 1884, Richard Richardson MLA introduced a bill to establish courts of conciliation (with provision for arbitration) into the Assembly. It was modelled on British legislation, and while it received the support of the Miners' Association (AMA), it was opposed by the THC.[75] Urban union leaders were concerned that the courts "might break through some of the rules... [and] violate some of the most standing principles that belong to trades members".[76] Trenwith, as the representative of a union of semi-

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[71]*Age*, January 6, 1885, pp.5-6.

[72]VOBU, Minutes, February 14, 1885, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/1; *Age*, January 7, 1885, p.6; January 8, 1885, p.6; January 9, 1885, p.6; January 14, 1885, p.6; January 17, 1885, p.9; January 20, 1885, p.5; January 23, 1885, p.6; February 3, 1885, p.5.

[73]Melbourne Trades Hall Council (THC), Minutes, February 6, 1885; February 13, 1885, NBAC, ANU M 14; *Age*, February 4, 1885, p.5; February 5, 1885, p.5; February 6, 1885, p.6, February 11, 1885, p.5.

[74]*Age*, February 12, 1885, p.6. See also *Argus*, October 4, 1888, p.17.

[75]*VPD*, XLVI, July 30, 1884, pp.814-20; August 13, 1884, pp. 996-7; September 10, 1884, pp. 1359-66; September 24, 1884, pp. 1515-19.

[76]*Age*, August 2, 1884, p.9. See also THC, Minutes, August 1, 1884.

skilled operatives saw the advantages of the bill "as it, for the first time,

acknowledged the equality of labor and capital". The craft union-dominated

Council, however, rejected the scheme and Richardson withdrew it.[77]

Despite this failure, the resolution of the boot trade dispute early in 1885 by

conciliation and further developments later in the year confirmed the trend

towards formalised industrial relations. Late in 1885, the Pressers' Union

took advantage of a busy period at the firm of Beath, Schiess & Co. to press a

new log of claims on the company. The firm gave in to the pressers, who

occupied a powerful strategic position in the clothing trade, but the Union's

successful industrial action encouraged an alarmed VEU to request the THC

to meet it in conference.[78] The VEU proposed a scheme to resolve disputes

between unions and firms which were affiliated with the THC or the VEU.[79]

The employers desired that "reasonable notice [be] given by both

parties...before either strikes or lockouts are resorted to".[80] In a labour

market which favoured wage-earners, the employers recognised the

advantages of formal conciliation procedures which prevented their

employees from taking sudden strike action. Andrew Lyell, an accountant

who was involved in virtually every major attempt at conciliation and

arbitration in the 1880s, thought that the principal cause of strikes was "want

of complete organisation on both sides".[81] He envisaged a system of

industrial relations in which employers and employees were represented by

unions who conferred to sort out their differences.[82] The THC leaders also

saw advantages in such a scheme, which would prevent hasty action by the

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[77]*Age*, August 7, 1884, p.6. See also THC, Minutes, August 6, 1884; T.A Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia: From the First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901, Volume III*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, p.1486.
[78]*Argus*, October 24, 1885, p.6; October 31, 1885, p.12; THC, Minutes, October 30, 1885.
[79]*Argus*, October 24, 1885, p.6.
[80]*Argus*, October 31, 1885, p.12.
[81]Report of the Royal Commission on Strikes (RCS), *New South Wales Parliamentary Papers* (*NSWPP* ), 1891, 2nd Session, 23 A, Minutes of Evidence, 8034.
[82]RCS, Minutes of Evidence, 8071.

unions while enhancing the prestige of the Council by formalising its role in the resolution of conflict. Trenwith proposed a motion in favour of boards of conciliation and arbitration at the Intercolonial Trade Union Congress in 1886. He explained that while the spread of education and the growth of union organisation meant that

> they would shortly be able to obtain any desired alterations in their conditions by mere brute force if they so desired, still he hoped that as they became strong and powerful, and able to dictate terms, they would also become more anxious to avoid mere brute force...[83]

He advocated conciliation on the grounds that strikes were unscientific, weakening both parties and leaving a lasting enmity between capital and labour.[84] The unions supported conciliation to the extent that it permitted them to obtain their demands by peaceful means rather than direct action; they did not intend to abandon the strike weapon entirely.

The THC discussed the possibility of a conciliation scheme with the VEU in November 1885, but the development of a wharf labourers' dispute interrupted these negotiations. In January 1886, the recently-formed Wharf Labourers Union struck in support of a log of claims which included wage increases and recognition of the eight hour day.[85] The VEU and the THC both played a significant role in resolving this dispute. Indeed, the THC assumed leadership of the strike, organising finance and negotiating with the VEU.[86] Murphy and Trenwith of the THC addressed Wharf Labourers' meetings, advising conciliation.[87] The employers' threat to flood the labour market in order to break the strike was one reason for this broader interest;

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[83]ITUC, *Report*, 1886, p.66.
[84]ITUC, *Report*, 1886, p.66.
[85]J.T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1967, pp.59-61.
[86]*Argus*, January 13, 1886, p.6; January 16, 1886, p.10; January 18, 1886, p.6; January 22, 1886, p.5.
[87]*Argus*, January 9, 1886, p.6; January 13, 1886, p.6.

it was certainly at the heart of the Seamen's Union's support of the Wharf Labourers.[88] The strike was settled by a board of arbitration which comprised an equal number of THC and VEU representatives, and an independent chairman, Professor W.C. Kernot of the University of Melbourne.[89]

The resolution of this dispute increased THC and VEU interest in a board of conciliation.[90] While negotiations between the VEU and the THC for the formation of such a board were proceeding in mid-1886, a dispute erupted between the Ironworkers' Assistants Union and the firm Robison & Co. over the employment of a non-unionist.[91] The Union struck when the management refused to dismiss the non-unionist or move him to another part of the establishment. The firm referred the dispute to the VEU.[92] As a result of pressure from the this body, the THC leadership requested the Ironworkers to submit the dispute to arbitration, but the Union refused on the grounds that a vital principle of unionism was involved.[93] Remarkably this minor dispute almost developed into a general lock-out when employers in the trade formed an Ironmasters' Association under the auspices of the VEU to resist the demands of organised labour.[94] This appearance of unity was deceptive, however, since several large firms

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[88]*Argus*, January 15, 1886, p.6.

[89]Board of Arbitration, Minutes, February 2-8, 1886, in Victorian Employers Federation Collection, NBAC, ANU M 65/1/2; Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, p.110.

[90]See, for example, Bruce Smith's comment, *Age*, April 10, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11: "...the result of the board of arbitration upon the wharf laborers' dispute seemed satisfactory to both sides whose interests were involved, though the men had received in the aggregate less than one-third of what they originally demanded".

[91]*Age*, June 19, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[92]*Age*, June 24, 1886, July 2, 1886, clippings in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[93]*Age*, July 3, 1886; July 10, 1886; July 14, 1886; July 17, 1886; July 23, 1886; August 10, 1886; *Herald*, August 9, 1886, clippings in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11; William Evans (secretary VEU) to W.E. Murphy, July 30, 1886, in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[94]*Age*, July 31, 1886; *Argus*, August 5, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

refused to join the lock-out. They had government contracts, and would be penalised in the event of failure to carry them out.[95] The absence of agreement among the ironmasters led to the rapid collapse of the lockout in late August.[96] Bruce Smith (VEU) and the THC leaders Trenwith and Murphy sponsored a settlement which conceded the Ironworkers' demands.[97]

The significance of this dispute lies in its escalation from a minor conflict in a single firm into a broader mobilisation of ironmasters against the unions. It laid the foundations for a more formalised and centralised system of industrial relations in the industry. At the same time, the dispute highlighted the employers' disunity. In particular, it exposed the vulnerability of firms with government contracts to militant industrial action by their employees. The employers were encouraged to look to alternative means of securing labour discipline. In this endeavour, they found a willing partner in the THC executive, which was also eager to prevent costly strikes. The dispute had also revealed the weaknesses of the THC executive, whose recommendations of arbitration had been ignored.[98]

After protracted negotiations which continued throughout the strike, a board of conciliation was established by the THC and the VEU in 1887.[99] While some THC leaders saw it as a means of avoiding strikes and lockouts, it did not arouse much enthusiasm in the labour movement. Many union

[95]*Age*, August 6, 1886; August 11, 1886; *Daily Telegraph*, August 13, 1886, clippings in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[96]*Age*, August 17, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[97]*Argus*, August 23, 1886; August 25, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[98]*Age*, August 6, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11. It is significant that F.G. Hartley, the secretary of the Ironworkers and also a THC leader, had moved at a meeting of the Ironworkers in favour of conciliation, but he was overwhelmingly out-voted by the rank-and-file. See *Age*, August 12, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[99]*Age*, October 25, 1886, p.5; December 11, 1886, p.10; January 15, 1887, pp.8-9; January 21, 1887, pp. 9-10; May 21, 1887, p.10; July 23, 1887, p.10; August 27, 1887, p.10; December 11, 1886, p.9; *Argus*, August 13, 1886, p.5; ; May 21, 1887, p.10; September 5, 1887, p.7; THC, Minutes, October 9, 1886; October 15, 1886; October 23, 1886. See also Coghlan, *Labour and Industry III*, p.1488; Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, pp.116-9.

leaders feared that it would unduly restrict their actions so that the "power of sudden and decisive action would be taken out of their hands".[100] The problem, as Lyell saw it, was that "some of the subordinate Unions will not accept the jurisdiction even of the Trades Hall Council, and...they do not want to tie their hands unnecessarily."[101] The THC leadership was willing to accept a THC-VEU sponsored scheme of conciliation, however, because it did not raise the possibility of legal restrictions on the activities of trades unions. Moreover, the 1887 scheme excluded provision for arbitration, which many unions regarded as suspect. The scheme did, however, promise to reduce strikes and lockouts. Union leaders wanted to establish institutions which would restrain the use of direct action by semi-skilled and unskilled workers, whom they would have to support in the event of a strike. As David Bennet (ASE) declared when some corporation labourers were embroiled in a conflict:

> ...trade societies were too ready to take action on their own responsibility, and then when they found themselves in a difficulty to come to the Trades Hall Council to assist them.[102]

Similarly, the VOBU's unconditional acceptance of the basis of agreement formulated by the THC and the employers in 1885 was prompted by pressure from the THC, in particular the prospect of the withdrawal of financial support.[103]

By October 1888, however, only twenty-three unions had signed the rules of the Board of Conciliation; fifty-one had refrained from joining.[104] J.C. Bolger (MTS) described the scheme as "a mockery, a delusion and a

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[100]*Argus*, January 15, 1887, p.10.
[101]RCS, Minutes of Evidence, 8034, 8071, 8117.
[102]*Age*, December 4, 1886, pp.9-10.
[103]*Age*, February 14, 1885, p.10; See also J.G. Barrett's comment, *Argus*, October 13, 1888, p.20.
[104]*Trades Hall Gazette*, October 13, 1888, p.7. See also *Argus*, November 12, 1887; January 26, 1888, p.13; THC, Minutes, November 11, 1887.

snare"[105]   By 1889, many unionists regarded the Board as a failure.[106] It was responsible for the resolution of some minor conflicts in the later 1880s, but it was never able to occupy a pivotal position in a system of collective bargaining due to the suspicions of the trades and the belief that they could do better by direct action or direct negotiation with the employers.[107] As David Bennet declared, "[t]he power to strike was a capital weapon in the hands of trades unionism".[108]  In 1888, the Ironmoulders and Ironfounders asked the THC not to interfere in a dispute in which they were involved (for an increase of one shilling per day), and refused to sign the rules of the Board of Conciliation.[109] They preferred "dealing with the masters direct".[110]  The main objection of the Ironmoulders, however, was revealed when one of its officials declared that joining the Board "would compel them to give two months notice, armed with which the masters could easily defeat the object of the men".[111]  The THC decided not to intervene, despite pressure from the VEU to persuade the iron trades unions to sign the rules of the Board.[112]  The four month dispute was settled by a conference between the Ironmasters' Association and the unions.  An independent chairman, Lyell, was allowed to make a binding decision on the wages question.[113] This was a clear manifestation of the formalisation process in industrial relations.

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[105]*Trades Hall Gazette*, September 29, 1888, p.7.

[106]Sixth Intercolonial Trades and Labor Union Congress (ITLUC), *Report*, Tasmanian News [Printer], Hobart, 1889, pp.52-3.

[107]See, for example, United Tinsmiths, Ironworkers and Japanners' Society of Victoria, *Rules*, J.F. Stewart & Co. [Printers], Melbourne, n.d. [c.1890].

[108]ITLUC, *Report*, 1889, pp.52-3.

[109]THC, Minutes, August 3, 1888; Moulders Executive, Minutes, July 24, 1888; August 5, 1888, in Federated Moulders (Metals) Union of Australia Collection, NBAC, ANU T 20/1.

[110]RCS, Minutes of Evidence, 8118; *Trades Hall Gazette*, August 4, 1888, p.7. In October, the Ironmoulders voted thirty-nine to eleven not to sign the Board of Conciliation rules. See Moulders, Minutes, October 1, 1888, UMA 2/1.

[111]*Argus*, October 12, 1888, p.12.

[112]THC, Minutes, September 28, 1888; October 12, 1888; *Trades Hall Gazette*, October 27, 1888, p.6.

[113]*Argus*, November 27, 1888, p.8; November 29, 1888, p.7; November 30, 1888, p.8; *Age*, November 27, 1888, p.6.

# A PIONEER UNIONIST

David Bennet (1830-1915)

In 1893, Bennet applied for the secretaryship of the Employers' Union. When censured by the Trades Hall Council, he replied that "no position he held in the Council would prevent him from bettering his position" (*Commonweal*, May 13, 1893, p.2).

In 1888 the Ironworkers' Assistants Association and Ironmasters' Association agreed to refer another dispute to the Board of Conciliation (one of only two major cases in which the Board was activated), which resulted in an award acceptable to the employees without entirely conceding their demands.[114]  Early in the following year, the Ballarat branch of the Union, most of whose members were employed by the Phoenix Foundry, demanded the same wages and conditions as their Melbourne counterparts.[115]  The Ballarat Trades and Labour Council (TLC) played a crucial role in the conflict, and was central to the negotiations with the Phoenix board.[116]  After a lockout of union labourers and the re-opening of Phoenix with non-unionists, representatives of the employers, the TLC and the Ironworkers' Assistants met in conference and struck an agreement which granted the Ironworkers the same minimum wage as their Melbourne counterparts.[117]  It also recognised the right of the management to hire and fire workers and continue employing some non-union labourers, thus preserving an important dimension of employer control.[118]

In the same year, the ASE in Melbourne pressed a new set of demands on the ironmasters.  Unindentured juvenile and improver labour had undermined the work control of skilled engineers by the late 1880s.[119]  The engineers believed that they had been working excessive overtime, which undermined the eight hours system.  They demanded higher overtime rates, an apprenticeship of five years, special rates for night work and a

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[114]THC, Minutes, February 3, 1888; March 2, 1888; Board of Conciliation, Minutes, February 16, 1888; February 27, 1888, NBAC, ANU M 65/1/2; United Ironworkers' Assistants' Society of Victoria, *General Laws*, H.W. Mills & Co. [Printers], Melbourne, 1890, pp.25-6.
[115]*Ballarat Courier*, March 22, 1889; March 23, 1889.
[116]TLC (Ballarat), Minutes, February 15, 1889, NBAC, ANU E 97/1/4; Thomas Price (Secretary Ironworkers' Assistants' Society) to J.L. Anderson (President TLC), March 20, 1889, Ballarat TLC Collection, NBAC, ANU E 97/7/2; *Ballarat Courier*, March 23, 1889; March 26, 1889; March 27, 1889.
[117]*Ballarat Courier*, April 27, 1889; April 30, 1889.
[118]*Ballarat Courier*, May 9, 1889.
[119]ASE, *Monthly Report*, March 1889, NBAC, ANU S 35.

closed shop, threatening to strike firms which refused to comply with these demands.[120] The ironmasters initially resisted, since they regarded the ASE's stand as an attempt to abolish overtime.[121] After negotiations between the VEU and the ASE, however, an agreement was formulated which conceded most of the ASE's demands.[122]

In the 1880s, collective bargaining machinery affected only a small minority of (mainly male) wage-earners and neither its prevalence nor its impact ought to be exaggerated. It had little influence on the building industry, a major employer of urban workers in the 1880s while the industrial methods of some of the more powerful unions (such as the MTS and the ASE) in the late 1880s were closer to unilateral regulation than collective bargaining. There were some negotiations between these unions and employer bodies when disputes occurred, but formalised collective bargaining was not a part of the process. Their strength in the prosperous conditions of the late 1880s contributed to a reluctance to become enmeshed in collective bargaining machinery, particularly when it restricted the right to strike. Despite these qualifications, there was a trend towards formalisation of industrial relations in the 1880s, and a nascent collective bargaining system had emerged in some industries by 1890. Even the ASE and MTS, despite their strength in the late 1880s, recognised the Master Printers' and the Ironmasters' Associations as bona fide representatives of the employers. The unions worked through these bodies as well as individual employers. Consequently, when the maritime strike erupted in 1890, the institutional setting of labour relations in Victoria had been changed by the organisational developments of the preceding decade: the

[120]ASE, *Monthly Report*, December 1889; ASE (MDC), Minutes, December 9, 1889; December 20, 1889; December 28, 1889; December 30, 1889, UMA. See also Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers*, pp.107-10.
[121]*Argus*, December 14, 1889, p.10; December 18, 1889, p.8.
[122]*Argus*, December 28, 1889, p.8; December 30, 1889, p.6; December 31, 1889, p.6; January 1, 1890, p.6; January 3, 1890, p.6; ASE (MDC), Minutes, December 30, 1889, UMA.

expansion of trade unionism,[123] the growth of organisation among the employers, and the emergence of a system of industrial relations involving both unions and employer organisations.

The growing prestige of the Melbourne THC and the Ballarat TLC, the bodies which organised the Labor Party in the 1890s, depended on the evolution of these more formalised procedures, a process in which the Councils themselves had played an important role. This development has been overlooked by the historian of the THC, C.J. Kellaway, who fails to locate the development of the Council in the context of the evolving relations between workers and employers.[124] The THC, as we have seen, was active in resolving the boot lockout and the wharf labourers' strike.[125] In 1882-3, it played a major role in the resolution of a dispute involving Melbourne's tailoresses.[126] These conflicts involved groups of workers with limited bargaining power, and it was natural in the context of the labour movement in the 1880s that they should look to the skilled trades for leadership and support.[127] Unionism expanded rapidly in the late 1870s and 1880s, a process which brought many semi-skilled and unskilled workers within the ranks of organised labour, and in touch with the craft unions through the THC. The Council was thus more representative of labour in 1890 than in 1880, but it remained a craft-union dominated body.[128]

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[123]J.C. Docherty estimates that the percentage of unionists in the workforce in 1890-1 was 23.2. See 'The Rise of Railway Unionism: A Study of New South Wales and Victoria, c 1880-1905', unpublished MA thesis, Australian National University, 1973, p.193.

[124]C.J. Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance, 1855-1889, unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1973.

[125]THC, Minutes, December 5, 1885; December 12, 1884; Murphy, 'Victoria', pp.186-95; Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, pp.108-11.

[126]Raymond Brooks, 'The Melbourne Tailoresses Strike 1882-1883: An Assessment', *Labour History*, 44, May 1983, pp.27-38.

[127]Skilled tradesmen often provided the leadership of the unions of semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the 1880s. F.G. Hartley (Ironfounders), for example, was secretary of the Ironworkers' Assistants' Union; W.A. Trenwith was secretary and J.G. Barrett was president of the Australian Railways and Public Works Employes' Union (the railway navvies).

[128]Philipp, 'Trade Union Organisations', Appendix 11.

The craft unions were ambivalent in their attitudes to these broader associations. The tradesman typically saw himself as a cut above the labourer. This attitude was evident at a meeting of the Felt Hatters' Society in 1885, when a member was charged with having called it "a society of navvies", the ultimate insult for respectable craftsmen.[129]  Much of the energy of these unions was spent in protecting their skilled members from the encroachment of unskilled labourers and improvers. These efforts, however, must be seen in the context of the broader relations between employers and unions; they should not be regarded merely as evidence of a belief in craft superiority. Moreover, historians have cast doubt over the validity of the concept of a "labour aristocracy", and have pointed to the common experiences of skilled and unskilled workers. Tradesmen, like labourers, were often part of the casual labour market. Both groups were affected by unemployment, underemployment and irregular earnings.[130] There was certainly a growing recognition among unionists that diverse groups of workers shared common interests. As the *Victorian Railways Gazette* declared in 1891: "It is a firmly established law that the rate of wages received by common and unskilled labourers determines the rate of remuneration of the more skilled labourers".[131]  Whether or not this observation was true is beside the point; it is significant because it indicated a desire to develop a sense of class identity. Similarly, the emergence of a union movement and a Trades Hall Council expressed a sense of shared experience even as it constructed it. One way in which unions expressed a sense of class solidarity in the 1880s was through donations during strikes. When Trenwith appealed to the Stonemasons for financial support in the

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[129]Victorian Association of Journeymen Felt Hatters (Felt Hatters), Minutes, November 30, 1885, in Federated Felt Hatting and Allied Trades Employees Union of Australia Collection, NBAC, ANU E 87/21/1.
[130]Lee & Fahey, 'A Boom for Whom?'; Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, pp.34-51; Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers', ch.4.
[131]*Victorian Railways Gazette*, November 1, 1891, p.3.

1884 bootmakers' strike "on the ground of self-interest as well as sympathy", they donated £100 as they considered "that it was a case of common danger".[132]  On the same occasion, the MTS gave £550 to the bootmakers.[133] Still, the views of the Stonemasons' Society, one of the most exclusive of craft unions, were summed up by Brownlie, the secretary of the Melbourne Lodge, in a letter to the NSW Stonemasons which submitted a dispute to the Sydney TLC in 1891:

> If the Society refers such trifling matters for arbitration you will very soon lose the privileges that you now enjoy - and again it is not mason like to ask other people to settle your difficulties because they are not in a position to thoroughly understand them...without a doubt it shows signs of weakness - and immediately Contractors get that idea into their heads, they will endeavour to ride rough shod over you...[134]

Yet for all their exclusiveness and craft pride, these unionists did have a sense of being a part of a working class.  The unions' desire to regulate industrial conditions provided a basis for class identity and organisation.  As the industrial relations theorist Allan Flanders has remarked, trade unions seek to "limit the power and authority of employers and to lessen the dependence of employees on market fluctuations and the arbitrary will of management".[135]  The development of these common objectives provided a basis for trade union intervention in parliamentary politics.  The emergence of a political movement which incorporated various groups of workers, however, involved the articulation of political languages which broadened the cultural and political meanings of work, linking the experiences of a particular union or group of workers with the struggles of a "the working class", "the masses", or "the people".  The first step in this process was the

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[132]Stonemasons, Minutes, December 10, 1884, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/6.

[133]Hagan, *Printers and Politics*, p.68.

[134]Brownlie to Seward, December 10, 1891, Letterbook, in Operative Stonemasons Society of Australia Collection, NBAC, ANU E 117/9/2.

[135]Allan Flanders, 'What Are Trade Unions For?', p.42.

development of a program which "created" a political affinity between different groups of workers. As we shall see in chapter three, the formulation of such a program had been achieved by the end of the 1880s and it was followed, in 1891, by the formation of a Labor Party.

## Urban Industry and the Unions in the 1890s

In the boom conditions of the 1880s there had been shortages of unskilled labour. The demand for such labour at this time was based on the construction of public utilities and urban amenities and the seasonal demands of primary industry.[136] In the 1891 census, for example, there were over 7000 wage-earners engaged in the construction of railways, roads and earthworks.[137] Other general labourers (as well as miners, small farmers and shearers) did this type of work for part of the year. The curtailment of state-funded developmental works in the 1890s produced a massive surplus of unskilled and semi-skilled labour which lasted until the 1920s.[138] The 1890s, in particular, were years of reduced employment opportunities. Unemployment during the depression was very high and not precisely calculable, partly because it was relieved by mass emigration.[139] P.G. Macarthy estimates that unemployment in 1893 was over twenty-eight per cent.[140] As Bruce Scates has shown, suffering was widespread and the unions and charities were unable to cope with unemployment.[141] Some unemployed people protested in the streets of Melbourne. Before 1890, there had been periodic unemployment as a consequence of the seasonal

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[136]Coghlan, *Labour and Industry III*, p.1487.
[137]*Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8.
[138]Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment', pp.18-9, 51-4, 106-116.
[139]Coghlan, *Labour and Industry III*, p.1502.
[140]Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment', p. 82.
[141]Bruce Scates, 'A Struggle for Survival: Unemployment and the Unemployed Agitation in Late Nineteenth-Century Melbourne', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 94, April 1990, pp.41-63.

character of the economy and occasional economic downturns. The unemployed usually called attention to their plight by peaceful methods, urging the Government to undertake relief work. After 1890, a more militant unemployed movement emerged under the leadership of socialist and anarchist agitators. The THC and the nascent Labor Party were unsympathetic towards its methods; they regarded them as evidence that the unemployed were being manipulated by agitators.[142]

The effects of the depression on manufacturing are suggested by the contraction of employment from over 57 000 in 1889 to about 39 000 in 1893. It was not until 1899 that manufacturing employment recovered to its previous peak.[143] Wage rates declined sharply during the crisis of the 1890s as the unions were unable to maintain standards. T.A. Coghlan suggests that the wages of skilled workers in the building industry were cut by 25-30 percent, while other skilled workers endured 15-20 percent reductions.[144] Most unions of unskilled and semi-skilled workers which had been formed on the eve of the depression disappeared. Macarthy estimates that while two-thirds of the craft unions survived, they were seriously weakened. In the worst year for unions, 1895, they probably lost one-half to two-thirds of their membership.[145] By 1893, the Melbourne THC had an overdraft of £1000 for which the Hall's trustees were personally responsible.[146] Many societies were in a "bankrupt state" and others had collapsed entirely.[147]

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[142]S.A. Rosa, *The Truth About the Unemployed Agitation of 1890*, S.A. Rosa, Melbourne, 1890; Scates, 'A Struggle for Survival', pp. 53-61; Stuart Macintyre, *Winners and Losers*, pp. 59-61; Charlie Fox and Bruce Scates, 'The Beat of Weary Feet', in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, Ringwood, 1988, pp.132-9; Verity Burgmann, *'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.113-115.

[143]Butlin, *Australian Domestic Product*, p.160.

[144]T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia: From the First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901*, Volume IV, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 2049-50.

[145]Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment', pp.33, 204

[146]THC, Minutes, January 19, 1894.

[147]Barrett to Curley, February 8, 1894, THC Letterbook, UMA 7/1/1. The THC was rescued from financial disaster by a £250 donation from the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (ASU)

# THE PARLIAMENT OF LABOUR
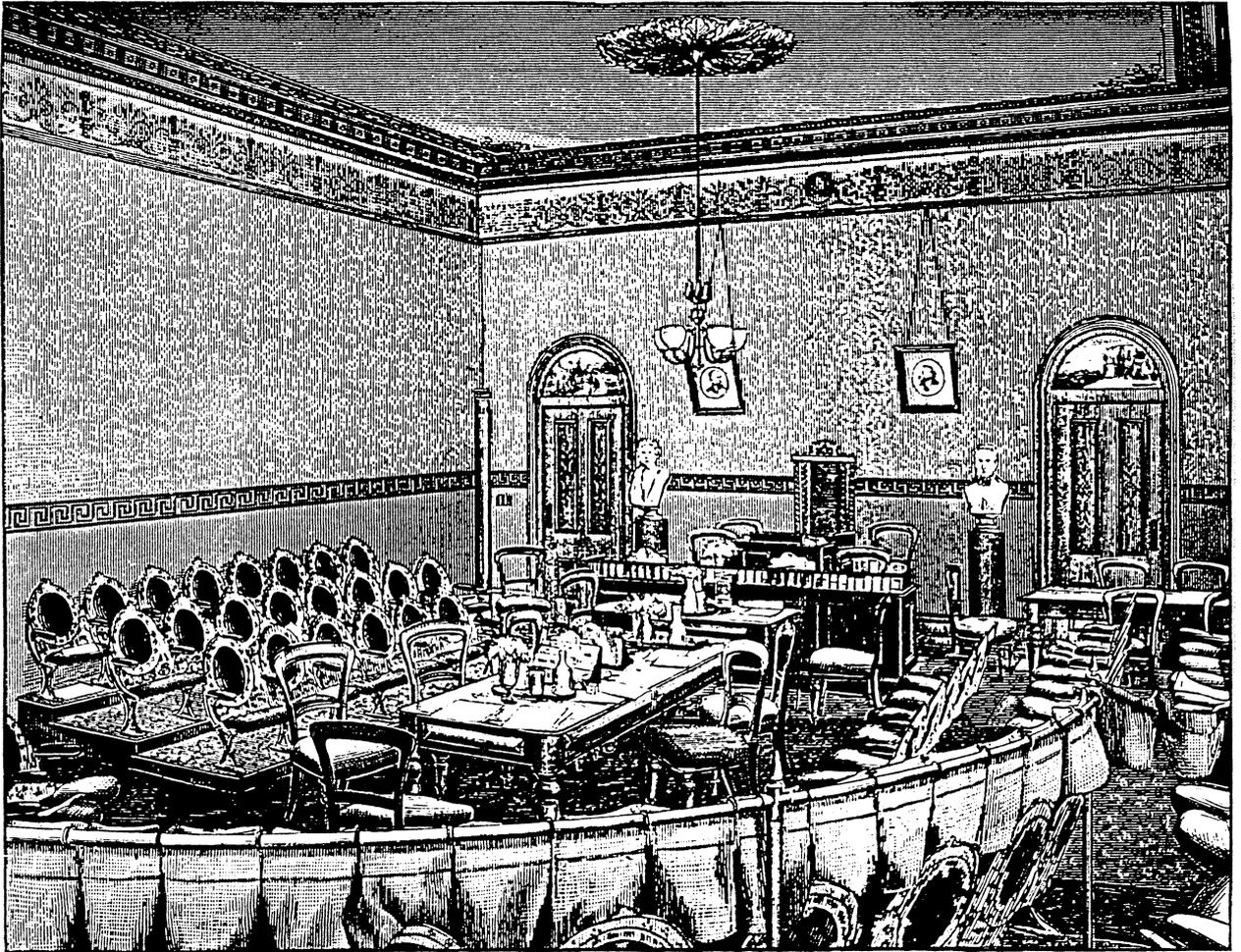


INTERIOR OF COUNCIL ROOM, TRADES HALL, MELBOURNE.

Individual unions were virtually powerless after 1892. Stephen Barker

declared that there was a union in the clothing trade "in name only".[148] In

1893, a member of the Agricultural Implement Makers' Union complained

that members of the trade had allowed "Unionism to die in them". The

Union had seventeen members.[149] The Timber Yard Employees Union

comprised a committee of seven without a rank-and-file[150] while the

Painters' Society in 1895 had five members and decided to disband.[151] In

1897, the *Age* summed up the condition of the union movement:

> ...at no time in its history has the body of Victorian artisans been so
> desperately weak as it is at present. Some of the strongest of the trades
> have so shrunk under the continuous drying up of employment that it
> is with the greatest difficulty that they are able to maintain the external
> semblance of organisations.[152]

The collapse of the union movement and mass unemployment provided

employers with an opportunity to reduce wages and increase managerial

control over the labour process. Employers insisted that declining

profitability necessitated the reduction of labour costs and reform of work

practices which restricted their right to deploy labour as they desired. As

Coghlan remarked:

> Employers took little heed of representations made to them, and in
> many trades, recognizing the weakened condition of the unions, took

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and a £1000 cheque from the Eight Hours Anniversary Committee. See THC, Minutes, February 16, 1894; June 28, 1895.

[148]Factories Act Inquiry Board (FAIB), *Victorian Parliamentary Papers (VPP )*, 1895-6, Vol. 3, No.44, Minutes of Evidence, 934.

[149]Agricultural Implement Makers' Union (AIMU), Minutes, November 10, 1893. See also AIMU, Minutes, February 2, 1893; February 16, 1893; June 8, 1893, in Sheet Metal Working, Agricultural Implement and Stovemaking Industrial Union of Australia (Victorian Branch) Collection, UMA 2/1/1/1.

[150]Royal Commission Appointed to Investigate and Report on the Operation of the Factories and Shops Law of Victoria (RCFS),*VPP*, 1902-3, Vol. 2, No. 31, Minutes of Evidence, 10883.

[151]Painters, Minutes, April 5, 1894, UMA 1/1.

[152]*Age*, March 2, 1897, p.4.

the opportunity to shake off restrictions which had been imposed on them in more prosperous times.[153]

This process was evident in the boot industry, where employers introduced new machinery in the early 1890s in order to reduce their dependence on skilled labour in the finishing process.[154] The VOBU, despite its weakened condition, resisted the imposition of weekly wages, the task system and the subdivision of hand labour (although not machine labour), but without effect.[155] By 1896, the Union exercised little influence in the trade. Employees at Bedggoods complained that "they paid their money but they had no protection from the Union".[156] The operatives' desire for greater work control, however, remained. Angus McLachlan, a VOBU leader, remarked:

> We think we have a right to have a say in the systems we are going to work under. The manufacturers do not want us to have a say; they want to say how they are going to work themselves.[157]

In the clothing trade, where female employees predominated, outwork became more widespread in the late 1880s and early 1890s as manufacturers sought to cut costs.[158] The Tailoresses' Union was reduced to about 130 members by the mid-1890s (from a peak of 2000 in the early 1880s), and could

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[153]Coghlan, *Labour and Industry IV*, p.2050.

[154]VOBU, August 28, 1893; January 29, 1894, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3; July 3, 1895; July 29, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4; Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p.49; Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, pp.67-71.

[155]VOBU, Minutes, February 7, 1894; February 13, 1894; February 22, 1894; August 27, 1894; September 2, 1894; September 7, 1894; October 3, 1894; October 11, 1894; January 7, 1895; January 11, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3; June 25, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4; THC, Minutes, September 7, 1894; September 21, 1894; September 25, 1895; July 31, 1896; August 14, 1896; December 10, 1900. See also Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p.53.

[156]VOBU, Minutes, July 16, 1896, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4. See also VOBU, Minutes, March 14, 1895; April 8, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3; September 7, 1896, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4.

[157]RCFS, Minutes of Evidence, 7613.

[158]Tailors' Trade Protection Society, Melbourne (Tailors), Minutes, May 8, 1893, in Federated Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia (Victorian Branch) Collection, UMA 1/1/1. Factories Act Inquiry Board (FAIB), *First Progress Report*, *VPP*, Session 1893, Vol. 2, No.47, p.14. See also Frances, *The Politics of Work*, pp.36-7.

not enforce its log.[159]   After 1896, wages board determinations which set piece rates higher than a weekly wage encouraged a trend away from outwork towards factory production and led to an increase in work discipline and the imposition of weekly wages and the task system.[160] Meanwhile, the Tailors' Society was concerned about outwork and the encroachment of female labour, but could not exercise effective control over conditions in the industry before the intervention of the wages boards.[161]

The clothing industry was the main field of paid women's employment outside domestic service.[162]  In the manufacturing sector, most women were employed in the clothing and boot trades; other areas of female employment in manufacturing were bookbinding; the processing and packaging of food and drink; and the tobacco industry.[163]  Between 1886 and 1909, the number of women in manufacturing increased dramatically.[164]  The industries most adversely affected by the depression were those which employed men almost exclusively: the metals industry, and building and construction.[165]  Industries which employed large numbers of women - clothing and textiles, boots, food processing and

[159]FAIB, *First Progress Report,VPP*, Session 1893, Volume 2, No. 47, p.15.

[160]Raelene Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p.82. See also RCFS, Minutes of Evidence, 9294, 13989-90, 14011-22, 14174.

[161]Tailors, Minutes, June 23, 1890, UMA 1/1/1; Bradon Ellem, *In Women's Hands? Clothing Trades Unionism in Australia*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1989, p.37.

[162]W.A. Sinclair, 'Women and Economic Change in Melbourne 1871-1921', *Historical Studies*, 29, 79, October 1982, pp.280-1.

[163]Edna Ryan & Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders : Australian Women at Work*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1989, pp.32-41; Raelene Frances & Bruce Scates, *Women at Work in Australia from the Gold Rushes to World War II*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1983; Beverley Kingston, *My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1975; Ellem, *In Women's Hands?* ; Sinclair, 'Women and Economic Change'.

[164]In 1886, the proportion of females to males in registered factories was 1:5; by 1909, it was 1:2. This was partly but not entirely a consequence of a greater proportion of factories coming to the attention of the statistician as the scope of Factories and Shops legislation widened. See Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1901-1910*, no.4, McCarron, Bird & Co. [Printers], Melbourne, 1911, p.558.

[165]W.A. Sinclair, *Economic Recovery in Victoria 1894-1899*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1956, p. 90; Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, pp.89-94.

packaging - did not suffer as acutely from the depression because there was a shift in demand from expensive imported to cheaper locally produced goods.[166] Moreover, the consumption goods produced by female workers were less subject to fluctuations in demand than capital goods.

There is little evidence of women encroaching on trades which had traditionally been defined as men's work.[167] The expansion of female labour occurred in "women's trades", and male unionists jealously guarded the sexual division of labour and the rights of male breadwinners.[168] In 1891, before the worst effects of the economic crisis had hit Victoria, the THC decided to appeal to the public "not to patronise places of business where cheap female labor is introduced nor any place of business which retails articles manufactured under this system".[169] Compositors working in the large metropolitan newspaper offices largely succeeded in maintaining the art and mystery of their craft as an adult male preserve.[170] Their success, however, prompted the employers to introduce the linotype machine, which displaced hundreds of compositors.[171] Moreover, small jobbing offices and country newspapers were overrun with unindentured youths in the 1880s and 1890s, a development which continued to undermine the printers' control over the labour process.[172]

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[166]W.A. Sinclair, *Economic Recovery in Victoria*,pp.86, 90-1, 98.

[167]Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p.79.

[168]Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Year Book, 1901-1910*, no.4, p.558.

[169]THC, Minutes, September 25, 1891.

[170]It would appear that there were, however, attempts to introduce juvenile labour in these offices. See MTS, Minutes, April 16, 1898; June 4, 1898, PKIU Archives.

[171]Frances, *The Politics of Work*, pp.69-72; See also MTS, Minutes, July 28, 1894; June 15, 1895; July 27, 1895; June 19, 1897; July 24, 1897, PKIU Archives; *Australasian Typographical Journal*, January 1895, p.2521-2; May 1895, pp.2556-7; August 1895, p.2581; June 1896, p.2660; July 1896, p.2669; July 1897, pp.5-6; February 1898, p.7; *Champion*, June 27, 1896, p.262.

[172]MTS, Minutes, May 26, 1883; June 15, 1901, PKIU Archives; *Australasian Typographical Journal*, July 1902, p.4. Hagan notes that the absence of Society comment on the employment of boys in the 1890s "can only be taken to mean that control of this problem was considered to be beyond the bounds of possibility; or that proprietors could find men who would work for boys' wages". Hagan, *Printers and Politics*, p.110.

Male unionists were alarmed at the growing prominence of women and children in the workforce. John Hancock, an MTS official, remarked at an anti-sweating meeting "that in a well-conducted world it would not be necessary for women to work".[173]  George Roberts, a Richmond Laborite, complained that

> with the advance of science, men were being displaced by youths, these in turn giving place to women; and if the present condition continued the woman...would be the world's worker.[174]

It was the spread of female labour and persistent unemployment among male workers which caused alarm.[175]  The situation called into question the domestic ideology which held that it was the responsibility of the man to provide for his wife and family through participation in the paid workforce and that the woman's role was to bear children and attend to her natural sphere, the home.[176]

One section of the urban workforce was less troubled by women workers than by Chinese labour.  The effect of Chinese competition on the European cabinetmakers is unclear, but furniture trades unionists blamed the Chinese in the industry for their problems, and successfully sought alliances with their employers in order to protect white labour from Chinese competition.[177]  In 1900 Fallshaw, a leading employer in the industry, addressed the United Furnishing Trades Society (UFTS) and "urged that now was the time to clear [the Chinese] out of the Country.  [H]e urged

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[173]*Champion*, April 25, 1896, p.159.

[174]*Ballarat Courier*, April 4, 1904, p.3.

[175]Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment', pp.18-9, 51-4, 106-116.  See the anarchist 'Chummy' Fleming's comment: "The little boys, girls, and women here were worked to skeletons, while their fathers and husbands walked about the streets unable to get employment." (*Argus*, March 1900, p.14).

[176]*Labor Call*, October 13, 1910, p.8.  See also Ryan & Conlon, *Gentle Invaders*, ch. 4.

[177]UFTS, Minutes, September 10, 1896; September 17, 1896, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/9; August 2, 1900; August 9, 1900, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/12; July 24, 1902, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/13.  See also Andrew Markus, 'Divided We Fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union, 1870-1900, *Labour History*, 26, 1974, pp.1-10.

united action on the part of the Employers & employees".[178]  The unionists'

perceptions of the industry's social relations of production were informed by

the traditional craftsman's distinction between the "fair" and the "unfair"

employer.  However, this understanding was moulded in the furniture

trade by racism.  Harwood, a union official, explained the problems of the

trade in the 1890s:

> ...owing to the Chinese element, it has caused the furniture sellers to so
> sweat the manufacturers that they, in turn, have sweated the men till
> at last men are working now £1 and 30s a week, piece-work, first-class
> skilled men...[179]

These tradesmen did not interpret the turmoil in the furniture trade

primarily in class terms.  They regarded white employees and employers as a

community which was a victim of Chinese labour.  In the 1890s, white

employers exploited the weakness of the men by introducing a debased

system of piece-work called "lump-work", in which employers and

individual workers bargained over piece-work rates.  They tightened shop

discipline and introduced juvenile and unskilled labour, but the workers

directed their hostility at the Chinese.[180]

The building industry was decimated by the depression, although the

influence of the unions in the industry had never been strong, especially in

residential construction.[181]  Tradesmen could not halt the spread of

improvers in the 1880s and 1890s.[182]  In 1890, after the boom had collapsed,

the Painters' Society reported that half of its members were unemployed

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[178]UFTS, Minutes, August 2, 1900, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/12.

[179]FAIB, Minutes of Evidence, 4831.

[180]RCFS, Minutes of Evidence, 9916, 9943, 9946, 10276, 10280, 10368, 10439; THC, Minutes, July 30, 1897; UFTS, Minutes, May 28, 1896; August 20, 1896, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/8; April 5, 1900; May 10, 1900, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/11; October 10, 1901, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/13.

[181]Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, pp. 85-9; Rich, 'Victorian Building Workers', chs.6-8.

[182]Note, for example, the Painters' concern about the 'improver' question, Stonemasons, Minutes, September 3, 1884, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/6.

and blamed the situation on "Improvers & dishonest competition".[183]
Carpenters and joiners, like painters, had experienced subdivision and
complained of a loss of work control and status from the 1880s.[184] They
were disturbed by the subdivision of their trade into a number of specialised
tasks, and yearned for a restoration of the golden age of craft production.
W.J. Inglis, the secretary of the Amalgamated Carpenters, complained that
specialisation was damaging the trade: "Our trade is going down as regards
men - all round men - and it is through not having a proper regulation of
the apprentices". Younger members of the trade were not properly trained
in all areas of carpentry and joinery, thus creating a class of sub-tradesmen
who would be used by "[u]nscrupulous employers" to depress the wages of
skilled carpenters.[185] The Bricklayers' Society was troubled by the spread of
piece-work and sub-letting while the proud Stonemasons' Society faced
even worse problems.[186] By the late 1890s, stone was being less frequently
used than bricks and cement in the construction public buildings and, as a
result, the trade never fully recovered from the depression.[187] The tight
control which it had established by the 1880s on city building sites was
undermined in the 1890s as its prohibition on piece-work and sub-
contracting was flouted by employers. Contractors also endeavoured to
increase the proportion of improvers in the industry.[188] While the Society
resisted, it was unable to prevent the reorganisation of the industry along

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[183]Painters, Minutes, July 17, 1890, UMA 1/1.

[184]*Age*, December 1, 1888, p.10; ITUC, *Report*, 1889, pp.30, 32; Rich, 'Victorian Building
Workers', pp.44-8.

[185]RCFS, Minutes of Evidence, 10752, 10762.

[186]Victorian Operative Bricklayers' Society, Melbourne Lodge (Bricklayers), Minutes, June
15, 1891, NBAC, ANU T 8/2A/5.

[187]Lamb to Ashton, March 22, 1897; Lamb to Garry, June 4, 1897, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E
117/9/1-2; Lamb to McPherson, September 22, 1900; Laughton to Griffin, October 30, 1903,
Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E 9/4.

[188]Stonemasons, Minutes, February 3, 1892, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/8; January 11, 1893; February
22, 1893, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/9; Brownlie to Johnston, June 14, 1892; Brownlie to Meller, July
4, 1892; Brownlie to Gibbs, January 18, 1893, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E 117/9/1-2.

the lines favoured by employers.[189] By the late 1890s, the practice of contractors sub-letting work to suburban yards where the Society exercised little influence was widespread.[190] In 1899, as the economy showed signs of buoyancy, the Stonemasons' Society struck a work agreement with the Builders' and Contractors' Association.[191] This was the type of centralised bargaining in which some other unions had become enmeshed during the 1880s but which the masons had resisted. In 1886, for example, the Society refused to recognise the Master Masons' Society, preferring to deal with individual firms in the traditional craft union manner.[192] By 1899, the weakened union was glad to gain the recognition of contractors in a nascent collective bargaining system.

Another industry which suffered acutely from the depression was engineering. By 1894, unemployment among ASE members was about sixteen per cent.[193] Significant erosion of the engineers' work control had already occurred in the 1880s, prompting the successful ASE strike of 1889-90.[194] In the 1890s, however, the loss of control was more rapid and complete. It was manifested in the widespread employment of improvers and labourers to do engineers' work, the spread of piece-work, and an increase in factory discipline.[195] Engineers complained of a loss of status. One member, Brother Dunn, stated "that he was looked on as a leading

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[189]For example, the Society had to tolerate piece-work by the late 1890s. See Stonemasons, Minutes, January 31, 1900; April 25, 1900; May 2, 1900; May 9, 1900, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/9.

[190]Lamb to Walker, February 2, 1899, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E 117/9/1-2; Lamb to Davidson, November 15, 1900; Laughton to Grant, January 8, 1903, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E 117/9/4.

[191]Stonemasons, Minutes, January 20, 1899; February 22, 1899; November 29, 1899, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/9.

[192]Stonemasons, Minutes, September 1, 1886, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/7.

[193]Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers*, p.316.

[194]ASE (MDC), January 21, 1889, UMA. See also Buckley, *The Amalgamated Engineers*, pp. 106-11.

[195]ASE (MDC), Minutes, January 26, 1890; May 29, 1891; September 22, 1891; November 21, 1891; March 3, 1892; May 3, 1892; June 14, 1892; August 23, 1892; October 11, 1892; June 7, 1892; February 26, 1895; March 19, 1895; October 16, 1895; September 16, 1897, UMA.

hand but he did not act now as one".[196]  In 1892, when some Melbourne

firms gave notice of a wage reduction, the ASE urged the Ironmasters'

Association to agree to a conference and stated its willingness "to assist them

in getting all the Ironmasters into their association".[197]  The ASE was still

working on the assumptions of the more formalised industrial relations

system which had emerged in the 1880s, but the employers were now

moving towards unilateral regulation of industrial conditions as they

capitalised on mass unemployment to remove many restrictions which the

Union had been able to impose in 1890.

There is some evidence, in this desperate climate, of a radicalisation of

the craft unions.  Brownlie, the Stonemasons' secretary, described an

attempt by a company to reduce wages as

> another instance of the greed of these Capitalistic money grubbing
> companies, that are never satisfied with a fair return for their money
> but are always ready to grind the worker down to the very lowest ebb,
> for the purpose of making themselves richer - & the poor, poorer...[198]

This might be regarded as fairly consistent with the earlier attitudes of the

craft unions to "unfair" employers but there was also an indication in some

unions of a state socialist turn.  The introduction of the labour-saving

linotype machine at the *Argus* drew a radical response from the

*Typographical Journal*.  The *Argus* represented

> a class which is ever ready to discard with a light heart those who have
> grown old in their service with as little compunction as they would
> throw away the rind of an orange after carefully extracting all the juice.
> The only remedy for the evil is the nationalisation of land and
> machinery![199]

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[196]ASE (MDC), Minutes, March 3, 1892, UMA.
[197]ASE (MDC), Minutes, November 29, 1892, UMA.
[198]Brownlie to Kitchen, February 6, 1893, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E 117/9/1-2.
[199]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, May 1896, p.2652.

In union discussions, there was a greater emphasis on the role of the state in ameliorating the working class.[200] This was an important shift when it is considered that most unionists regarded politics and the trade as separate realms, a distinction which was gradually eroded in the 1880s and 1890s. At the same time, the significance of these developments ought not to be exaggerated. These unions represented only a small proportion of workers and the radical sentiments belonged to a minority of union activists. However, the greater emphasis on state action did suggest a departure from traditional union strategies. From the late 1890s, unions increasingly looked to the state to compensate for their reduced bargaining power, and new industrial strategies prompted new attitudes to political involvement.

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[200]UFTS, Minutes, May 30, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/7.

# CHAPTER TWO:
# THE WORKING CLASS IN TRANSPORT, MINING
# AND PASTORALISM, 1885-1900

**Transport I**

By 1891, the transport industry employed over 20 000 Victorians, who
formed some of the largest unions in the labour movement.[1] There was
considerable diversity among the various sections of the transport industry
in the relations between capital and labour. The Tramway Company
maintained a strict discipline, demanding the absolute compliance of
employees with its directives.[2] Employees worked long hours (up to sixty a
week) for low wages, and exercised little collective power. Alison
Churchward has attributed the inability of tramway employees to form a
successful union to the management's hostility to unionism.[3] In the early
1890s, they suffered five separate cuts which reduced their wages by twenty-
three percent, and many employees were discarded.[4] Meanwhile, carters,
drivers and carriers also suffered long hours and poor wages. While there
were a few larger employers in the carrying business, most firms were small
and many carriers were self-employed (21.6 per cent in 1891).[5] Employers

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[1]*Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8.

[2]For a history of the Company which, unfortunately, ignores industrial relations, see John D.
Keating, *Mind the Curve!: A History of the Cable Trams*, Melbourne University Press,
Carlton, 1980.

[3]Alison R. Churchward, 'Attempts to Form a Union: The Employees of the Melbourne
Tramway and Omnibus Company, 1882-1898', *Labour History*, 42, May 1982, pp. 27-39. See
also T. Mann, 'The Political and Industrial Situation in Australia', *Nineteenth Century*, 56,
1904, pp.476-7.

[4]Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Grievances of Employes of the Melbourne
Tramway and Omnibus Company Limited (RCGEMTOC), *VPP*, Session 1898, Vol.3, No.42,
Report, viii, ix, xix; Minutes of Evidence, 4833-4.

[5]*Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8.

regarded such work as light and unskilled, which they used to justify a working week of up to seventy hours.[6]

It was, however, railway and maritime transport which employed most workers in the industry. Melbourne was a busy port in the 1880s, and the home of most of Australia's large intercolonial shipping companies.[7] The industry was characterised by giant aggregations of capital, a large workforce, and a small number of employers.[8] Among the workers, there was a hierarchy based on skill and strength, which was complicated by technological change, especially the transition from sail to steam. Traditionally, the captain and his officers were at the apex of the ship hierarchy, but steam power created a new set of processes which were performed by marine engineers.[9] By 1890, marine officers were conscious of a loss of status and the erosion of their wages and conditions relative to other maritime employees.[10] The affiliation of the officers with the THC, which the shipowners regarded as detrimental to discipline on the ships, led to the maritime strike of 1890. The Seamen, Stewards and Cooks, Wharf Labourers and Stevedores, who were pressing their own claims on the shipowners, supported the officers but the Australian Institute of Marine Engineers (AIME) reached a separate agreement with the shipowners and refused to strike. They were rewarded for their loyalty with a wage reduction in 1893 and found it necessary to strike in 1897 in support of a

[6]Royal Commission Appointed to Investigate and Report on the Operation of the Factories and Shops Law of Victoria (RCFS), *VPP*, 1902-3, Vol. 2, No. 31, Minutes of Evidence, 19302, 19322, 20056.

[7]Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, p.90.

[8]In 1891, employers were 2.6 per cent of breadwinners in sea and river transport. See *Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8.

[9]Rosemary Broomham, *Steady Revolutions: The Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers 1881-1990*, University of New South Wales Press, Kensington, 1991, pp. 1-89; Chris Fisher, 'Technological Change and the Unions: The Case of the Marine Engineers before 1890', *Labour History*, 41, November 1981, pp.29-40; Victorian Steamship Owners' Association (VSSO), in Australasian Steamship Owners Federation Collection, NBAC, ANU, E 217/1.

[10]*Age*, August 14, 1890, p.5; The Mercantile Marine Officers' Association of Australasia and New Zealand (Victorian Section), *Rules*, C.W. Burford [Printer], Melbourne, 1890, p.5.

return to 1890 conditions.[11] The Seamen were even less fortunate. In 1893, they were involved in an unsuccessful strike when the shipowners announced a reduction in the wages of seamen and firemen.[12] While there was some improvement in wages in the second half of the 1890s, the employers refused the recognise the Union.[13]

Many seamen who tired of life at sea worked as wharf labourers and stevedores.[14] The labour process on the wharves had been affected by mechanisation in the 1880s, with the introduction of steam winch engines, but it remained a labour intensive industry in which heavy and dangerous work was the rule.[15] There was a distinction in status between stevedores' labourers, who worked the overseas ships at Port Melbourne and Williamstown, and the wharf labourers, responsible for the coastal vessels on the Yarra.[16] Each group of workers had its own union. The members of the Stevedores' Association possessed a higher level of skill than their counterparts in the Wharf Labourers' Union, since they were responsible for the careful stowing of overseas cargoes.[17] Until 1890, stevedores were better paid than the wharf labourers working the coastal vessels and the lumpers who carted coal to and from the wharves.[18] The seasonal character of waterfront labour meant that work and earnings were irregular.[19]

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[11]'Memorandum of Agreement', in VSSO, Minutes, October 1893, NBAC, ANU E 217/1; VSSO, Minutes, December 29, 1896; December 30, 1896; January 5, 1897, NBAC, ANU E 217/1.

[12] Brian Fitzpatrick and Rowan J. Cahill, *The Seamen's Union of Australia 1872-1972: A History*, Seamen's Union of Australia, Sydney, 1981, pp.22-26.

[13]Steamship Owners' Association of Australasia (SOA), Minutes, February 6, 1895, in VSSO, Minutes; VSSO, Minutes, March 14, 1895, October 28, 1896, NBAC, ANU E 217/1; Fitzpatrick & Cahill, *The Seamen's Union*, pp.30-1.

[14]*Argus*, January 12, 1886, p.6.

[15]*Trades Hall Gazette*, July 28, 1888, p.8; *Age*, September 19, 1890, p.5.

[16]*Age*, September 18, 1890, p.5. See also Rupert Lockwood, *Ship to Shore: A History of Melbourne's Waterfront and Its Union Struggles*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1990, p.15.

[17]*Argus*, February 5, 1886, p.6.

[18]W.J. Mitchell, 'Wharf Labourers, Their Unionism and Leadership, 1872-1916, unpublished PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1972, pp.10-11.

[19]*Argus*, January 9, 1886, p.6; February 3, 1886, p.6; February 4, 1886, p.4. See also Mitchell, 'Wharf Labourers', pp.19,163-4. In 1890, the Melbourne Wharf Labourers' Union had 930 members and an additional 450 members in other employment who paid a reduced subscription. See *Age*, September 4, 1890, p.5.

By 1890, the Stevedores and the Wharf Labourers had been able to secure moderate improvements in their conditions. The arbitration award of 1886 led to substantial improvements in wharf labourers' pay and conditions while in 1890, the Union gained further increases which gave the wharf labourers virtual (wage) parity with the stevedores' labourers.[20] The unions thus entered the maritime strike in 1890 with some confidence of success but the employers were able to secure sufficient non-union labour to defeat the strike. They established a Bureau to supply maritime labour. By 1893, the Port Phillip Stevedores could claim only five members.[21] The waterfront unions had only a nominal existence in the early 1890s, and wages in the industry suffered strong downward pressure.[22] In May 1897, however, a Sydney visitor described the Melbourne waterside workers as "a compact body, whose number exceeded that of any other society walking in the recent Eight Hour procession...". He also noted that the Labour Bureau had been abolished, "the men having some time ago refused to patronise it, and after a strike of ten days, the Steamship Owners submitted to the dictates of the union".[23] The Bureau was actually still in operation after 1897, but its significance had declined with the tightening of the labour market.[24] In March 1899, the Wharf Labourers' Union was revived, with 300 members out of a total of 800-900 regular labourers.[25] The Port Phillip Stevedores Association was also resurrected early in 1900.[26] In 1902, when it joined the Waterside Workers Federation, it claimed 1100 members while the Wharf Labourers' Union could boast about 400 members and an agreement with the shipowners.[27]

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[20]For details of the 1890 agreement, see *Commonweal*, February 11, 1893, p.4.
[21]Mitchell, 'Wharf Labourers', pp.239-40.
[22]VSSO, Minutes, March 12, 1896, NBAC, ANU E 217/1.
[23]*Australian Workman*, May 8, 1897, p.3.
[24]VSSO, August 5, 1897; July 21, 1898, NBAC, ANU E 217/1.
[25]*Tocsin*, March 30, 1899, p.2.
[26]THC, Minutes, February 9, 1900; *Tocsin*, February 8, 1900, p.7.
[27]Lockwood, *Ship to Shore*, p.101; Mitchell, 'Wharf Labourers', pp.198, 259.

**Transport II**

In the 1880s, there was a massive extension of the railway system in
Victoria.  In 1883, there were 1562 miles of tracks; by 1891, a further 1200
miles had been added, an increase of almost seventy-seven per cent.[28]
Railway construction provided employment for a large army of navvies;
created backward linkages with the manufacturing sector; and sustained a
large expansion of the Railway Department.  By 1890, there were over 15 000
railway employees, and many thousands more were involved in the
construction of lines.[29]

Conditions in the service for employees were generally more
favourable than in the private sector.  The permanent employment
available in the Railway Department was prized by the minority who
enjoyed it and coveted by others, since job insecurity and irregular earnings
were the rule outside the service.[30]  Many railway staff received paid
holidays while those who entered the Department before 1883 were entitled
to a pension on retirement.[31]  There were also opportunities for promotion.

Railway employees were divided between three branches.  The
locomotive branch comprised men employed in the workshops in the
construction and maintenance of rolling stock.  Some of these workers were
mechanics who belonged to craft unions.  The "aristocratic" engine drivers
as well as those lower in the ranks from whom they were recruited, the
firemen and cleaners, belonged to this branch.  The permanent way section

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[28]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1890-1, No. 124, xvii.
[29]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1898-9, No.52, p.37.
[30]Eddie Butler-Bowdon, *In the Service?: A History of Victorian Railways Workers and their
Union*, Hyland House, South Yarra (Vic.), 1991, pp.9-10.  See also Victorian Railway
Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1898-9, No.52, p.67, for excess of applications over available
positions in the railway service.
[31]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1884-5, No.64, xii; Railway Inquiry
Board, Minutes of Evidence, *VPP*, Session 1895-6, Vol.3, No.71, 7813.

encompassed "gangers" and "repairers" responsible for the maintenance of tracks and railway buildings, and the installation of equipment. Finally, the traffic branch included station staff, guards, shunters, signalmen and goods handlers.[32] There were also distinctions between permanent and casual employees, salaried and wages staff, clerks and manual workers. Railway employees, however, derived a sense of community from their place "inside the fence".[33] They had one employer, the government, while their everyday dealings were with their immediate superiors in the service. Management used a system of fines to enforce discipline while severe breaches of departmental regulations could lead to suspension or dismissal.[34]

Railway employees' industrial activities, social life and, in country areas, their accommodation, were defined by employment in the railway service. They felt bound to the service, and identified themselves as a particular "class", railway men.[35] A sense of belonging to the working class was thus not the only, nor even the most powerful source of their social identity. Railway employees, however, were not totally isolated from other groups of workers. The Victorian Railways Employees' Mutual Association (VREMA), which aspired to be an all-grades union, affiliated with the THC at its formation in 1884 while the Engine Drivers Association was a member of the Council in the 1880s.[36] The reasons for the Engine Drivers' support of

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[32]This discussion depends on Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1885-6, No.80, pp.34-42; Butler-Bowdon, *In the Service?*, pp.15-6; 57-85; J.C. Docherty, 'The Rise of Railway Unionism: A Study of New South Wales and Victoria, c 1880-1905', unpublished MA thesis, Australian National University, 1973, p.35.

[33]Alison Churchward, '"Inside the Fence": Unionism in the Victorian Railways 1903-1920', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1983, pp.2-5, 27.

[34] 'Abstract of Department Regulations', *VPP*, Second Session, 1883, Vol. 4, No. 52.

[35]Churchward, 'Inside the Fence', pp.2-3.

[36]THC, Minutes, November 21, 1884; Docherty, 'The Rise of Railway Unionism', p.28. The VREMA had allowed its affiliation with the THC to lapse by 1886. In this year, the Annual Conference of the VREMA voted not to affiliate with the THC. As one member declared, while he "would advise any society of operatives to join the Trades' hall...they were railway men, and their first duty was safety to the public". See *Daily Telegraph*, March 25, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

the THC were summarised by its secretary in 1885, when he defended the decision to financially support the bootmakers who had been locked out by their employers:"...I have no doubt [we] will not be forgotten by the Trades Hall Council should we ever require their assistance...".[37] The Engine Drivers' superior pay and status in the service did not prevent them from raising a levy in support of the maritime strike in 1890.[38] In general, railway men recognised that labour conditions in the service were related to working conditions outside the "fence", but their status as state employees prevented active participation in the broader labour movement.[39] There were also regulations which forbade state employees from involvement in politics (except voting in elections).[40]

By 1888, the VREMA had 4000 employees, making it one of the largest unions in Victoria.[41] The railway unions eschewed militancy and never seriously considered the strike as an instrument of strategy.[42] W.F. Fitzpatrick, a senior official in the Railway Department, thought that a "safety-valve exists in those societies by which the men can work off their discontent".[43] In the 1890s, most railway unions became more remote from the rest of the labour movement, pursuing their objectives without the assistance of the THC. However, the depression of the 1890s unleashed many of the forces which ultimately broke down the industrial and political

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[37]Swift to Webb (Sandhurst branch, secretary), February 17, 1885, Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association, Letterbook, in Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen Collection (Victorian Division) Collection, State Library of Victoria (VSL) MS 9391.
[38]Ross to Brown, October 7, 1890, Letterbook, VSL MS 9391.
[39]*Victorian Railways Gazette*, November 1, 1891, p.3.
[40] 'Abstract of Department Regulations', *VPP*, Second Session, 1883, Vol. 4, No.52.
[41]Murphy, 'Victoria', pp. 176-7; Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, pp. 115-6.
[42]Railway Inquiry Board, Minutes of Evidence, 1706-1710; Victorian Railways Employees' Mutual Association (VREMA), Minutes, June 23, 1887, in Australian Railways Union Collection UMA 1/1.
[43]Railway Inquiry Board, Minutes of Evidence, 2142.

isolation of railway employees from other wage-earners.[44] Railway workers'

wages and conditions were adversely affected by the attempts of the

Government to reduce expenditure. The economic crisis had a devastating

effect on the Railway Department. Between 1890-1 and 1894-5, gross

revenue declined by twenty-two per cent.[45] Sea and road transport

provided the railways with increasingly effective competition, prompting

reductions in railway freight prices and fares.[46]

In general, the course pursued by the Railway Department to effect

economies was moderate. It reduced train mileage, rationalised

administration, retired sexagenarians, and dispensed with casual staff.

Management reduced employees' working time with pay deductions in

preference to the dismissal of permanent staff.[47] Permanent staff were not

replaced when they retired.[48] The number of employees in the Department

fell by over thirty-five per cent between 1890 and 1897.[49] The Department

increased duties while curtailing privileges which the staff had previously

enjoyed.[50] In 1893, the Patterson Government introduced percentage

reductions for state employees earning over £100.[51] Railway employees

were able to exercise political influence to mitigate the worst effects of the

depression, especially as the myth that the 1894 election result had been

determined by the votes of state employees gained currency.[52] J.C. Docherty

suggests that the Victorian railway unions maintained and possibly

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[44]There were exceptions. The Locomotive Workshops Union was affiliated with the THC from April 1890 while the Daily Paid Union, formed in 1896, was also represented on the Council. See Docherty, 'The Rise of Railway Unionism', pp. 67-8, 84-5.

[45]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1894-5, No.68, pp.4-5.

[46]Railway Inquiry Board, Report, xii-xiii; Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1890-1, No.124, xix; 1892-3, No.43, p.13; 1893-4, No.1, p.9; 1894-5, No.68, pp.7, 9.

[47]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1891-2, No.99, pp.11-12; 1892-3, No.43, pp.11-14, 56; 1893-4, No.1, p.12; 1894-5, No.68, p.14; Railway Inquiry Board, Minutes, 7776.

[48]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1896-7, No.16, p.13.

[49]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1898-9, No.52, p.37.

[50]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1892-3, No.43, p.14.

[51]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1893-4, No.1, p.12; *VPD*, LXXII, July 19, 1893, p.404.

[52]Railway Inquiry Board, Report, xi; Minutes of Evidence, 1025, 8020, 8033, 8055.

increased their membership in the 1890s and that "railway men who retained their jobs were in a far superior condition to most other wage earners".[53] There were significant concessions to the employees after 1895. The implementation of a reclassification scheme and the gradual abolition of percentage reductions beginning with the lowest paid workers increased incomes while the formation of an appeal board with an employee representative was a major concession.[54] The Department adopted a minimum rate of pay in response to the agitation of the labour movement while the number of permanent staff was increased marginally in 1897-8.[55] In 1900, however, the greatest trials of the railway employees still lay ahead of them.

## Mining

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, Victorian gold miners were haunted by the passing of the golden age of the "free independent digger".[56] The introduction of steam-driven pumps, lifts and cages, dynamite, and pneumatic rock drills, which replaced manual boring, led to the emergence of mechanised company mining.[57] Despite the transformation of the industry, gold yields declined from the 1860s. There was a drop in every year from 1871 to 1879; a brief revival during the mining boom in the early 1880s; and a steady decline after 1882. Yields improved during the depressed

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[53]Docherty, 'The Rise of Railway Unionism', p. 75.

[54]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1896-7, No.16, pp.11-12; 1897-8, No.36, p.4; 1898-9, No.52, p.4; 1899-1900, No.47, p.15.

[55]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1898-9, No.52, p.4; 1897-8, No.36, p.13.

[56]W.G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker Trustees, Sydney, n.d. (first published 1909), p.15. See also W.B. Withers, *The History of Ballarat from the First Pastoral Settlement to the Present Time*, F.W. Niven, Ballarat, 1887, p. 238; T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia, Volume III*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, p.1481.

[57]Robert Murray & Kate White, *The Golden Years of Stawell*, Town of Stawell in conjunction with Lothian, Melbourne, 1983, p.96; Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1978, p.78; Tony Dingle, *The Victorians: Settling*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1984, pp.89-90.

conditions of the 1890s because the fixed price of gold encouraged investment in the industry and unemployed workers went fossicking in abandoned goldfields to avoid starvation.[58]

Employment levels in gold mining also dropped after the rushes of the 1850s and 1860s. Many of those engaged in the industry earned only part of their income from mining, working as shearers or labourers at other times.[59] There was an absolute drop in employment in the industry between 1880 and 1892 from 38 568 to 23 518, but between 1892 and 1896 the number of workers engaged in mining increased by 8605 or thirty-six per cent. There was a decline in the late 1890s which continued throughout the following decade.[60]

The development of mining unionism was an outcome of the growth of company mining from the 1860s. In 1874, a conference at Bendigo formed the Amalgamated Miners' Association (AMA).[61] The mining unions of the 1870s were little more than *ad hoc* "strike organizations", often under the leadership of local politicians.[62] Moreover, the political successes of the 1870s bred a complacency about industrial organisation. The Regulation and Inspection of Mines Acts of 1873 and 1877 improved conditions for miners.

[58]*Victorian Year Book*, 1892, p.332; *Victorian Year Book*, 1903, p.434.

[59]Geoffrey Serle estimates that only about half of those included in official statistics as gold miners could have been earning a regular wage at this occupation. See Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria 1883-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, p.63.

[60]*Statistical Register of Victoria*, 1890, p.520; *Statistical Register of Victoria*, 1900, p.611; *Victorian Year-Book*, 1909-10, p.674; 1910-11, p.710; 1915-16; p.776.

[61]Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, p. 19; W.E. Murphy, 'Victoria', in John Norton (ed.), *History of Capital and Labour in All Lands and Ages*, Oceanic Publishing Co., Sydney, 1888, pp.133-4.

[62]Kevin Peoples, 'To what extent does the second phase of trade unionism in the Bendigo Miners' Association, 1882-1888, represent a growth in trade unionism and a development in both Unionism and working-class identity over the first phase, 1872-1882', unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1975, p.8; David Potts, 'Robert Clark', *ADB*, Volume 3, pp.407-8.

The 1877 Act provided for an eight hour day.[63]  By the late 1870s, the AMA

had declined to three branches and approximately 250 members.[64]

In 1878, an attempt to reduce wages at Creswick led to the formation of

a Miners' Association there under the leadership of W.G. Spence.[65]  The

Miners' Association was also revived at Ballarat, and there was renewed

activity at Bendigo in 1879 as miners resisted attempts to cut wages.[66]  The

Ballarat district branches soon took over the AMA, which they based on a

benefit fund as a means of attracting members.[67]  This encouraged the

growth of the AMA in the 1880s, although the union rarely encompassed

more than about one-third of the European miners.[68]  Moreover, the benefit

fund hampered the industrial dimension of the Union's activities.[69]  The

records of the Bendigo Miners' Association reveal that the Association's

benefit activities occupied much of its attention and most of its funds.[70]

There were very good reasons for this emphasis.  Mining was a particularly

dangerous and unhealthy occupation.  Accidents were common, and

sometimes fatal.[71]  Moreover, the development of quartz mining and the

use of mechanical rock drills led to a dramatic increase in miners' phthisis, a

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[63] 'An Act to provide for the regulation and inspection of Mines', 25th November 1873, No. CCCCLXXX, in Acts of Parliament of Victoria 36 & 37 Victoria, 1873, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1873; 'An Act to provide for the Regulation and Inspection of Mines', 20th December 1877, No. DLXXXIII, in Acts of Parliament of Victoria 41 Victoria, 1877-8, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1878.

[64] Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, p.19.

[65] W.G. Spence, *Review of the First Ten Years' History of the Creswick Branch, No. 3, A.M.A. of Australasia*, The Advertiser [Printers], Creswick, 1888, pp.3-6.

[66] Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, p.23; Spence, *Review*, p.6.

[67] Bate, *Victorian Gold Rushes*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Fitzroy, 1988, p. 49.

[68] Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, p.111;*Age*, February 27, 1907, p.9.  See AMA, *Official Report of the Seventh Annual Conference*, W.D. James [Printer], Eaglehawk, 1899, p.22; *Statistical Register*, 1900, p.7.  The AMA had just over 9000 members in 1899 in a total mining population of 30 114.

[69] Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, p.25.

[70] Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, 1885-9, in Lloyd Ross Collection, NBAC, ANU P 103/4.

[71] In 1882, the New Australasian Company's mine at Creswick was flooded, resulting in twenty-two deaths.  See Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended*, pp. 297-8.

debilitating complaint which often led to premature death.[72] Dr. Walter

Summons found that miners at Bendigo failed to take even the most simple

precautions, such as the use of water jets to minimise the dust nuisance, in

order to preserve their own health.[73] He reported: "The sole idea, I fear, in

too many minds, is to secure the gold without regard for anything else".[74]

The question of miners' health was not a cause of tension in the mining

industry. Most early disputes between the AMA and the mine owners

occurred when the employers tried to reduce wages or refused to recognise

the Association.[75] The AMA always favoured conciliation and, as long as

the mine-owners recognised the Association, the relationship between the

two parties was relatively harmonious.[76] The Association supported

legislative attempts to introduce voluntary councils of conciliation in 1883-4

and in 1886, it appointed a committee of miners to meet seven nominees of

the mine owners on a joint committee to resolve disputes and to act in

representations to the Minister of Mines.[77] While there is some evidence of

a movement towards a fairly informal system of collective bargaining in the

1880s, the process never advanced very far. There was, for example, no

association of mine-owners at Bendigo.[78] In 1887, the Bendigo AMA

resolved to send circulars to the Boards of Directors in the Sandhurst district

"respectfully requesting them to form a mine owners association".[79] It is

likely, however, that in the Ballarat district, where the mine owners were

better organised and the unions, under the influence of Spence, more

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[72]Report of the Royal Commission on Gold Mining (RCGM), *VPP*, Session 1891, Volume 5, No.151, Minutes of Evidence, 5179-88; Walter Summons, *Miners' Phthisis: Report of an Investigation at Bendigo into the Prevalence, Nature, Causes and Prevention of Miners' Phthisis*, Stillwell & Co., Melbourne, 1907, pp.9-11.
[73]Walter Summons, *Miners' Phthisis: Report on the Ventilation of the Bendigo Mines*, Acting Government Printer, Melbourne, 1906, p.31.
[74]Summons, *Miners' Phthisis*, 1906, p.15.
[75]RCS, Minutes of Evidence, 1567.
[76]Spence, *Review*, pp.8-10.
[77]Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, p.117; RCS, Minutes of Evidence, 1580.
[78]*Bendigo Advertiser*, February 6, 1886.
[79]Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, May 26, 1887, NBAC, ANU P 103/4.

assertive, that the transition to a formalised system of industrial relations was relatively more advanced.[80]

The AMA's activities did not reveal a precocious belief in the class war. On the contrary, miners believed that the interests of the mine owners and the miners were complementary. The banner of the Ballarat branch showed "a capitalist in an immaculate silk hat and frock coat, shaking hands with a miner in his working clothes over a bag of gold".[81] The unreliability of mining employment contributed to the harmonious industrial relations in the mining industry. Unemployment and underemployment were persistent features of life as a gold miner.[82] Consequently, mining communities regarded investors such as George Lansell and B.J. Fink as public benefactors.[83] In 1887, the Bendigo Miners' Association expressed "its gratification at Mr. Lansell [the Quartz King] coming to reside amongst us again...".[84] Both the Stawell and Ballarat Mine Owners' Associations declined to join the Employers' Union, regarding the interference of an outside body as a potential threat to industrial peace.[85] Tributing might also have contributed to this calm. Under this system, the owners of mining leases permitted working miners, using their own tools, to search for gold in

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[80]*Creswick Advertiser*, August 30, 1882. The proceedings of the conference between the Creswick Miners' Association and the mine owners in 1882 reveal that there were no established rules to govern the bargaining process at this stage. See also Spence, *Review*, pp.7-8.

[81]*Socialist*, February 23, 1907, p.4.

[82]Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, May 23, 1889, NBAC, ANU P 103/4; Amalgamated Miners' Association of Victoria, *General Rules*, F.N. Martin & Grose, Creswick, 1884, preface; J. C. Fahey, 'Wealth and Social Mobility in Bendigo and North Central Victoria 1879-1901', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1981, p.122; J.A. Froude, *Oceana or England and her Colonies*, Longmans, Green & Co., 1886, p.134.

[83]Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, pp. 64, 262; The grateful people of Bendigo erected a statue in honour of Lansell after his death in 1906. See Suzanne G. Mellor, 'George Lansell', *ADB*, Volume 5, p.64.

[84]Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, October 27, 1887, NBAC, ANU P 103/4. See also *Bendigo Advertiser*, October 28, 1887. Some members of the AMA committee opposed the proposal to participate in the civic activities to welcome Lansell on the grounds that it might cause discord. The motion to participate was carried seven votes to four.

[85]Murray & White, *Golden Years of Stawell*, p.121; *Shearers' Record*, September 15, 1890, p.6.

return for a percentage of the yield.[86] Tributing expanded in the 1880s as capital investment and gold yields declined. Geoffrey Blainey has been suggested that tributers "were aristocrats amongst miners" but by the 1880s, the system was almost certainly of greater benefit to the companies than the miners, who often laboured for little reward as a means of avoiding unemployment.[87] It seems likely that tributing magnified a characteristic of the whole industry: the tendency for miners to perceive that they shared a stake in the production process with the mine owners. Peter Phillips, a Bendigo AMA official, expressed the attitude of many AMA leaders when he said that "a great deal of what is called capital and labor is only co-operation on a broad principle".[88]

In 1886, the president of the AMA, J.F. Hunter contrasted "the trained, disciplined reasoning of the unionists to the ill-directed violence of a rabble".[89] In liberal terms, unionism made miners better citizens.[90] In the larger mining centres, the existence of a wide variety of cultural institutions and voluntary associations reflected a strong belief in the virtues of a civic culture. The local Miners' Association was usually well integrated into the local community. It donated money to local bands, hospitals, benevolent asylums and charities.[91] The AMA was one of a plurality of local institutions in which miners were involved; others were friendly societies,

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[86]Under another arrangement, called the "halves system", the companies provided the mining equipment except candles in return for half of the gold extracted by tributers. See RCGM, Minutes of Evidence, 3796-7.

[87]Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1978, p.123. For a less optimistic view of tributing than that of Blainey, see J. C. Fahey, 'Wealth and Social Mobility in Bendigo and North Central Victoria 1879-1901', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1981, pp.123-4. See also RCGM, Minutes of Evidence, 5028.

[88]Press clipping, in Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, March, 1887, NBAC, ANU P 103/4.

[89]*Age*, September 22, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/11.

[90]Amalgamated Miners' Association of Victoria & Tasmania, *Official Report of the Seventeenth Annual Conference*, D. James [Printer], Eaglehawk, 1909, pp.6-7.

[91]Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, November 7, 1885; July 17, 1886, NBAC, ANU P 103/4.

sporting clubs, municipal councils, school, hospital and mining boards, and churches.[92] Evangelical religion, especially Methodism, was a powerful influence in the mining districts.[93]   Many local businessmen were honorary members of the AMA,[94] while the Association's anniversary each year was a major celebration for the whole town, with a sports day, street procession, baby show, concert and dance.[95]   These activities were less an expression of working-class consciousness than a celebration of the "mass experience" of mining in which mine owners, managers, miners and local townsfolk shared.[96]   As Summons pointed out, even the miners' respiratory diseases were shared by the whole community, as they also affected the non-mining population.[97]

Miners were just as likely to perceive a common interest with their employers than with workers in other industries.   Under Spence's leadership, the AMA participated in the affairs of the THC parliamentary committee and its branches were among the most generous contributors to the bootmakers in their troubles in 1884-5.[98]   The AMA, however, often held aloof from the broader labour movement before 1900, especially in the 1890s.[99]   The miners believed the main political battle was not against the employing class but against non-mining interests.   As Spence told the Royal Commission into Gold Mining when asked whether farmers should be permitted to vote for mining boards: "We want to avoid the farmers; they want to monopolize the land; and the miners want it left open; that is the

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[92]Margaret McAleese, 'Creswick in the 1880s', unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, Monash University, n.d., p.13.

[93]Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, pp.112-3.

[94]McAleese, 'Creswick', p.13.

[95]*Bendigo Advertiser*, October 11, 1887; Peoples, 'Bendigo Miners Association', p.31; McAleese, 'Creswick', p.13.

[96]Weston Bate, *Lucky City: The First Generation at Ballarat, 1851-1901*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1978, p.261.

[97]Summons, *Miners' Phthisis*, 1907, p.17.

[98]Trades Hall Council, *Victorian Operative Bootmakers' Lock Out Fund, Balance Sheet, 12 March 1885*, J.J. Miller [Printer], Melbourne, 1885. The AMA donated £845/19/6.

[99]*Tocsin*, March 3, 1898, p.5.

conflict between the two".[100]  In 1885, miners and mine owners co-operated

to oppose compensation to landowners for damage to their land which,

according to the president of the Creswick Mine Owners Association,

"would be the cause of stopping several mines".[101]  In 1889, Spence even

suggested the formation of a "mining party" in the Legislative Assembly.[102]

Even the more class conscious gold miners believed that conditions for

workers were worse elsewhere, and that their employers were basically

decent.[103]

## Pastoralism and Agriculture

The Victorian economy in the 1890s was still, to some extent, "hitched to a

wool waggon".[104]  In 1892, Victoria had almost thirteen million sheep, 14.5

per cent of the Australian total.[105]  However, wool was Victoria's biggest

export in the early 1890s, and the colony's ports were also the outlet for

Riverina wool, about as much as was produced in Victoria itself.[106]

Victoria's flocks were owned by wealthy pastoralists and selectors engaged in

mixed farming.  Pastoral holdings were generally smaller than those in

western New South Wales and Queensland.[107]  The increasing emphasis on

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[100]RCGM, Minutes of Evidence, 18394.

[101]Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, October 29, 1885, NBAC, ANU P 103/4.

[102]Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, March 26, 1889; March 29, 1889, NBAC, ANU P 103/4.

[103]Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, September 22, 1888; Press clipping, in Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, September 1888, NBAC, ANU P 103/4.

[104]Brian Fitzpatrick, *The British Empire in Australia: An Economic History, 1834-1939*, Macmillan of Australia, South Melbourne, 1969, p.33.

[105] Victoria's share of Australia's sheep had been in decline since the 1860s as a consequence of the stagnation of sheep numbers in that colony as it reached its pasturing capacity, the expansion of pastoralism into the far west of New South Wales, and the development of the industry in Queensland. See N.G. Butlin, 'Distribution of the Sheep Population: Preliminary Statistical Picture, 1860-1957', in Alan Barnard (ed.), *The Simple Fleece: Studies in the Australian Wool Industry*, Melbourne University Press in Association with The Australian National University, Carlton, 1962, pp. 281-99.

[106]*Statistical Register of Victoria*, 1892, pp.217, 219. Wool leaving Victorian ports in 1891, for example, was valued at £7,165,092 while its imports were £3,372,154. By subtracting imports from exports, we have some indication of the value of Victorian wool exports.

[107]Serle, *The Rush to be Rich*, p.48.

sheep raising by farmers from the 1890s and closer settlement legislation in the early years of the twentieth century encouraged the trend towards smaller flocks.[108]

The pastoral industry used land-extensive methods and, after the development of wire fencing from the 1850s, did not require a large permanent labour force. During the shearing season, thousands of workers were employed by the pastoralists as shearers and shedhands. John Merritt has emphasised the importance of local labour in the Victorian pastoral industry and estimates that by the 1880s, over fifty per cent of shearers and nearly all shedhands were local men.[109] In the 1891 census, only 311 people gave their occupation as shearer, indicating the part-time and seasonal nature of the occupation.[110] Merritt estimates the Victorian shearing workforce at about 4300.[111] Many of these were selectors and their sons, who supplemented their incomes with money earned from shearing and other pastoral work. In the 1891 census, 18 839 people gave their occupations as farm servants, labourers and ploughmen while over 20 000 were wives, sons, daughters or relatives of farmers and market gardeners, assisting them with their work.[112] It is likely that the males in these census categories provided the bulk of the Victorian pastoral workforce, although other labourers also participated.

The peak of the Victorian shearing season was mid-October.[113] Earnings derived from shearing and other casual labour were often essential for selectors to maintain solvency, especially before 1900. Spence told the

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[108]Charles Fahey, '"Abusing the Horses and Exploiting the Labourer": The Victorian Agricultural and Pastoral Labourer, 1871-1911', *Labour History*, 65, November 1993, p.107; John Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p. 34.
[109]Merritt, *The Making*, p. 38.
[110]*Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8.
[111]Merritt, *The Making*, p. 43.
[112]*Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8.
[113]AWU, *Official Report of the Twenty-second Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1908, p.14.

(NSW) Royal Commission on Strikes in 1891 that most of the Victorian members of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (ASU) followed other occupations and had land of their own.[114] Margaret Kiddle and Susan Priestly have emphasised the prominence of selectors in the shearing workforce of the Western district and Warracknabeal (Wimmera).[115] Their conclusions are supported by ASU evidence.[116] Shearers were also engaged as general labourers on pastoral stations, or as miners, agricultural labourers, railway navvies, and labourers on public works.[117] The *Shearers and General Labourers' Record* claimed that "[f]ully two-thirds of the shearers follow general work after the shearing...".[118] As Fahey has shown, there was a large army of rural labourers in Victoria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who followed a variety of occupations for low and irregular wages. They were part of a casual rural labour market. Even in 1914, most rural workers outside the pastoral and mining workforce were unorganised and exercised little collective power.[119]

The prominence of selectors in the Victorian pastoral workforce is significant in explaining the character of shearers' unionism in Victoria. Union sources emphasised farmers' resistance to unionism, and attributed it to their status as property owners.[120] That many farmers only shore for a few weeks was probably a disincentive from investing in a Union ticket; others purchased a Union ticket and worked under ASU conditions early in

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[114]RCS, Minutes of Evidence, 1689-92.

[115]Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1962, pp. 401, 403, 407, 420; Susan Priestly, *Warracknabeal: A Wimmera Centenary*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1967, pp. 15, 33-4.

[116]*Shearers' Record*, November 15, 1888, p.5; April 15, 1889, p.3. See also *Argus*, May 2, 1906, p.8.

[117]*Shearers' Record*, April 16, 1888, p.9; April 15, 1890, p.6; *Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, January 15, 1892; May 10, 1892; April 15, 1893.

[118]*Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, November 15, 1892.

[119]Fahey, 'Abusing the Horses', pp.96-114.

[120]*Shearers' Record*, January 15, 1889, pp. 4-5. See also *Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, July 15, 1891.

the season, only to shear non-union later.[121]  There were other reasons for

the selectors' lack of enthusiasm for unionism.  They were dependent on

neighbouring pastoralists for the loan of equipment, breeding stock, timber,

credit references, water rights, and employment during the off-season.[122]

There is no evidence of intense conflict between selectors and pastoralists in

Victoria at this time.

It was the closely settled character of Victoria and the easy availability

of labour which did most to promote peaceful social relations between

pastoralists and their employees in rural Victoria.  The ease with which

Victorian pastoralists could procure labour was a reason for the lower prices

for shearing and station work in Victoria, but Victorian shearers also lost

less time travelling the relatively short distances between stations than

shearers in more sparsely settled colonies.[123]  It was largely as a result of

these conditions that the resistance of Victorian pastoralists to the claims of

the ASU was so stubborn.  The rates fixed by the ASU for Victoria in 1886

(15s with rations; 17s 6d without rations) meant a major increase in

prevailing rates, but the Victorian pastoralists were well organised.  They

formed the Western Districts Sheepowners' Association and similar bodies

were soon established in other areas to resist the ASU's demands.[124]

The ASU, founded in 1886, challenged the prevailing industrial

relations in the industry to the extent that it asserted the right of shearers to

limit the authority of the pastoralists.  The ASU, however, also worked with

the grain of existing social relationships.  Its official organ proclaimed the

essential congruence of capital and labour: "Capital is to a great extent

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[121]Merritt, *The Making*, p. 130.

[122]Merritt, *The Making*, pp. 129-31; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, pp. 142-43;
Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday*, p. 423.

[123]*Shearers' Record*, June 15, 1888, p.9; February 15, 1889, p.3; Merritt, *The Making*, p. 113.
Some men in Victoria claimed they could earn more at 13s. per 100 than they could in the
Riverina or western NSW at 20s per 100. See Merritt, *The Making*, p. 75. See also AWU,
*Official Report of Sixteenth Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1902, p.13.

[124]Merritt, *The Making*, pp. 117-9.

powerless without labor, and labor cannot, without capital become useful and profitable to its fullest ability."[125]  This perspective implied that shearers should "avoid doing anything calculated to do injury to the employers", but it also upheld the dignity of labour.[126]  ASU officials claimed that shearing was skilled labour which deserved to be rewarded accordingly.[127] Consequently, when shearers withheld their labour, they were doing

> no more than any business man does.  If the latter cannot obtain such a price for his goods as will enable him to live, he must necessarily refuse to serve the cheap customers rather than suffer a loss.[128]

This equation of labour with property would have appealed to workers who either owned land or aspired to land ownership, and saw in the acquisition of such property a path to upward social mobility and manly independence. Unionism would not only increase shearers' earnings, it would improve them morally, making them more self-reliant, provident and manly".[129]

Shearers' unionism in Victoria was more conservative than in western New South Wales and Queensland.  In 1890, the secretaries of the Creswick and Casterton branches of the ASU condemned the proposal for a call-out of shearers in support of the maritime strike,[130] and the strike leaders exempted Victorian shearers from withdrawing their labour.[131]  In 1893, the Victorian branches of the ASU voted overwhelmingly to defeat the proposal to amalgamate with the Queensland bush unions, whose members' "extreme views and actions were not in accord with the more moderate unionists in the southern colonies".[132]

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[125]*Shearers' Record*, February 15, 1888, p.2.

[126]*Shearers' Record*, July 16, 1888, p.1.

[127] The pastoralists, however, denied that shearers could "be classed with skilled artisans". See *Shearers' Record*, June 15, 1888, p.4.

[128]*Shearers' Record*, January 15, 1889, p.1.

[129]*Shearers' Record*, June 15, 1888, p.2.

[130]*Shearers' Record*, February 16, 1891, p.3.

[131]*Shearers' Record*, September 15, 1890, p.3; November 21, 1890, p.4; January 15, 1891, p.2.

[132]*Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, June 15, 1892; March 15, 1893.

After 1894, the ASU was devastated by the depression, drought and the anti-union activities of the pastoralists. Between 1890 and 1894, wool prices declined by about one-third.[133] The shearers' strike of 1894 severely weakened the Union in Victoria. Meanwhile, the great drought began in 1895, lasting until 1903, producing a decline in sheep numbers.[134] The continuation of high levels of unemployment throughout the economy ensured that pastoralists had a ready supply of labour ever at hand, and the authority of the Union was eroded. The Casterton branch of the AWU was closed in 1896[135] while in early 1898, Spence reported that members in Victoria had "permitted the decrease in wages forced on in '94 to continue...the shearing rates in some parts of that colony are the lowest of any in Australia.[136] Temple issued tickets at half-price during these years, a practice which did not improve the standing of the Union.[137]

After Ted Grayndler took over the leadership of the Creswick branch from Temple in 1900, there was progress in the Union's affairs.[138] Temple claimed about 1100 members in March 1900.[139] These figures are almost certainly inflated, as many of these "members" paid only half-rates. The

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[133]E.A. Boehm, *Prosperity and Depression in Australia 1887-1897*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, London, 1971, p. 75.

[134]Boehm, *Prosperity*, pp. 70, 84-5, 93-4.

[135]AWU, *Official Report of the Eleventh Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1897, p.3.

[136]AWU, *Official Report of the Twelfth Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1898, p. 3.

[137]AWU, *Official Report of the Twelfth Annual Conference*, 1898, p. 9.

[138]There were moves to depose Temple from 1898, when it was alleged that he was selling AWU tickets at half-rates and had not replied to correspondence. In 1900, AWU president Arthur Rae referred to "the lax way in which Creswick Branch had been managed for years past...". To the previous allegations was added the accusation that he had misappropriated Union funds. This was almost certainly without foundation, but Temple was suspended, and an enquiry held into the affairs of the branch. Temple resigned as secretary of the branch. See AWU, *Official Report of the Twelfth Annual Conference*, 1898, p.9; *Official Report of the Fourteenth Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1900, pp. 7-9, 16, 19, 21. For an account which is sympathetic to Temple, see Clyde R. Cameron, "'A Man Is Never Dead Until He Is Forgotten': David Temple: Founder of the ASU", *Labour History*, 60, May 1991, pp. 93-107.

[139]AWU, *Official Report of the Sixteenth Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1902, p.5.

recovery of the branch was rapid after Grayndler became secretary; numbers increased to 2800 by late 1900 and 6060 in early 1902.[140] These figures include the Riverina shearers who were covered by the Creswick branch. Grayndler was assisted by the return of the wool industry to a temporary prosperity in 1899, as a consequence of the increase in wool prices associated with the Boer War,[141] and the emergence of labour shortages in the country in 1899-1900 due to the recovery of urban industry.[142] As a part of a powerful national political machine, the Victorian branch of the AWU was destined to play a significant role in Labor Party politics in the twentieth century.

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[140]AWU, *Official Report of the Sixteenth Annual Conference*, 1902, p.5.

[141]Boehm, *Prosperity*, p. 84.

[142]Merritt, *The Making*, p. 282; W.A. Sinclair, *Economic Recovery in Victoria 1894-1899*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1956, pp. 84-100.

# CHAPTER THREE:

# LIBERALISED LABOR: THE EMERGENCE OF THE LABOR PARTY IN VICTORIA, 1885-1900

## Introduction

The Labor Party which emerged in Victoria in the late 1880s and 1890s differed from its counterparts in the other Australian colonies in its organisational form, ideology, and political strategies. In the 1890s, the Victorian labour movement failed to create a stable extra-parliamentary organisation to which parliamentarians could be held responsible.[1] There was no central executive capable of exercising any power independently of the THC; local branches were weak, isolated and discontinuous; and parliamentary candidates were not compelled to sign a pledge before 1902. In parliament, the Labor Party did not pursue an independent working-class political strategy, but remained attached to the Liberal Party. Labor candidates who entered the Legislative Assembly from 1889, however, consolidated an *ouvrieriste* political tradition whose central tenet was that the interests of the working class could only be properly represented in parliament by those who had belonged to a trade. This formulation appealed to electors' sense of class consciousness but it was not a strategy of independent working-class political action on the model of European social democracy.[2] The early Labor Party comprised former tradesmen who

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[1]Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, University of Queensland Press, St.Lucia, 1975, pp. 295-308. See also John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, pp.42-6; 115-20; Lindsay Tanner, 'A Protracted Evolution: Labor in Victorian Politics 1889-1903', *Labour History*, 42, May 1982, pp.40-53; D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria', in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin & R.S. Parker, *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1977, pp.51-92.

[2]Julius Braunthal, *History of the International 1864-1914*, Nelson, London, 1966, pp.195-242; Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South

accepted the fundamentals of liberal capitalism while claiming for labour a greater share of the fruits of industry. Still, the *ouvrieriste* tradition was radical in the context of late colonial politics to the extent that it challenged the right of middle-class liberals to represent the working classes in parliament.[3]

## The Emergence of the Labor Party

From 1884, a radical group in the Melbourne THC advocated the direct representation of labour in parliament.[4] These unionists' attitude to political representation is suggested in the report of the Victorian parliamentary committee to the 1885 Intercolonial Conference:

> The opinions, needs and rights of those who live by manual labour never can be as faithfully represented by other classes as by their own. Their opinions are only fully understood by constant - in fact, daily association; their needs can only be learned by the fullest expressions of fellow-feeling, which workmen only exhibit to those known to be in much similar circumstances to their own, and their rights are never seen so clearly by any except by those who know both their opinions and needs. Class questions require class knowledge to state them, and class sympathies to fight for them.[5]

This set of attitudes embodied a working-class claim for a greater share of political power. The advocates of direct representation regarded the manual

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Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, p.202; Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Outlawed Party: Social Democracy in Germany, 1878-1890*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1966.

[3] For the development of this tradition in Great Britain, see John Shepherd, 'Labour and parliament: the Lib.-Labs. as the first working-class MPs, 1885-1906', in Eugenio F. Biagini & Alastair J. Reid (eds.) *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991 pp.187-213.

[4] C.J. Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance, 1855-1889', unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1973, pp.325-47.

[5] Third Intercolonial Trades' Union Congress (ITUC), *Official Report*, Baston & Co. [Printers], Sydney, 1885, p.11.

working-class as an interest group which deserved better representation in the parliament.[6] They appealed to a class consciousness which was only partially accommodated within Victorian liberalism after 1890. Liberals, who considered "class" the enemy of progressive and inclusive politics, could never accept that class experience should form the basis of a citizen's political beliefs or allegiances. The *Age* was generally hostile to working-class candidates, and in 1885 it accused the advocates of direct representation of labour of "provoking a conflict between classes by making the labor question a purely class one".[7] The existence of manhood suffrage from 1857, however, provided working men with the means to exercise political power while the "moral-force" Chartist backgrounds of many early union leaders ensured that they placed great faith in the franchise as a means of effecting reform.[8] Moreover, as Butlin has argued, colonial governments in Australia were "private entrepreneurs in Australian capital formation".[9] The state developed a public infrastructure and the government was a major employer of labour. Since the economic activities of the state affected labour conditions throughout the economy, the unions had a strong incentive to become involved in parliamentary politics to influence working conditions in the public sector.[10] Finally, union leaders articulated policies such as the legalisation of trade unions, legislative enactment of the eight hour day, amendment of the Factories and Shops Act and the Masters and Servants Act in favour of wage-earners, tariff protection, the reduction of assisted immigration, and the restriction of Chinese and "coloured" labour as common working-class objectives which could only be advanced

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[6]*Trades Hall Gazette*, November 3, 1888, p.10.
[7]*Age*, November 25, 1885, p.4. See also *Age*, September 28, 1886, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Papers, ML MSS 308/11.
[8]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', p.400.
[9]Noel G. Butlin, 'Colonial Socialism in Australia, 1860-1900, in Hugh G. Aitken (ed.) *The State and Economic Growth*, Social Science Research Council, New York, 1959, p.38.
[10]P.G. Macarthy, 'The Living Wage in Australia - The Role of Government', *Labour History*, 18, May 1970, pp.3-4.

by intervention in parliamentary politics.[11] In 1884, the THC formed a parliamentary committee to deal with political matters on behalf of the trades. This initiative coincided with growing union interest in the direct representation of labour in parliament.[12]

Union interest in political action preceded the formation of a parliamentary Labor Party by over thirty years. In 1859, Charles Jardine Don, a radical stonemason, was elected to the Assembly for Collingwood as a representative of the working classes, although he was also associated with the radical populist politics of the Land Convention.[13] The strategy of seeking direct representation of labour in parliament was not continued because of the difficulty of financing labour parliamentarians before the introduction of payment for members of parliament and the tendency of working-class electors to look to middle-class radicals for political leadership.[14] It was typical of the political activity of labour before 1890 to form populist alliances. From the 1850s, the urban working class was involved in a "fragile and fragmented" political alliance with manufacturers, farmers and miners against the pastoralists and merchants who controlled the Legislative Council.[15] Radicals coalesced around a program of free, compulsory and secular education, land reform, tariff protection and democratic constitutional reform.[16] The union movement

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[11]See THC parliamentary committee platform, in W.E. Murphy to W.C. Smith, February 1, 1886, THC Parliamentary Committee Letterbook in Geoff McDonald Collection, NBAC, ANU P 94/20.

[12]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp.325-332

[13]S. Merrifield, 'Charles Jardine Don', *ADB*, Volume 4, p.82; G.R. Bartlett, 'Political Organisation and Society in Victoria, 1864-1883', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1964, pp.422-5; Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp. 90-5, 120-40.

[14]Carole Woods, 'Moses Wilson Gray', *ADB*, Volume 4, pp.287-8. W.E. Murphy, 'Victoria', in J. Norton (ed.), *The History of Capital and Labour in All Lands and Ages*, Oceanic Publishing Co., Sydney & Melbourne, 1888, pp.136-7.

[15]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', p. 418.

[16]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', p. 254; John Tregenza, *Professor of Democracy: The Life of Charles Henry Pearson, 1830-1894, Oxford Don and Australian Radical*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1968, chs. 6-11; Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial*

was only a minor partner in this alliance. Most unionists supported Graham Berry's National Reform and Protection League (NRPL) and his radical ministry in the late 1870s, but relations between the Liberal leader and the THC later soured.[17]

The reign of the Service-Berry Coalition Ministry of Liberal and Constitutionalist parties in the Assembly from 1883 was the context for the growing dissatisfaction of the radical group in the THC with the Berryite Liberal Party.[18] These unionists grew hostile to the "hybrid Ministry" and favoured a return to party lines.[19] They were led by Trenwith (VOBU), W.E. Murphy (Furniture Trades), F.H. Bromley (Tinsmiths), J.G. Barrett (Tinsmiths) and F.G. Hartley (Ironfounders), but they were a minority in the THC, opposed by an older generation of union activists. The traditionalists supported the continuation of labour participation in the liberal alliance and argued that the selection of parliamentary candidates was outside the functions of the THC, which should confine itself to industrial matters.[20] The disagreement between these factions resulted in an unsuccessful attempt to commit the Council to direct representation late in 1885.[21]

In the election campaign of 1886, the parliamentary committee lobbied candidates and three members of the "radical" THC group stood

*Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991.

[17]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp.254-86, 404.

[18]The "Constitutionalists" was the name given to the members of the Assembly who had opposed Berry's proposals for constitutional reform in the late 1870s. For an explanation of the differences between the Victorian political "parties" in the 1880s, see Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, pp.22-33; S.M. Ingham, 'Political Parties in the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1880-1900', in Margot Beever & F.B. Smith (eds.), *Historical Studies: Selected Articles: Second Series*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1967, pp.91-107.

[19]*Trades Hall Gazette*, January 5, 1889, p.7; See also *Daily Telegraph*, February 18, 1886; *Age*, February 18, 1886, clippings in Melbourne Trades Hall Papers ML MSS 308/11; *Trades Hall Gazette*, February 16, 1889, p.8.

[20]*Trades Hall Gazette*, March 9, 1889, p.6. See also Stonemasons, Minutes, November 25, 1885, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/7.

[21]THC, Minutes, October 16, 1885; November 24, 1885; December 1, 1885; December 8, 1885; Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp.325-8, 348-57.

unsuccessfully for parliament - Bromley (Collingwood), Trenwith

(Richmond), and Murphy (North Melbourne).[22] In the following year, the

THC defeated an attempt by the trustees (representing eight of the founding

building unions and the MTS) to seize control of the Trades Hall and limit

the powers of the Council.[23] The THC was now able to assume working-

class political leadership. In 1889, it drafted a program and gave its official

support to the successful candidature of Trenwith for Richmond.[24] There is

other evidence of radicalisation of sections of the working-class electorate in

1889: Melbourne West returned the ultra-radical Dr. William Maloney

while Collingwood elected W.D. Beazley, a former saddler who had been a

member of the THC.[25] Working-class mobilisation was evident in the

emergence of new unions and the multiplication of industrial demands.[26]

The maritime strike of 1890 was the climax of this process. The events of

the strike are well-known and need not detain us here.[27] Its scale, which

was unprecedented in Australia, prompted participants and observers to

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[22]W.E. Murphy to W.C. Smith, February 1, 1886, Letterbook in Geoff McDonald Collection, NBAC, ANU P 94/20; T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia: From First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901, Volume III*, Macmillan, Melbourne, p.1489; Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp. 358-61; Celestina Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party, 1885-1894', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1984, pp.53-61.

[23]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp.364-70.

[24]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', pp.376-8; Proceedings of the Seventh Intercolonial Trades and Labor Union Congress of Australasia (ITLUC), *Official Report*, Ballarat, 1891, pp.11-13. For the 1889 platform, see Appendix D.

[25]THC, Minutes, January 8, 1886.

[26]This is evident from an examination of the labour news in the *Argus*, December 1889-September 1890.

[27]Brian Fitzpatrick, *A Short History of the Australian Labor Movement*, Rawson's Bookshop, Melbourne, 1944, pp.64-74; *The British Empire in Australia: An Economic History 1834-1939*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, pp.219-25; N.B. Nairn, 'The Maritime Strike in New South Wales', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 37, November 1961, pp.1-18; C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia, Volume V*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, pp.46-51; Ian Turner, *In Union is Strength: A History of Trade Unions in Australia 1788-1978*, Nelson, West Melbourne, 1978, pp. 41-2; John Merritt, 'W.G. Spence and the 1890 Maritime Strike', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 60, 1973, pp.594-609; Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.7-37; J.T. Sutcliffe, *A History of Trade Unionism in Australia*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1967, pp.92-8; Jim Hagan & Andrew Wells (eds.), *The Maritime Strike: A Centennial Retrospective: Essays in Honour of E.C. Fry*, University of Wollongong Labour History Research Group/Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Wollongong, 1992; Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party', ch.3.

regard it as a "war of class against class", or "Capital v. Labor".[28] The

articulation of such language, however, occurred within the context of social

and political relationships which were modified but not transformed by the

events of 1890.  Chief Justice George Higinbotham was only the most

prominent of the middle-class liberals who supported the Council's request

for a conference.[29]  The employers' unwillingness to discuss their

differences with the unions offended the liberal faith that human relations

could be ordered and civilised if reason and good-will prevailed.[30]

The maritime strike did not bring about the political isolation of the

Victorian working class.  The scale of the conflict was smaller in Victoria

than in NSW; there was nothing in the southern colony comparable with

the rioting in Sydney in September.[31]  The Melbourne THC opposed the

extension of the conflict and placed its faith in conciliation.[32]  Still, the

labour movement was furious when the Ministry called out the military

and enroled special constables.[33]  Moreover, unionists bitterly attacked

Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Price, whom they alleged had given an order to

his men on the occasion of a large protest meeting to "fire low and lay them

out".[34]  The THC believed that these actions were directed against "those

who have at all times advocated and practised the use of lawful measures to

effect a settlement of all Trade & Labor disputes".[35]  The Ministry's actions

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[28]*Age,* September 11, 1890, p.6.  See also *Age,* August 25, 1890, p.4; August 28, 1890, p.5; September 13, 1890, pp.3, 10.

[29]Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism,* p.185.  See also THC, Minutes, October 3, 1890. Even Alfred Deakin and Charles Pearson, both members of the Government, voted for Sir Bryan O'Loghlen's successful motion in the Assembly regretting the employers' refusal of a conference.  See *VPD,* LXV, October 21, 1890, p.2150.

[30]*Age,* August 30, 1890, p.8.

[31]*Age,* September 20, 1890, p.7; September 22, 1890, p.5.

[32]*Age,* September 20, 1890, p.8; September 24, 1890, p.5; W.E. Murphy to Andrew Lyell, September 11, 1890, in Report of the RCS, Appendix T.

[33]THC, Minutes, September 12, 1890.

[34]*Age,* September 27, 1890, p.7; THC Committee of Finance and Control, *Report of Committee of Finance and Control, The Great Maritime Strike of 1890,* H.W. Mills & Co. [Printers], 1891, pp.23-7.

[35]Clipping in Ballarat Trades and Labour Council collection, 'Mass meeting at Ballarat', September 12, 1890, NBAC, ANU E 97/7/35.

were a betrayal of liberalism, an assertion that respectable working people could not be trusted to maintain the peace. Moreover, the enrolment of special constables, who were "Government servants, members of the professions...private gentlemen...[and] business men from the city and suburban warehouses and shops" helped to provide the question of law and order with strong class overtones.[36]

The liberal tradition of the colony refracted the class mobilisation of 1890 in such a direction as to discourage the emergence of an independent Labor Party. Instead, the unions sought to restore what they regarded as traditional party divisions between "Liberals" and "Conservatives", to revive a Liberal Party corrupted by years of coalition with conservatism.[37] In November 1890, the Coalition Ministry was defeated in a want-of-confidence motion, its handling of the maritime strike and financial mismanagement the main reasons for its downfall.[38] The radical *Bull-Ant* expected little from the new Munro Ministry but it was pleased that the change indicated "an early return to party politics".[39] This was certainly a premature announcement, but the political conditions in which union support for the direct representation of labour in parliament had developed - the years of quietude presided over by a Grand Coalition - had been changed by the fall of the Ministry. Working-class interest in direct representation of labour did not, however, subside with the defeat of the government. The perception that the Ministry had favoured the employers in the strike increased union interest in direct representation. In March

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[36]*Age*, September 2, 1890, p.6. See also *Age*, August 30, 1890, p.9; September 1, 1890, p.5.
[37]There were members of the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1890 who deserved the designation "Conservative", but the major ideological division was between radical liberalism (the "Liberal Party" of Berry and Deakin) and a more conservative liberalism (the "Constitutionalists" of Service and Gillies). It was the radicalisation of the "Liberal Party" which the unions desired. See Serle, *The Rush to Be Rich*, pp.22-33. See also S.M. Ingham, 'Some Aspects of Victorian Liberalism, 1880-1900', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1949, chs. 1-3.
[38]*VPD*, LXV, November 5, 1890, p.2294.
[39]*Bull-Ant*, November 13, 1890, p.4.

1891 the parliamentary committee decided to form "District Committees in all electorates to obtain all necessary information relating to electoral rolls...and to transact the necessary business in their districts", a recommendation which was accepted by the THC.[40]  Almost immediately, the death of the Liberal G.D. Langridge left one of the Collingwood seats vacant.  On 3 April, the parliamentary committee recommended that a Labor candidate be fielded in the by-election.[41]  This suggestion was accepted by the Council, although several members opposed intervention.  A meeting of Collingwood electors then selected John Hancock as the Labor candidate.  He was a radical printer and THC official who had been prominent in the strike.[42]

Hancock's candidature did not receive the unanimous support of the labour movement but several unions contributed financially, and many unionists worked tirelessly in support of his campaign.[43]  Even the Tailors and the Stonemasons, who had opposed direct representation before the strike, offered their support.[44]  These changes are evidence of working-class political mobilisation, as was the voter turnout - 4410 out of 6583 electors on the polls - one of the heaviest ever known in Collingwood.[45]  The hostile Collingwood *Observer* later attributed Hancock's victory to the efforts of the bootmakers:

> Every boot factory in Collingwood was turned into a Hancock
> Committee room, and hundreds of men, with lanterns and rolls, went

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[40]Parliamentary Committee, Minutes, March 17, 1891, UMA 1/10/1; THC Minutes, March 20, 1891.

[41]Parliamentary Committee, Minutes, April 3, 1891, UMA 1/10/1.

[42]*Age*, April 8, 1891, p.6.  See also Jim Claven, *John Hancock and the Rise of Victorian Labor: The First Detonation of the Volcano*, Australian Fabian Society Pamphlet No. 52, Pluto Press, Melbourne, 1991, pp.14-17.

[43]THC, Minutes, April 17, 1891; VOBU, Minutes, April 6, 1891, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3; UFTS, Minutes, April 10, 1891, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/6; Bricklayers, Minutes, April 20, 1891, NBAC, ANU T 8/2A/5; Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party', p.164.

[44]Tailors, Minutes, April 13, 1891, UMA 1/1/1; Stonemasons, Minutes, April 8, 1891, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/8.

[45]*Collingwood Observer*, April 23, 1891, p.6.

from door to door, appealing to the working folk, whether unionists or not, to lay aside for once all other considerations and go as one man for *the* labor candidate.

The *Observer* also claimed that the union secretaries sent circulars to their Collingwood members asking them to vote for Hancock.[46] He won the election, attracting 538 votes more than his nearest rival, the butcher Edgar Wilkins.[47]

The Progressive Political League (PPL) was formed in the aftermath of the maritime strike and the Collingwood by-election. On 12 May, the THC parliamentary committee decided to recommend to the Council that each of the Victorian Trades and Labor Councils (TLCs) and other large labour organisations send delegates to a convention with a view to formulating "a Constitution for Local Committees and to draw up a common Platform".[48] On 15 May, the Council accepted this recommendation, and the convention assembled in the Melbourne Trades Hall on 30 May.[49] Delegates represented the Melbourne THC, the TLCs of Ballarat, Bendigo, and Geelong, the Amalgamated Shearers' Union (ASU), the Amalgamated Miners' Association (AMA), and the Social Democratic League (SDL).[50] They formulated a moderate platform of political, industrial and social reform which included many of the demands which had been expressed by the THC in the 1880s.[51] The influence of the ideas of Henry George and the Single Tax League (STL), under the presidency of Max Hirsch, was revealed in the planks demanding that no more crown land be alienated, and a tax on

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[46]*Collingwood Observer*, April 23, 1891, p.6.
[47]*Age*, April 18, 1891, p.9.
[48]Parliamentary Committee, Minutes, May 12, 1891, UMA 1/10/1.
[49]THC, Minutes, May 15, 1891; *Age*, May 16, 1891, p.9.
[50]Convention of the Trades and Labor Bodies of Victoria, 'Report', 1891, J.P. Jones Collection, VSL MS 9547/1268/5; *Age*, June 3, 1891, p.5; June 6, 1891, p.10.
[51]See Appendix E.

# A RADICAL PRINTER AND A PIONEER
## LABOR PARLIAMENTARIAN



John Hancock (1846-1899), member for Collingwood, 1891-2 and member for Footscray, 1894-9. The *Bulletin* described his victory in the Collingwood by-election in 1891 as the "first detonation of the volcano" (April 25, 1891, p.11).

unimproved land values.[52] As Scates has shown, STL members were active in the labour movement in the early 1890s, but land reform had been integral to the Victorian radical tradition since the 1850s.[53] It was natural that it should find a prominent place in the program and propaganda of a Labor Party which identified with the Victorian radical tradition.

In October, the provisional committee of the PPL reported that branches had been formed throughout Melbourne, Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong and in some of the country districts, yet the League appears not to have won as much support as its NSW counterpart.[54] Robin Gollan, in explaining the relative failure of the PPL, has argued that "the Melbourne Trades Hall Council did not regard itself as a representative institution of the working class, but as the close preserve of its constituent unions".[55] As Kellaway, Sagazio, Scates and Rickard have shown, this comment underestimates the role played by the urban unions represented on the THC in providing working-class leadership from the 1880s.[56] By 1890, the ranks of the THC included many unions of semi-skilled and unskilled workers as well as craft unions. At the mass meeting in Flinders Park during the maritime strike, Hancock declared that the THC represented "not

[52]Progressive Political League of Victoria (PPL), *Platform*, 1891, F.J. Riley Collection, NLA, PPL File. For biographical details of Hirsch, see Airlie Worrall, 'Maximilian Hirsch', *ADB*, Volume 9, pp.308-9.

[53]Bruce Scates, '"Wobblers": Single Taxers in the Labour Movement, Melbourne 1889-1899', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 83, October 1984, pp.176-180; Geoffrey Serle,*The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1977, pp.266-82; Henry Mayer, *Marx, Engels and Australia*, Sydney Studies in Politics: 5, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1964, pp.25-9.

[54]Provisional Committee of the PPL, *Report*, October 3, 1891, Ballarat TLC Collection NBAC, ANU E 97/41/8. See Jim Hagan & Ken Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1891-1991*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, pp.19, 33-56.

[55]Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia 1850-1910*, Melbourne University Press in Association with the Australian National University, Melbourne, 1970, p.140.

[56]Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council', chs. 17-8.; Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party', chs.1-6; B.C. Scates, 'Faddists and Extremists: Radicalism and the Labour Movement, South-eastern Australia 1886-1898', unpublished PhD Thesis, Monash University, 1987, p.7; Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.42-52, 115-120.

merely...the aristocracy of labor...they would gladly welcome all classes".[57]

The PPL leaders, most of whom were prominent members of the THC, also

saw themselves as working-class leaders, not as representatives of only the

skilled trades.[58] *Commonweal* expressed this sense of class consciousness

when it explained that the PPL had "been formed to define the political

views and aspirations of the working classes...". "We can no more in these

moving times keep class, and class questions out of Parliament", it

proclaimed, "than we can stop the earth from travelling in its orbit".[59]

Labor candidates and activists often embraced a broad definition of

"working class" which they believed should not be confined to manual

wage labour. Joseph Winter, a bookbinder and the Labor candidate for

Melbourne South in 1892, thought that the workers included everyone who

toiled by hand or brain:

> All producers must be on their side. That large section of the
> community known as shopkeepers were toilers who should be with
> them. Those who only soiled their hands with ink, teachers,
> educators, actors, artists, and all who employed the higher and brighter
> faculties of human nature were well within their ranks.[60]

Samuel Mauger, hat manufacturer, former THC member, Rechabite,

Sunday School teacher and Labor candidate for Fitzroy, told an audience that

he would work "to bring about a nobler and better condition amongst the

toiling thousands, whether they worked with hand or head".[61]

*Commonweal* appealed to "Farmers, shopkeepers, artisans, laborers,

producers and distributors of all kinds...under the name of 'Workers'".[62] At

other times, *Commonweal* distinguished between the manual working

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[57]*Age*, September 1, 1890, p.5.

[58]*Commonweal*, February 20, 1892, p.2; *Age*, February 18, 1892, p.5.

[59]*Commonweal*, August 8, 1891, p.2.

[60]*Age*, March 24, 1892, p.6.

[61]*Fitzroy City Press*, March 25, 1892, p.3. For biographical details of Mauger, see John Lack, 'Samuel Mauger', *ADB*, Volume 10, pp.451-3.

[62]*Commonweal*, April 16, 1892, p.2.

class and other classes, as when it saw in the PPL platform a deliberate attempt to secure the "adhesion of democrats outside of the hand toilers".[63] *Commonweal* regarded the working class and the middle class as natural allies; it counselled that the "enlisting the sympathy of the middle class in the cause of the oppressed...engage the attention of the Labor Party in order that identity of interest may be shown".[64] The language of the Labor Party embodied senses of class consciousness based on an appeal to those who engaged in manual wage labour as well as broader political identities. The League's appeal to social groups other than the working class was based on the assumption that a broad alliance of "democrats" or "liberals" committed to social and political reform was desirable. The League's speakers identified enthusiastically with the Victorian liberal reform tradition. *Commonweal* urged that the principles of the PPL be propagated around Victoria so that "the Conservatives will find a solid phalanx of organised Liberal voters".[65] PPL propagandists advanced labour's claim for parliamentary representation:

> ...a Parliament can only be a reflex of public opinion when it is composed of representatives of all classes. The Capitalist, the Merchant, the Professional Man, and the Worker are only the component parts of the whole community, and no legislature can be expected to perform its functions satisfactorily unless it contains a fair proportion of all these varied interests.[66]

This rhetoric was part of an electoral strategy which upheld labour's claim to a share of parliamentary power. It was also an expression of the liberal pluralist ideology espoused by Victorian Labor Party leaders throughout the 1890s. They assumed that working-class interests could be advanced within

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[63]*Commonweal*, August 15, 1891, p.3.
[64]*Commonweal*, August 29, 1891, p.1.
[65]*Commonweal*, October 10, 1891, p.2.
[66]*Shearers' and General Labourers' Record*, August 15, 1891. See also PPL, *To the Electors of Prahran & South Yarra*, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/8/42.

the framework of the liberal democratic state whose role was to reconcile competing demands and formulate a consensus which would embody the interests of the whole community. The Labor Party was thus a political expression of the "labour interest", a part of the organic community of the liberal imagination. This view of the meaning of Labor representation was largely consistent with that expressed by the liberal *Age* under Syme's proprietorship. The *Age* regarded liberalism as the only authentic form of progressive politics, but recognised that some liberals raised the status of certain issues over others. This was how it explained the emergence of the Labor Party:

> So intense has this desire [to advance the status of labour] been in some quarters in recent years that a distinct party has been brought into existence to promote its object. There is not the slightest objection to Labor candidates or Labor members. They are simply Liberals with a special as well as with a general mission, just as other Liberals have undertaken the special prosecution of the temperance or other progressive movement.[67]

The Labor Party was thus one strand in the tapestry of liberal politics. Liberals and Labor representatives did not stand for competing philosophies, since Labor was concerned with only one aspect of governmental activity - the relations between capital and labour. Only liberalism could provide a philosophy sufficiently broad in its scope to be applied to all spheres of human activity.[68] There were differences in emphasis between Labor propagandists and the *Age*, which remained suspicious of political appeals to the class consciousness of electors.[69] Labor propagandists advanced a "labourist" version of liberalism, emphasising the advantages that would accrue to the workers if they were represented in parliament by members of

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[67]*Age*, September 4, 1894, p.4.
[68]*Age*, March 14, 1895, p.4. See also Deakin's comment in *The Webbs' Australian Diary 1898*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Melbourne, 1965, p.64.
[69]*Age*, April 13, 1891, p.4.

their own class. In supporting the Labor candidate Barrett's candidature in the 1895 Carlton South by-election, the *Worker* asserted that if the workers were to achieve favourable legislation, they had to be "represented by men from their own ranks". The class origins of the candidate, and his position as secretary of the THC, were seen as "a guarantee of his ability and honesty of purpose". The discourse also embodied a critique of the liberal demagogue:

> The masses have had proved to them the utter hopelessness of expecting honest actions from well-to-do candidates who yell themselves hoarse on the hustings in the cause of democracy, yet who on the first opportunity find an excuse for exercising their innate weakness for Moneybags.[70]

Labor propagandists argued that the Labor Party could reinvigorate Victorian liberalism. Barrett, as a PPL candidate in 1892, expressed this sentiment when he declared that the workers "had had enough of milk and water liberalism, and should now seek representation from their own order".[71] Labor propagandists attempted to synthesise the PPL's liberalism with an appeal to working-class identity. The Party embraced a program which incorporated the political demands of the unions, and it ran its own candidates against the Liberals. The PPL's liberal credentials were strengthened, however, when it decided to support William Shiels's Ministerial program announced at Casterton in March 1892. There now seemed to be no compelling reason for an independent Labor Party.[72] Several of the PPL's nominees in 1892 were sitting members who had previously been elected to the parliament as radical liberals.[73] The PPL also

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[70]*Worker* (Melbourne), March 9, 1895, p.1.

[71]*Carlton Gazette*, April 14, 1892, p.3. See also *Commonweal*, August 27, 1892, p.2.

[72]*Age*, March 21, 1892, p.5; *Fitzroy City Press*, March 25, 1892, p.2; *Commonweal*, March 26, 1892, p.3.

[73]*Commonweal*, April 9, 1892, p.3; April 16, 1892, p.3. They were W.D. Beazley (Collingwood), an auctioneer; G.H. Bennett (Richmond), a cordial manufacturer; W.T. Carter

sought the co-operation of prominent liberals. The Prahran and South Yarra branch asked Deakin to join its ranks. He declined, but expressed his support for the League's platform.[74] The Bendigo branch requested John Quick to stand in the interests of the PPL while the Geelong League sought H.B. Higgins as a candidate.[75] The PPL even asked Berry to join the ranks since "the principles of the League [were] as advocated by him in his previous administration".[76]

The *Argus* announced that only eleven PPL candidates had been successful in the general election of April 1892, and it declared that the Labor party had been "utterly and ignominiously defeated...".[77] This was not far from the truth. The Liberals John Gardiner (Carlton) and W.J. Mountain (Melbourne South), who had voted against the want-of-confidence motion in the Gillies-Deakin Ministry, were defeated by Labor candidates but Labor's performance in 1892 was otherwise unimpressive.[78] The only clear Labor gains (from 1889) were those of Carlton (Bromley), Melbourne North (Wyllie) and Melbourne South (Winter). Liberals defeated Labor candidates in Footscray, Collingwood, Carlton South, East Bourke Boroughs, Essendon and Flemington and Fitzroy, all metropolitan electorates with a strong

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(Williamstown), a former Methodist clergyman; and Thomas Smith (Emerald Hill), a hat manufacturer.

[74]F.C. Gray to Deakin, July 23, 1891, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/8/6; Deakin to Gray, July 28, 1891, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/8/11; Gray to Deakin, July 29, 1891, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/8/12; Gray to Deakin, July 31, 1891, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/8/13; *Age*, July 30, 1891, p.6.

[75]*Bendigo Advertiser*, March 17, 1892, p.3; *Age*, March 17, 1892, p.6; Deakin to Higgins, November 10, 1891, Deakin Papers, NLA 1540/8/14; *Geelong Advertiser*, March 29, 1892; April 5, 1892; *Age*, March 29, 1892, p.6.

[76]Notes on back of PPL, 'Suggested Rules to Govern the Nomination and Selection of Candidates for Parliament', n.d. [1892], NBAC, ANU E 97/41/7. See also *Ant*, October 22, 1891, p.4; December 17, 1891, p.5; January 21, 1892, p.5; February 11, 1892, p.5.

[77]*Argus*, April 21, 1892, pp. 4, 7; April 22, 1892, p.5.

[78]*VPD*, LXV, November 5, 1890, p.2294.

working-class component.[79] While Labor candidates polled well in some

contests, they were usually a long way behind Liberal opponents,

emphasising that working-class support for liberalism had been barely

disturbed by the events of 1890 and 1891. The lesson learned by the PPL

from its failure in these contests was that it should draw more closely to the

liberals, that Labor members should act as "the Radical wing of the Liberal

Army...".[80] The PPL leadership was probably comfortable with this position

anyway, but the weakness of the independent Labor vote which had been

exposed by the 1892 election provided it with no alternative.[81]

There were other reasons for the PPL's failure. In the period between

the maritime strike and the election, the class hatred aroused by the

maritime strike had declined and the hopes of the labour movement for the

NSW Labor Party were dashed when it split over the fiscal issue.[82]

Moreover the conservative forces, warned by the success of the Party in

NSW, had time to organise for the Victorian election. The National

Association and the Young Victorian Patriotic League agitated vigorously

against the PPL.[83] The worsening financial crisis in early 1892 provided

ammunition for a conservative campaign against the Labor Party.[84] The

electoral system also militated against the interests of the League. Union

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[79]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1890-1964*, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, pp.1-13.

[80]*Commonweal*, April 23, 1892, p.2.

[81]In February, two months before the election, Trenwith had declared that there "ought to be no intriguing in constituencies already represented by the ultra Liberals. Let them put out the Conservatives, and so prove their patriotism" (*Age*, February 16, 1892, p.6).

[82]Verity Burgmann, *'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.23-4.

[83]J.D. Melvin, *The Victorian Electors' Guide to Questions and Candidates*, Stillwell & Co., Melbourne, 1892, pp.1, 32.

[84]T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry in Australia: From First Settlement in 1788 to the Establishment of the Commonwealth in 1901*, Volume IV, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, pp.1882-3. See also *History of the Trades Hall Political Movement: Origin and Objects of the Progressive Political League: Points for the Electors*, n.d. [1892] (reprinted from *Argus*, April 6, 1892) in R.S. Ross Papers, NLA MS 3222/7; Punch, *King Workingman: Being Cartoons Reprinted from Melbourne Punch*, John Joseph Halligan, Melbourne, 1892.

leaders claimed that the Purification of Rolls Act (1891) had disfranchised many voters, and they believed that in cases where objections were made to workers being on the rolls, they would be unable to find time to attend the revision courts to demonstrate their eligibility.[85]

A shortage of funds, which was due mainly to the weakness of union support for the League, also contributed to the problems of the PPL.[86] The union movement remained divided in its attitudes to direct representation once the excitement over the maritime strike and Hancock's election had receded. Most unions which opposed the efforts of the radical group to politicise the Council in the 1880s were no more enthusiastic about direct representation after the maritime strike than before 1890. The Stonemasons, for example, showed little interest in the PPL, carrying a motion in August 1891 that "we have nothing further to do with subscribing to the League".[87] The ASE and Tailors also remained aloof from the PPL.[88] At a meeting of the moulders in April 1892, one of its members even moved that the Society "show their disapprobation of Mr Hancocks speech at Collingwood".[89] Many of these unions had strong links with the Liberal Party, and regarded the existence of a Labor Party as a danger to traditional alliances.[90]

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[85]THC, Minutes, February 3, 1893; Letter from David Bennet, February 8, 1892, THC Letterbook, UMA 7/1/1.

[86]*Age*, July 30, 1891, p.6; March 12, 1892, p.8; March 14, 1892, p.6; March 26, 1892, p.7; PPL, *Second Meeting of Central Council*, December 5, 1891, Ballarat TLC Collection, NBAC, ANU E 97/41/6; THC, Minutes, March 25, 1892; PPL (Ballarat West), Minutes, May 17, 1892, NBAC, ANU E 97/37.

[87]Stonemasons, Minutes, August 26, 1891, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/8. See also Stonemasons, Minutes, March 9, 1892, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/8.

[88]ASE (MDC), Minutes, March 8, 1892, UMA; Tailors, Minutes, August 3, 1891; February 15, 1892, UMA 1/1/1.

[89]Moulders, Minutes, April 7, 1892. See also Moulders, Minutes, October 1, 1891; January 14, 1892, UMA 2/1.

[90]Hagan, *Printers and Politics*, p.72. The PPL did receive some financial support from the unions. See UFTS, Minutes, July 2, 1891; September 10, 1891, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/6; VOBU, Minutes, February 1, 1892; February 8, 1892; February 15, 1892; March 28, 1892, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3; *Age*, February 11, 1892, p.6; Parliamentary Committee, Minutes, March 1, 1892, UMA 1/10/1.

After the 1892 election, working-class politics in Victoria was orientated towards a protectionist liberalism; the THC temporarily gave up any idea of separate labour organisation. As the economic depression worsened and class mobilisation receded in the face of rising unemployment and a disintegrating union movement, the Labor Party drew more closely to its traditional liberal and middle-class allies. This was in part because it lacked an alternative base of support in the unions.[91] Labor and middle-class protectionist opinion were increasingly united in support of a higher tariff and hostility to a growing free-trade clamour. As Scates has shown, the STL became disillusioned with the labour movement's adherence to tariff protection during 1892. Hirsch and his followers left the Labor Party and gravitated towards the conservative opponents of tariff protection, led by Robert Murray Smith.[92] They revived the Free-Trade Democratic Association to lead the campaign against tariff protection.[93] Radical liberals and members of the PPL responded by forming the Protection, Liberal and Federation League in January 1893.[94] The protectionist Shiels Ministry, which had received the support of the Labor Party, was defeated in early 1893.[95] Few in the labour movement mourned its passing. The Ministry's failure to deal with Victoria's worsening economic depression had brought its downfall, and it was replaced by a Ministry led by the more conservative J.B. Patterson.

By early 1894, the PPL was virtually defunct.[96] Several by-election defeats had reduced the Labor Party's strength and led to demoralisation.[97]

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[91]For the disintegration of the union movement, see pp.48-50.

[92]Scates, 'Wobblers', pp.183-5.

[93]*Commonweal*, December 24, 1892, p.2; Rawson, 'Victoria', pp. 69-70.

[94]Protection, Liberal, and Federation Alliance, *Meeting of Electors interested in Protection and Liberal Principles*, January 1893, Ballarat TLC Collection, NBAC, ANU E 97/7/2; *Age*, February 9, 1893, p.5; *Argus*, February 9, 1893, p.7; *Commonweal*, January 21, 1893, p.3.

[95]*VPD*, LXXI, January 18, 1893, pp. 3996-7.

[96]Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party', pp.390-418.

[97]Rawson, 'Victoria', p.69; *Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, September 15, 1892; *Commonweal*, June 10, 1893, p.3.

In May 1894, the THC parliamentary committee recommended that the Council call a political conference of all the THC's affiliates, the AMA, the ASU, the railway employees, the TLCs of Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong, the Horsham Eight Hours Association, the Democratic Club, the various working men's clubs, the Protection, Liberal and Federation League, the surviving PPL branches and the Women's Suffrage Society.[98] The conference, which met on 25 June, comprised 110 representatives of trade unions, working men's and democratic clubs, political reform bodies and women's franchise organisations, many of them from the country.[99] They formed a "United Labor and Liberal Party of Victoria" (ULLP), a title chosen on the persuasion of Trenwith, the leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party (PLP).[100] The platform of the ULLP, drafted by a committee elected by the conference, was an unambitious program of reform.[101] The promoters of the ULLP envisaged a federation of progressive and democratic associations, but the ULLP received only moderate support from the surviving urban unions, which were in a weak financial condition. Radical compositor Ted Findley's estimate of the mood of MTS members was probably accurate when he advocated a donation to the ULLP on the grounds "that the greatest portion of the money would be laid out in supplying the necessary printing, and so giving partial employment to the members".[102] Still, urban unionists were alarmed by the actions of the Patterson Ministry which they regarded, with considerable justification, as unsympathetic to the labour movement. The worsening financial crisis resulted in a new interest on the

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[98]Parliamentary Committee, Minutes, May 22, 1894, UMA 1/10/1; THC, Minutes, May 25, 1894.

[99]'Political Organization of Labor in Victoria', n.d. [1894], J.P. Jones Papers, VSL MS 9547/1268/5. The STL was not invited to this conference. A resolution that the STL be invited, probably initiated by a Bendigo delegate, was defeated. See *Beacon*, July 1, 1894, p.38.

[100]THC, Minutes, June 29, 1894; July 6, 1894; *Age*, June 26, 1894, p.7; July 4, 1894, p.5; July 6, 1894, p.5; *Worker* (Melbourne), June 30, 1894, p.2; July 28, 1894, p.4.

[101] United Labor and Liberal Party of Victoria (ULLP), *Platform and Organization*, n.d. [1894], J.P Jones Papers, VSL MS 957/1268/6. See Appendix F.

[102]MTS, Minutes, July 28, 1894, PKIU Archives.

part of the Government in tariff reform as a solution to the colony's financial woes.[103] At a public meeting in Williamstown in April 1894, Patterson claimed that protectionism had damaged Victoria's foreign trade and was unable to secure high wages for the workers. It was partly in response to the Premier's declaration at this meeting that there was "nothing more in the policy of protection than mischief" that the Protectionist Association of Victoria (PAV) was formed.[104] Labor parliamentarians, including Trenwith, were active PAV members.[105] Tariff protection, always a matter of acute concern to the labour movement, now became its major political priority. It was the lynchpin of "Liberalised Labor".[106]

When the Treasurer, G.D. Carter, delivered the budget in late July, it included proposals for retrenchment and tariff reform which soon raised a storm.[107] Among the most vigorous opponents of Patterson's tariff proposals were the PAV and the Protectionist, Liberal and Federation League.[108] On 1 August, George Turner, who had recently replaced Shiels as leader of the Liberal Party, moved a want of confidence motion in the Ministry. This was eventually carried by the Assembly, and an election was set for 20 September.[109] In the campaign, Patterson's enemies interpreted the division between the supporters and opponents of the Ministry, somewhat inaccurately, as between "Conservatism" and "Liberalism". This perception determined the strategy of the labour movement. On 1 September 1894, the *Boomerang*, a short-lived labour weekly of which

[103]Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', p.300; M.J. Finlayson, 'Groups in Victorian Politics, 1889-1894', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, ch. 5.

[104]*Age*, April 6, 1894, pp.5-6.

[105]*Age*, May 15, 1894, p.6; *Argus*, May 15, 1894, p.4.

[106]*Worker* (Melbourne), July 28, 1894, p.4.

[107]*VPD*, LXXIV, July 31, 1894, pp. 1105-1121; *Age*, August 1, 1894, p.4; Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party', pp. 382-3.

[108]*Age*, August 2, 1894, p.5; August 3, 1894, pp.4-5.

[109]*VPD*, LXXIV, August 15, 1894, p.1385; August 28, 1894, p. 1580. For an account of the campaign, see Rawson, 'Victoria', pp.72-5.

Prendergast and Findley were two of the proprietors, announced that the Labor and Liberal parties were to avoid splitting the progressive vote. Labor would refrain from contesting a number of seats, supporting the Liberal candidate instead, and "expecting the Liberal vote to be cast for the Labor man where the positions are reversed".[110] This policy was implemented when the central council met on 13 September and endorsed eighteen candidates for the metropolitan area, including Liberals such as Deakin, Longmore and Berry. The 1894 election saw the return to the Assembly of Longmore, as well as F.C. Gray (secretary of the PPL in 1892) James Styles, Hume Cook and H.B. Higgins. The radical liberalism of these members was virtually indistinguishable from that of the Labor Party and together, they formed the radical section of the Turner Ministry's supporters.[111] There was an obvious class distinction between radical liberals such as Deakin and Higgins and the union leaders in the Labor Party but while the language of class's penetration of colonial politics remained partial, there was still scope for a political radicalism broader than that which emanated from the Trades Hall.

The 1894 election resulted in an overwhelming victory for Turner and his supporters. The Labor Party also improved its position, gaining the seats of Footscray, where John Hancock was successful; Melbourne North, which returned Prendergast; Port Melbourne where the Seamen's Union leader George Sangster had a comfortable victory; and Sandhurst, where the coachmaker and People's Party candidate, W.A. Hamilton, was elected.[112]

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[110]*Boomerang*, September 1, 1894, p.5. Hancock announced on behalf of the ULLP that the party would not oppose members of the Opposition who had "voted very consistently against the Patterson government". See Coghlan, *Labour and Industry: IV*, p.2222.

[111]Ingham, 'Some Aspects of Victorian Liberalism', ch.7; Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, pp.21-23, 29. See also program of the East Bourke Boroughs Reform League of which Hume Cook was president (*Age*, August 9, 1895, p.5). Its planks were one adult one vote, the referendum, a tax on unimproved land values without exemptions and female suffrage.

[112]The opponents of Prendergast and Hancock (Reynolds and Clark), had both been identified as supporters of the discredited Patterson Ministry, who only abandoned it on the want of

With the return of Maloney (unopposed), Bromley, Winter and Trenwith, Labor had achieved a satisfying result.[113] In the one electorate where there was a split between Labor and organised protectionism, Emerald Hill, the candidate with PAV support, Thomas Smith, narrowly defeated J.B. Tucker, the secretary of the Wharf Labourers' Union and the ULLP candidate.[114] In Collingwood, the ULLP endorsed Beazley and Wilkins but Ted Warde (UFTS), a Labor candidate in 1892, missed out on a seat by only twenty votes despite the absence of official Labor endorsement of his candidature.[115] This was an indication of the emergence of a class vote which was not entirely dependent on the authority of the THC or the Labor Party.

After 1894, the fortunes of the Labor Party were tied up with those of the Ministries led by George Turner. Ironically in light of the contemporary perceptions of the significance of the 1894 election, Turner came to pursue a style of politics in which party division was minimised. He aimed to reconcile the various sections of the House rather than divide them by introducing controversial measures. One effect of this approach was that Turner forestalled the development of a coherent Opposition.[116] Labor's attempts to create an organisation to replace the PPL were largely unsuccessful and, except for some isolated branches, the ULLP never took root.[117] In 1896, the bohemian journal the *Free Lance* described the ULLP as

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confidence motion. Officially, however, they were Oppositionists in the election of 1894. See *Age*, September 21, 1894, p.6.

[113]*Argus*, September 21, 1894, pp.5-6; Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, pp.19-31.

[114]*Age*, September 4, 1894, p.6; September 18, 1894, p.6; September 19, 1894, p.5.

[115]According to the hostile *Collingwood Observer* (September 20, 1894), Warde, a brilliant speaker, was "an extreme Trades Hall man" whose prospects depended "solely on the trade society vote...". See also *Collingwood Observer*, September 13, 1894; *Collingwood Mercury*, September 19, 1894.

[116]Rawson, 'Victoria', pp.76-87; Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.85-88; *The Webbs' Australian Diary*, pp.64-5, 67.

[117]ULLP, Organizing Committee, Minutes, n.d. [1895], J.P. Jones Collection, VSL MS 9547/1263/1; ULLP (Brighton Branch), Minutes, June 3, 1895-May 29, 1896, Democratic Labor Party (DLP) Collection, VSL MS 10389/C 91; THC, Minutes, February 8, 1895.

"probably a Chinese secret society that has up to the present eluded the attention of the police".[118]

While the ULLP had difficulty attracting the support of the unions, the Protectionist Association received the THC's official support.[119] Indeed, the protectionist fervour of the labour movement remained undiminished during the mid-1890s.[120] Many trades regarded tariff protection as a means of mitigating the worst effects of economic depression and productive reorganisation. More radical solutions derived from socialism, radical agrarianism and co-operative traditions were also considered, but did not receive the sustained attention which the unions gave to the tariff.[121]

The support of the Labor Party for higher tariffs caused some minor tension in its relationship with the Turner Ministry, which favoured reductions in accordance with the recommendations of the 1894-5 Tariff Board.[122] The Party's tariff policy, however, reinforced its alliance with liberal protectionist opinion outside the parliament, and with the high tariff party in the Assembly.[123] In order to consolidate working-class support for

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[118]*Free Lance*, May 21, 1896, p.2.

[119]THC, Minutes, May 31, 1895. The PAV also received the co-operation and financial support of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, which had consistently refused to have anything to do with the Labor Party. See ASE (MDC), Minutes, May 7, 1895; May 21, 1895; July 30, 1895, UMA.

[120]Protection remained a major concern of the THC. In May 1895, the Protectionist Association asked the Council for financial assistance. This request received a favourable response. Despite the poor financial condition of the unions, delegates were asked to bring the matter under the notice of their societies, while the secretary would write to the delegates of societies not present. See THC, Minutes, May 31, 1895. See also THC, Minutes, May 10, 1895; July 7, 1895; July 19, 1895.

[121]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, August 1895, p.2580; May 1896, p.2652; June 1896, pp.2660-1; July 1896, p.2671; MTS, Minutes, May 6, 1893; June 20, 1896; October 10, 1896, PKIU Archives; VOBU, Minutes, July 30, 1894; December 4, 1894; January 11, 1895; June 3, 1895; June 17, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3; June 25, 1895; April 18, 1898, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4; Painters, Minutes, June 23, 1892; December 16, 1895; May 4, 1896, UMA 1/1; Stonemasons, Minutes, September 7, 1892; October 14, 1892; October 26, 1892, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/8.

[122]G.D. Patterson, *The Tariff in the Australian Colonies 1856-1900*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1968, pp.146-50.

[123]*VPD*, LXXVII, June 12, 1895, pp.261-8; June 18, 1895, pp.348-67; June 20, 1895, pp.445-9; June 27, 1895, pp.599-603. One exception was W.A. Hamilton, a coachmaker, trade union official and Labor member for Sandhurst, a mining constituency. He argued that "whether a country adopts protection, or whether it adopts free-trade...the position of the great mass of the people remains practically the same - with a little, a very little, on the side of protection...".

protection, the PAV carried a resolution in May 1895 affirming the principles of the minimum wage and the eight hour day.[124] Rickard has argued that the linking of the minimum wage to protection "was not sought by the labour movement but offered to it" by the middle-class liberals in the PAV.[125] As early as February 1893, however, *Commonweal* had declared that "the tone of the worker is not alone for protection; he must have an assurance as to hours of work and wages before he will be justified in handing himself over to the interest-making manufacturer".[126] Joseph Fabbri, a felt hatter and member of the THC, proposed that the minimum wage be linked to protection at a meeting of the PAV in May 1894. His suggestion was not endorsed by the other members, who thought that their organisation should confine itself to the advocacy of protection.[127] Later in 1894, the VOBU also passed a resolution which linked protection to pay rates:

> That whereas the wages of Operative Bootmakers have fallen in spite of the duties imposed on imported boots which duties were granted to the manufacturers on the understanding that the wages of the operatives should be maintained this meeting resolves to call upon the Labour candidates to use their best efforts to induce the Government to give the workers a share in the benefit of the protective Policy by

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Hamilton thought that the workers should "abandon their worship of this god" and direct their attention to issues of more drastic significance for their welfare. Hamilton's electoral organisation, the People's Party, opposed revenue duties and was influenced by single tax doctrines. Hamilton himself was a Theosophist, a leader of the co-operative movement, and a member of H.H. Champion's Fabian Society. He was more closely associated with middle-class radicalism than with the ultra-protectionist THC. See *VPD*, LXXVII, June 12, 1895, pp.268, 271; *Champion*, June 22, 1895, p.3; *Platform of the People's Party*, Bolton Bros. [Printers], n.d. c.1894, Ballarat TLC Collection, NBAC, ANU E 97/41/5; *Bendigo Advertiser*, October 18, 1893; October 23, 1893; October 25, 1893; November 1, 1893; November 6, 1893; November 14, 1893; November 20, 1893; January 11, 1894; February 21, 1894; Race Mathews, 'Victoria's First Fabians, 1890-1910', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1989, pp. 43, 46-7, 56.

[124]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.94-5.

[125]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p.95.

[126]*Commonweal*, February 11, 1893, p.3.

[127]*Argus*, May 15, 1894, p.4.

enforcing the payment of minimum piece wages by the Boot manufacturers and in other protected and otherwise privileged industries.[128]

Thus contrary to Rickard's suggestion, some sections of the labour movement had linked protection with a minimum wage before the idea was embraced by the PAV. From 1895, the policy was taken up by the Labor Party. G.M. Prendergast proclaimed his support for a policy which was, in all its details, identical to that of the PAV:

> I believe that our protective system should build up, side by side with the protection given to the manufactories, a guarantee for the payment of a proper rate of wages, for fixing proper hours of labour, and for procuring proper factory supervision, so that our workmen may be healthy and contented.[129]

This policy was given some substance by the inclusion of a clause in the Factories Act in 1896, on an amendment moved by Prendergast, bestowing on the new wages boards the power to set a minimum wage for both male and female workers. This laid the basis for the "new protection" policy which was to have a significant impact on the politics of the early Commonwealth.[130]

Protectionism encouraged a form of pressure group activity in which each union, often in alliance with the employers, sought to advance the sectional interests of the trade through political lobbying.[131] The desire of many unions to exercise greater influence on tariff policy prompted them

[128]VOBU, Minutes, October 25, 1894, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3.

[129]*VPD*, LXXVII, June 27, 1895, pp.577.

[130]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p.95.

[131]Moulders, Minutes, June 9, 1892, UMA 2/1; ASE (MDC), Minutes, May 10, 1892; May 17, 1892, UMA; Silk Hat Makers, Minutes, July 29, 1892, UMA 1/1; MTS, Minutes, June 18, 1892; September 22, 1892, PKIU Archives; Stonemasons, Minutes, July 19, 1893, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/9; UFTS, Minutes, July 18, 1895; September 12, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/7; October 10, 1901, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/13; VOBU, Minutes, July 26, 1886; April 30, 1888; May 28, 1888, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/2; August 31, 1891; May 9, 1892; August 4, 1892, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/3; *The Australasian Coachbuilder and Saddler*, June 15, 1895, pp.33, 48.

seek direct representation of labour but militated against the development

of an independent working-class party. The unions also participated in the

anti-sweating campaign which led to the Factories and Shops Act of 1896,

but they acted only as the minor partner to the National Anti-Sweating

League.[132] F.H. Cutler and John Rickard have shown that this organisation,

formed in 1895, was imbued with the spirit of middle-class liberalism and

nonconformism. While the unions in the trades covered by the new wages

boards - clothing, boots, furniture and baking - recognised their potential to

compensate for the unions' weakened bargaining position, the labour

movement itself played a subordinate role in the agitation which led to

their formation.[133] The feebleness of the unions in the 1890s was probably

the main reason for their inactivity but the labour movement's preference

for compulsory arbitration and preoccupation with the campaign for a

minimum wage in government and municipal contracts as a means of

influencing conditions in the private sector might also have contributed to

their lack of interest in wages boards until they had become an actuality.[134]

Labor thus remained wedded to liberalism but by 1896, there were

already indications of an emerging breach in the "alliance". In 1896 a by-

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[132]THC, Minutes, July 26, 1895; August 23, 1895; October 18, 1895; March 27, 1896; May 15, 1896. It is significant that the unions most heavily involved in the anti-sweating campaign tended to look to the Anti-Sweating League for leadership. See Tailors, Minutes, June 3, 1895, UMA 1/1/1; VOBU, Minutes, July 29, 1895; August 12, 1895, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4.

[133]F.H. Cutler, 'A History of the Anti-Sweating Movement in Victoria 1873-96', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1956, pp.163-6; John Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.88-103.

[134]For conciliation and arbitration, see THC, Minutes, July 27, 1894; August 17, 1894; September 29, 1894; November 2, 1894; November 16, 1894; March 29, 1895; *Worker* (Melbourne), October 6, 1894, p.2; October 27, 1894, p.3; November 10, 1894, p.1. P.G. Macarthy 'Victorian Wages Boards: Their Origins and the Doctrine of the Living Wage', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 10, 1968, pp.116-34, pp.119-20. For the campaign in favour of a minimum wage in municipal and government contracts, see *VPD*, LXXIV, pp.288-311 (June 14, 1894), 531-58 (June 28, 1894), 783-89 (July 12, 1894); LXXVI, pp.1768-91 (January 18, 1895); THC, Minutes, January 12, 1894; February 3, 1894; March 9, 1894; April 13, 1894; June 8, 1894; June 15, 1894; July 27, 1894; October 5, 1894; October 19, 1894; November 2, 1894; November 23, 1894; January 18, 1895; January 25, 1895; February 8, 1895; February 22, 1895; March 8, 1895; March 23, 1895; March 29, 1895; April 19, 1895; June 21, 1895; October 4, 1895; December 6, 1895; December 13, 1895; February 14, 1896; P.G. Macarthy, 'The Living Wage in Australia - The Role of Government', *Labour History*, 18, May 1970, pp.6-8.

election in working-class South Melbourne was necessitated by the death of Joseph Winter.[135] The contest provoked a split in the Labor Party between the elements loyal to the candidate selected by the ULLP and the THC, J.B. Tucker, and those who supported the Liberal and PAV candidate, Samuel Mauger, a prominent anti-sweating activist. Several Labor branches favoured Mauger.[136] Traditional attachments to liberalism and personal admiration for Mauger cut across the loyalties of many trade unionists and Labor Party members to the THC and the ULLP. Tucker received less than half the vote, but the remainder of it was divided between the other five candidates.[137] He retained the seat for the Labor Party.

By the time of the Melbourne South by-election, the THC had already moved to reorganise its political forces. Prompted by the conflict between the Assembly and the Council over the Factories and Shops Act, the THC formed the United Labor Party (ULP). Its promoters envisaged the ULP as a more centralised, THC-dominated body but they called a conference "to bring in all outside bodies who were in sympathy with the progressive movement...".[138] It met in August and embraced a program more radical than any previously accepted by the Victorian Party, yet it is indicative of the character of labour politics in the mid-1890s that the most controversial issue was "the maintenance and perfection of the policy of protection". One delegate, G. Wright, proposed that this plank be amended to provide that "a trades union rate of wage and a maximum day of eight hours be ensured to all employes in all protected industries". This did not satisfy several delegates, including the socialist clothing manufacturer J.P. Jones, who urged the omission of the plank "as there were many ardent social democrats who were opposed to protection". The conference accepted

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[135]*Record* (South Melbourne), May 9, 1896; *Champion*, May 9, 1896, p.174.
[136]*Age*, May 19, 1896, p.6; May 21, 1896, p.6.
[137]*Age*, May 27, 1896, p.5; *Record*, May 30, 1896; *Champion*, May 30, 1896, p.214.
[138] *Age*, May 16, 1896, p.7. See also *Champion*, May 23, 1896, p.203.

Wright's amendment, with the addition of a provision for the abolition of revenue duties.[139] The more radical policies embraced by the ULP included the election of Ministers by parliament; abolition of the Legislative Council; equal electoral districts; the eight hour day to apply to all classes of labour; state fire and life insurance; a state pension for the aged; socialisation of the means of production and nationalisation of the land.[140] The lack of details about who attended the conference makes it difficult to explain the radical turn of these policies, but the absence of country delegates and lack of direct PAV representation might provide part of the explanation.[141]

The ULP made little political impact. In 1897, the provisional committee of the ULP (dominated by THC officials) in consultation with Trenwith, dropped from the party's fighting platform the most radical policies formulated by the conference.[142] By the time of the 1897 election, only sixteen branches had been formed, all in Melbourne and its suburbs.[143] The election campaign of 1897 revealed the growing impatience of a section of the Party with the Ministry.[144] The tenor of Turner's policy speech indicated his departure from a program of radical reform. He believed that it was "in the best interests of our people that we should have rest and quiet".[145] Labor members were dissatisfied with the Government's failure to persist with the State Bank Bill, introduce a land tax and reform the

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[139]*Age*, August 13, 1896, p.5; *Argus*, August 13, 1896, p.4.

[140]*Age*, August 6, 1896, p.7; August 8, 1896, p.8; August 11, 1896, p.5; August 13, 1896, p.5; August 18, 1896, p.7; *Argus*, August 6, 1896, p.6; August 8, 1896, p.7; August 13, 1896, p.4; August 18, 1896, p.5.

[141]When the conference met on August 3, the credentials of the Radical League and the Yarra-bank Sunday Demonstration Organisation were not accepted. Resolutions that the Women's Suffrage League, the Radical League, the Yarra-bank Sunday Demonstration Organisation, the Single Tax League, the Free trade Democratic Association and the Protectionist Association of Victoria be invited were rejected. See *Age*, August 4, 1896, p.6.

[142]THC, Minutes, January 15, 1897; January 22, 1897; February 12, 1897; *Age*, January 23, 1897, p.7; *Argus*, January 23, 1897, p.7. See Appendix H.

[143]*Age*, August 17, 1897, p.6.

[144]For an account of this campaign, see Rawson, 'Victoria', pp.79-83; McQueen, 'Victoria', p.302.

[145]*Australasian*, October 2, 1897, p.742.

Legislative Council. They also opposed Turner's proposal to reduce income tax.[146] This dissatisfaction was not confined to the radical section of the Party. Even Trenwith disliked Turner's policy speech, especially his proposals to reduce income tax and drop the land tax.[147] Still, it was evident that a section of the Labor Party, led by Hancock and Prendergast, was no longer content with its status as an advance guard of liberalism.[148] As early as mid-1896, Hancock had threatened that if the Turner Ministry failed to enact liberal measures, the Labor Party "would cross the floor of the House in a body".[149] It was apparent that Hancock was not speaking on behalf of the Labor Party, or even its radical wing, when his fulminations against the Turner government were disclaimed by other members of the Party. Even Prendergast thought that Hancock "was not speaking against the policy of the TURNER Government generally, for he [Prendergast] believed it was as good a Government as the colony had ever had".[150] By the time of the 1897 election, the opinions of Prendergast and several of his colleagues had changed. They were encouraged by the presence in Victoria of the British trade union leader and socialist, Ben Tillett.[151] At a mass meeting of the ULP in September 1897, Prendergast claimed that the "Liberal party never had any platform in this country, unless it was sticking to office". On the same occasion, Hancock and Bromley attacked Alfred Deakin's reputation. Hancock called him as "a cold blooded scoundrel", recalling Deakin's role in calling out the military in the maritime strike.[152] These parliamentarians

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[146]*Argus*, October 1, 1897, p.4.

[147]*Australasian*, October 2, 1897, p.742; October 9, 1897, p.786; *Argus*, October 1, 1897, p.4; October 6, 1897, p.5.

[148]*Age*, October 7, 1897, p.4. For an account of the left's challenge in 1897, see McQueen, 'Victoria', pp. 302-3; Scates, 'Faddists and Extremists', p.813.

[149]*Champion*, June 6, 1896, p.226.

[150]*Champion*, June 13, 1896, p.239.

[151]Ben Tillett, *Memories and Reflections*, John Long, London, 1931, pp.205-6. In this account, Tillett confuses his two visits to Australia, in 1897-8 and 1907-8.

[152]*Age*, September 17, 1897, p.5. See also *Argus*, September 17, 1897, p.4.

had their allies in the THC. Stephen Barker thought that Turner had done an injustice to the Labor Party, and he urged independent action:

> When the Labor members were fighting for labor...they had no right to be joined to any party, Ministerial or Opposition...[The Labor party] owed allegiance to no party, and went for measures, not men.[153]

Findley predicted that in the future, "it would be a fight between the Premier's party and the Labor party".[154]   At this time, Findley was involved with Prendergast in a scheme to produce a new radical weekly.  The *Tocsin* appeared for the first time on 2 October.  It supported the Labor left's desire for a more independent political position, but the moderates answered this agitation for a break with Turner.[155]  J.B. Tucker thought that "the Turner Government was... the best that had been in power for many years past".[156] Barrett supported the Turner Government[157] while Trenwith agreed that the Ministry was "the best the colony had ever known".[158]  Even Bromley, who had attacked Deakin at the ULP meeting in September, announced his support of the Ministry when he addressed the electors directly.[159]  This did not prevent the *Age* from including him among the Labor "extremists" which it urged the electors to oust.[160]

The ULP nominated twenty-one candidates for the 1897 general election.[161]  In accordance with the rules set out in the ULP scheme of organisation adopted in the previous year, the central council announced that all candidates would be required to sign a pledge.[162]  Prendergast

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[153]*Age*, October 2, 1897, p.9.
[154]*Age*, October 2, 1897, p.9.
[155]*Tocsin*, October 9, 1897, p.6.
[156]*Age*, October 2, 1897, p.10.
[157]*Age*, October 7, 1897, p.6.
[158]*Age*, October 6, 1897, p.5
[159]*Age*, September 28, 1897, pp.5-6.
[160]*Age*, October 7, 1897, p.4.
[161]*Age*, October 4, 1897, p.5; *Argus*, October 4, 1897, p.5.
[162]*Age*, September 3, 1897, p.5; *Age*, September 15, 1897, p.6.

welcomed this decision. He thought that "no person should be accepted as voicing the opinion of the Labor party unless he were amenable to the control of the labor organisation".[163] Several candidates did sign pledges but Trenwith's refusal made enforcement of the rule virtually impossible.[164] The left had suffered its first defeat.

Even the mild challenge mounted by the Labor radicals in 1897 led to an electoral backlash against the struggling Labor Party. Prendergast and Barrett lost their seats, and Labor's overall percentage of the vote declined from 1894.[165] This result halted any immediate movement towards an independent Labor Party. The radicals were outraged at what they regarded as the perfidy of the Liberal leader and the *Age*, but they continued to identify with radical liberals regarded as sympathetic to the labour cause.[166] The *Tocsin* thought that Higgins and Berry were democrats who ought to be supported by the Labor Party.[167] It regretted Berry's defeat in the election.[168]

The theme of liberal betrayal was played out at a meeting held for the benefit of Prendergast after the election. At the conclusion of the North Melbourne meeting, Maloney set alight a copy of the *Age* and, with high melodrama, declared, "Boys, we will light such a spark of freedom to-night as will not be put out until the whole colony is ablaze". There were loud cries of "Burn the traitor" as Maloney threw the remaining ashes amongst the five-hundred strong audience. Trenwith, who was present, had been vilified throughout the proceedings as "a protectionist barracker".[169] This ritual symbolised the dissatisfaction of the Labor radicals with Trenwith's

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[163]*Age*, September 3, 1897, p.5. See also *Age*, September 17, 1897, p.5.

[164]*Tocsin*, July 27, 1899, p.6.

[165]Rawson, 'Victoria', p.82; Colin A. Hughes and B.D. Graham, *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics, 1890-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1968, pp.468-71.

[166]*Argus*, October 16, 1897, p.10.

[167]*Tocsin*, October 9, 1897, p.7; October 21, 1897, p.3

[168]*Tocsin*, October 21, 1897, pp.6-7.

[169]*Bulletin*, November 6, 1897, p.20; *Liberator*, October 30, 1897, p. 10598; *Argus*, October 26, 1897, p.5.

leadership and their anger at the conduct of the *Age* during the campaign, but it also expressed their exasperation at the failure of the electors to recognise the Liberal betrayal of working-class interests.

The tensions between the radical and moderate sections of the Labor party intensified after the 1897 election. At the meeting of the THC, Hancock made comments about the PLP leader that were correctly interpreted as criticism:

> While they were under a leader it was their duty to give him every support. If he were not satisfactory they must get a fresh leader, and it was better to do this than to be complaining at the one in power.[170]

When the Council met again on 29 October, Charles Harris, (Saddlers) moved

> that the Council strongly deprecates & resents the unjustifiable attacks Continually being made upon Mr. Trenwith MLA & hereby expresses its entire Confidence in him as the leader of the Labor Party.[171]

The motion was carried, but this did not put an end to the tension. At the next meeting, Sangster obtained submitted a motion "condemnatory of the actions of Mr. Trenwith as Leader of the Labor Party". The president ruled that the motion could not be accepted, as the Council had already expressed its confidence in Trenwith.[172] William Bayst (Butchers), however, described Trenwith as "a failure as leader of the Labor party...a mere political figure head".[173] The tensions between these men led to a brawl between them outside the Council chamber in 1898.[174]

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[170]*Argus*, October 16, 1897, p.10.
[171]THC, Minutes, October 29, 1897
[172]THC, Minutes, November 5, 1897.
[173]*Age*, November 6, 1897, p.9.
[174]THC, Minutes, July 29, 1898; August 5, 1898; September 9, 1898; September 16, 1898; *Age*, July 30, 1898, pp. 8-9; *Argus*, July 30, 1898, p.9; *Tocsin*, August 4, 1898, p.2; August 11, 1898, p.2.

On 17 December, Trenwith attended the Council to answer these

criticisms. Bayst charged Trenwith with having "neglected social democracy

for federation". Trenwith responded with an eloquent defence of the right

of the Labor representative to act according to his conscience, untrammelled

by extra-parliamentary organisations. He declared:

> if there ever came a time when he had to choose between doing what
> he thought was right and gaining the council's approval, he would be
> guided by his own judgment, and act according to his own conscience...

Trenwith's speech evoked cheers from the delegates. His critics were in a

minority but there was growing dissatisfaction with his leadership and the

failure of the Labor Party to act as an independent force.[175]

All might have been well if, in 1898, the labour movement had

adopted the same attitude to the Federal Bill as Trenwith, who had been the

only Labor representative at the Federal Conference.[176] At a meeting of the

Council on 24 March, Barrett moved the following resolutions:

> 1. That in the opinion of this Council the Constitution Draft Bill as
> now framed is undemocratic in its character many of its provisions

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[175]THC, Minutes, December 17, 1897; *Age*, December 18, 1897, p.10; *Argus*, December 18, 1897, p.10.

[176]*Champion*, March 13, 1897, p.4. The Victorian Labor Party's attitude to Federation went through several changes in the 1890s. The platform of the PPL included the plank 'Federation of the Colonies on a Democratic Basis'. The *Commonweal* (August 8, 1891, p.2.) declared the plank the "first grand step towards the inevitable destiny of this great country, the establishment of an Australian Republic". This was probably written by Prendergast who represented the PPL at the Corowa Conference in 1893. Maloney was also present at the conference as the representative of the Protection, Liberal and Federation League. (See *Official Report of the Federation Conference held in the Court-House, Corowa, on Monday, 31st July, and Tuesday, 1st August 1893*, James C. Leslie [Printer], Corowa, 1893; Stuart Macintyre, 'Corowa and the Voice of the People', Address to Canberra and District Historical Society, 29 July 1993, unpublished typescript, 1993). In March 1894, Deakin, representing the ANA, addressed the THC on the Federation issue and was received enthusiastically (THC, Minutes, March 16, 1894; *Age*, March 17, 1894; *Worker* (Melbourne), March 24, 1894, p.2.). The Council was represented by Prendergast, Trenwith and Winter on the Australasian Federation League Executive (THC, Minutes, August 3, 1894; *Age*, July 31, 1894, p.6.) The ULP and the THC selected a list of ten candidates for the Federal Convention in 1897 which included Trenwith and nine Liberals (THC, Minutes, February 19, 1897; *Argus*, February 17, 1897, p.5; February 20, 1897, p.20).

being obscure and requiring further elucidation before being submitted to the people.

2. That this Council is further of opinion that the Constitution for the Federation of Australia will not be acceptable unless it provides for the mass Referendum & Adult suffrage & further without these provisions such a Constitution is pernicious in its application & destructive to representative Government.[177]

Labor opponents of the Bill were concerned about the rigidity of the proposed constitution. The particular Labor criticisms of the Federal Bill included the lack of provision for full adult suffrage; the equal representation of states in the Senate, which they thought placed Victoria and NSW at the mercy of the less populous states; and the absence from the Federal Bill of provision for a referendum in the event of a deadlock between the Senate and the House of Representatives.[178] When the Council voted on the motion, Trenwith was alone in supporting the Bill.[179] The Labor leader's own parliamentary colleagues, Hancock and Maloney, condemned him in the Council chamber while the *Tocsin*, which campaigned against the Bill, predicted that Trenwith's destination was "the Hen-house of Liberalism".[180] The unsuccessful campaign against the Federal Bill drove a further wedge between the union movement and mainstream liberal opinion as represented by Deakin, Isaacs and Turner. However, the result of the referendum - the Bill was carried by 100 520 votes to 22 099 in Victoria - suggested that the union leaders lacked support even among metropolitan working-class electors who had voted overwhelmingly for the Bill.[181]

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[177]THC, Minutes, March 24, 1898.

[178]*Age*, March 25, 1898, p.5; March 29, 1898, p.6; April 1, 1898, p.6; April 13, 1898, p.5; Henry L. Hall, *Victoria's Part in the Australian Federation Movement 1849-1900*, Elliot Stock, London, 1931, pp.121-138. See also THC, Minutes, March 24, 1898; *Vote No on June 3rd*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, n.d. [1898], in Merrifield Collection, VSL; Hugh Anderson (ed.), *Tocsin: Radical Arguments against Federation 1897-1900*, Drummond, Melbourne, 1977.

[179]THC, Minutes, March 28, 1898; April 12, 1898.

[180]*Age*, April 1, 1898, p.6; April 13, 1898, p.5; *Tocsin*, May 12, 1898, p.4.

[181]Hall, *Victoria's Part in the Australian Federation Movement*, p.140.

# THE LEADER



William Arthur Trenwith, Leader, Victorian
Parliamentary Labor Party, 1892-1900

The leader of the "Anti-Billites" in Victoria was Higgins, not the THC.[182] W.A. Holman, in a letter to Higgins after the referendum, exaggerated Higgins's importance only slightly: "You played almost a lone hand. Had you been here [NSW] you would have found dozens of kindred spirits ready and able to assist".[183] The campaign did nothing to enhance the THC's claims to exercise working-class political leadership. The disastrous result for the "Anti-Billites" highlighted the isolation of the union leadership from most working-class voters, at least in regard to Federation. When Parliament opened at the end of June, however, Hancock renewed his attack on Trenwith.[184] Sangster submitted a motion to the PLP calling on the Party to withdraw its support for Trenwith's leadership. Hancock and Maloney also opposed Trenwith, but the Labor leader was supported by the moderates Hamilton, John Murray and Hume Cook. Sangster withdrew the motion when he realised that he lacked support, and Trenwith survived as leader. For the first time, Trenwith's leadership had been directly challenged from within the parliamentary party.[185]

Another issue which divided Trenwith from his radical colleagues in the late 1890s was the Boer War. The war split the Victorian labour movement although there is little evidence of strong working-class feeling one way or another in relation to British or Australian involvement.

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[182]J.G. Barrett to H.B. Higgins, March 24, 1899, Higgins Papers, NLA MS 1057/43.
[183]W.A. Holman to H.B. Higgins, December 7, 1898, Higgins Papers, NLA MS 1057/40a.
[184]*VPD*, LXXXVIII, June 29, 1898, pp. 38, 44, 60, 64.
[185]T.A. Coghlan, *Labour and Industry: IV*, p. 2230. According to the *Age*, the motion condemnatory of Trenwith's leadership had been prepared over a month before the meeting. It was:
> That, in consequence of the leader of the party failing to call a meeting on the request of several of its members, the members of the party in meeting assembled cease to further recognise Mr. Trenwith as the leader of the Labor Party in Parliament

The *Age* reported that the resolution was never formally moved while the *Argus* claimed that Sangster introduced the motion and later withdrew it. There are also discrepancies between the two accounts regarding the number of members present at the meeting. The *Age* reported that fourteen were in attendance while the *Argus* named thirteen: Murray, Smith, Wilkins, Sangster, Tucker, Hamilton, Cook, Hancock, Burton, Maloney, Styles, Bromley, Trenwith. See *Age*, July 1, 1898, p.5; *Argus*, July 1, 1898. p.5.

Radical liberals such as Higgins, Murray and Hume Cook[186] were more prominent than union leaders in opposing the war, reflecting the weakness of the unionists' claims to political leadership.[187]  Labor members Bromley, Sangster, Tucker and Maloney opposed the decision to send a Victorian contingent to South Africa, but Trenwith supported the measure.[188]  He argued that Victorians owed loyalty to the Empire.[189]  Maloney, on the other hand, opposed the war because it was an unjust fight between unequal foes.[190]  He idealised the Boer nation as standing

> eminent amongst the countries of the world as being the nation that has not bowed down to the god of gold, and prefers that its people should earn their living from the land.[191]

Bromley embraced the a standard radical view of the war, declaring that "[t]he London Stock Exchange and the brokers are at the bottom of it".[192]  For the *Tocsin*,  Australia's intervention was on the side of tyranny against freedom, aiding the British Government's interference with the sovereignty of the Boers.[193]

There was trouble in the THC when Harris, the president, announced that he had accepted an invitation from the Mayor of Melbourne to attend a banquet to mark the departure of the Victorian contingent.  Bob Solly (VOBU) opposed the president's actions, since the function was "jingoist" and the Transvaal trouble "nothing but a capitalistic affair".  John Hyman (VOBU), who supported the president's action, admitted that "it was not

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[186]Murray and Hume Cook were sometimes treated as Labor Party members, but they are more accurately to be regarded as radical liberals.  They had no links with the THC or socialist groups.

[187]*VPD*, XCII, October 10, 1899, pp. 1730-4; 1761-2; 1776-9; John Rickard, *H.B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, pp.108-13.

[188]*VPD*, XCII, October 10, 1899, p.1790.

[189]*VPD*, XCII, October 10, 1899, pp.1775-6.

[190]*VPD*, XCII, October 10, 1899, pp.1751-9.

[191]*VPD*, XCII, October 10, 1899, p.1754.

[192]*VPD*, XCII, October 10, 1899, p.1741.  See also *Tocsin*, October 5, 1899, p.3.

[193]*Tocsin*, July 20, 1899, p.4.

altogether a just war" while Barker opposed adoption of Harris's report because "[w]orkers everywhere desired peace, and were 'against the military'". The Council adopted Harris's report by thirteen votes to eleven, indicating union support for the war even before Black Week in December 1899.[194]   After the defeat of the British forces at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso in December, the THC discussed a proposal to establish a fund to assist the families of Victorian soldiers in the war. Sangster opposed the motion, arguing that the workers should not be asked to provide for the wives and families of "men who in their foolish moments had volunteered to go and fight against people with whom they had no quarrel". The THC voted in favour of creating the fund by thirteen votes to ten.[195]

Some Labor opposition to sending the first contingent was based on the belief that the Empire was not in peril, and that Victoria's assistance was not required. The defeat of the British forces in December 1899 (Black Week) helped to change this attitude.[196]  At a THC meeting in March 1900, the Union Flag and the British Lion were prominently displayed above the dais in honour of the relief of Ladysmith while the announcement at the AMA conference of Buller's success "evoked a great manifestation of loyalty, the delegates rising and singing the National Anthem, with cheers for General Buller".[197]  George Hawke, president of the AMA, remarked that "[t]he advantages of unionism...had never received such a pointed practical illustration as during the present war in South Africa...soldiers from the various colonies taking their stand shoulder to shoulder with the Imperial troops in the cause of humanity and the upholding of the British flag".[198]  In May, at a meeting of the Plumbers' Society "three cheers for Baden Powell &

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[194]*Age*, November 4, 1899, p.9. See also *Argus*, November 4, 1899, p.13; *Tocsin*, November 9, 1899, p.5; THC, Minutes, November 7, 1899.

[195]*Age*, December 23, 1899, p.7. See also *Tocsin*, December 28, 1899, p.4.

[196]Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War*, Jonathan Ball Publishers in association with Weidenfeld and Nicolson, Johannesburg and London, 1979, pp.242-53, 580-1.

[197]*Age*, March 3, 1900, p.10; *Bendigo Advertiser*, March 2, 1900.

[198]*Bendigo Advertiser*, February 28, 1900.

the relief of Mafeking...were heartily given".[199]  Working people,

encouraged by the Government which called a public holiday for the

occasion, participated in the celebrations which followed the relief of

Mafeking while employers also promoted displays of working-class

patriotism.  When the management of the Denton Hat Mills gave half a

sovereign to each journeyman for the Mafeking holiday, the employees

assembled outside the gates to give three cheers for the managers for their

thoughtfulness.[200]  At the same time, there were few union leaders who

took a prominent part in pro-war activities. Trenwith was one, asserting at a

Town Hall meeting in January 1900 that "...it was all important to the world

that the Union Jack should continue to fly pre-eminent over all the flags on

earth" but as we have seen, he was increasingly remote from the labour

movement and gravitating towards the Liberal Party.  At the same meeting,

Harris assured the audience that he "was not a very strong man, but if he

were he would have been in South Africa".[201]

Attitudes had hardened by the time the Victorian parliament

considered sending a second contingent in January 1900.  Murray, a

prominent pro-Boer, was ridiculed and branded a traitor.[202]  Moreover, the

Labor opposition was breaking down.  Maloney's speech was defensive.  He

maintained his opposition to the war of the grounds that it was an unequal

battle, a justification which would have been unconvincing to most

Victorians in light of recent British defeats.[203]  J.B. Tucker, who opposed the

first contingent, supported the second, arguing that the Empire was now in

peril and praising "the freedom of speech that prevails or is permitted to the

British race all over the empire...".  He explained that he had opposed the

first contingent because it appeared to him that Great Britain "accepted these

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[199]Plumbers, Minutes, May 22, 1900, NBAC, ANU T 17/1/1.
[200]*Age*, May 23, 1900, p.6.
[201]*Age*, January 9, 1900, p.5.
[202]*VPD*, XCIII, January 9, 1900, pp.2869.
[203]*VPD*, XCIII, January 9, 1900, pp.2875.

small units, not only with reluctance, but under sufferance".[204]  Tucker's

change of opinion was probably a reflection of the attitudes of most of his

constituents, but the war was not the occasion of working-class mobilisation.

Most labouring people preferred a victory for the Empire to a defeat, but did

not usually indulge in jingoism.[205]  Labor opponents of the war such as

Maloney and Sangster easily survived the general election in late 1900

although the Liberal opponents of the war Hamilton and Higgins lost their

seats of Sandhurst and Geelong.[206]  Higgins won the solidly working-class

seat of North Melbourne in the federal election only a few months later,

indicating that an anti-war stand was no barrier to the support of

metropolitan working-class electors.

The war *was* significant in providing a rallying point for the radicals

who were gradually displacing Lib-Lab moderates from the leadership of the

labour movement.  The trend was evident in September 1900 when Harris

moved in the THC that the executive consider how THC could express the

appreciation of the workers of the proposed visit of the Duke and Duchess of

York to Australia.  His motion prompted the following exchange:

> Solly:     The trouble is that this fellow does not represent the
> workers.  He represents the loafers.
> Harris:    So Mr. Solly says.  I say he represents the Queen.
> Solly:     That bears out my assertion.

Solly declared that he was "a republican and socialist - a socialist before

everything else".[207]  It was radicals such as Solly who assumed leadership of

the Victorian Labor Party after 1900.

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[204]*VPD*, XCIII, January 9, 1900, pp.2874.
[205]C.N. Connolly, 'Class, Birthplace, Loyalty: Australian Attitudes to the Boer War',
*Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 71, 1978, pp. 213-6.
[206]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, p.57, 62.
[207]*Argus*, September 22, 1900, p.13.

# USE OF THESES

# LABOUR AND POLITICS IN VICTORIA, 1885-1914

Francis Robert Bongiorno

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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# CHAPTER FOUR:
# THE EMERGENCE OF AN
# INDEPENDENT LABOR PARTY, 1899-1904

## Introduction

The fall of the Turner Ministry in 1899, and its replacement by a more
country-oriented Ministry under the leadership of Allan McLean, led to
improved relations between Labor and Turner, based less on sentiment than
concern about the fate of the wages board system, which was due for renewal
in 1900.[1] The 1900 election, however, was the last in which the Victorian
Labor Party was allied with the liberals. After 1900, the allegiance of the
working class to the Liberal Party was eroded in an environment of intense
political conflict and conservative employer resistance to the demands of
the unions.[2]

The Labor Party's emphasis on disciplined organisation after 1900 often
appealed to a sense of class consciousness: middle-class liberals who refused
to bind themselves to the Labor Party could not be trusted to carry out their
promises. Labor propagandists interpreted a willingness to sign the pledge
and platform as indicative of a candidate's solidarity with the working class
and sincerity in the cause of reform. This formulation implied a new
understanding of political representation, in which a parliamentarian was a
delegate rather than a representative, but it did not necessarily involve a
transformation of political consciousness. Labor's early twentieth century
appeal to the electorate focused on the advantages of supporting a "pledged

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[1]John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth,
1890-1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, pp. 104-15.
[2]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, ch.6; David Plowman, 'Forced March: the Employers and
Arbitration', in Stuart Macintyre and Richard Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration:
The Origins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration 1890-1914*, Oxford University Press,
Melbourne, 1989, pp. 137-46.

candidate". This strategy met with only moderate electoral success, since traditional ways of conceiving legislators as independent representatives and not as delegates bound to a Party machine were deeply embedded in the political culture. The aim of this chapter is to trace the decline of working-class support for the old Liberal Party and the development of an independent Labor Party in the early years of the century.

## The Labor Party and Liberalism in the late Colonial Period, 1899-1900

The defeat of the Turner Ministry late in 1899 prompted a rapid reconsideration by the labour movement of its attitude to Turner. The members of the PLP voted against McLean's want of confidence motion, with the exception of Hamilton, the only non-metropolitan Labor member, and Hume Cook, a radical liberal who identified with the Labor Party but stood on its fringe.[3] The Labor Party's main concern at this time was the Factories Act, which required renewal. The Labor Party, with the Anti-Sweating League, was agitating for an extension of the wages board system.[4]

The new McLean Ministry was an unknown quantity. It had been installed by a combination of Oppositionists, country members and disaffected radical liberals.[5] On the defeat of Turner, a motion was introduced in the THC expressing its "astonishment", an unusual choice which expressed the ambivalence of the Council's attitude to the Ministry.[6] The THC supported the North and West Melbourne Labor Party's selection of Stephen Barker for the by-election contest against W.A. Watt, who had been appointed Postmaster-General by McLean.[7] Barker, who had criticised Turner at the time of the 1897 election, now defended the Ministry's record.

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[3]*VPD*, XCIII, November 30, 1899, p.2830.
[4]THC, Minutes, March 24, 1899; May 12, 1899; November 17, 1899; January 19, 1900; April 27, 1900; August 3, 1900.
[5]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p. 104; *Argus*, October 24, 1900, p.9.
[6]THC, Minutes, December 8, 1899.
[7]THC, Minutes, December 11, 1899.

He recognised that the Government "had done more for the cause of labor than any other government...".[8] Barker was supported on the platform by leading Liberals as well as members of the Labor Party.[9] At an election meeting, Maloney called for three cheers for the Turner Government, a far cry from his pyromaniacal antics in the aftermath of the 1897 election.[10] The *Tocsin* (it was almost certainly the anarchist J.A. Andrews) responded to these developments by describing Barker as one of the "eminently respectable" section of the Labor Party whose selection was "calculated not to alarm too seriously those nervous Liberals who regard Labour members as perhaps a degree worse than Anarchists".[11] The *Tocsin*, however, failed to register the shift of the whole Labor Party towards the Turnerite Liberals after the Ministry's defeat. Barker, while certainly a respectable artisan - he was a presser who operated a small business as a tailor and dyer in North Melbourne in the 1890s - was hardly unique among Labor leaders in this respect.[12] The *Age* was more accurate in pointing to the inconsistency of Barker's support for Turner while "he and his allies [had] made the street corners of North Melbourne ring with denunciations of Sir George Turner for the past five years".[13] At a THC meeting in 1898, for example, Barker had described the Turner Government as "the biggest sweaters that ever sat on the Treasury benches".[14] That Labor radicals such as Barker were able to swing from hostility to the liberals in 1897-8 to strategic support in 1899 indicates that 1897 was more a temporary split in the Lib-Lab alliance than a permanent breach. In 1899, with the moderates in control of the PLP, the THC concerned about the future of the Factories Act, and working-class

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[8]*North Melbourne Gazette*, December 15, 1899.
[9]*Age*, December 13, 1899, p.8; *North Melbourne Gazette*, December 15, 1899.
[10]*Age*, December 16, 1899, p.10.
[11]*Tocsin*, December 14, 1899, p.4.
[12]Article, 'Stephen Barker', *ADB*, Volume 7, p.174.
[13]*Age*, December 18, 1899, p.4.
[14]*Argus*, January 15, 1898, p.11.

electors steadfast in their adherence to liberalism, the identification of Barker with the defeated Turner Ministry becomes explicable. The attitude of the majority of working-class electors at this time is indicated by Watt's comfortable victory over Barker in North Melbourne[15] and Mauger's defeat of Prendergast for the Footscray seat made vacant by the death of the Labor member, Hancock.[16] Both results suggested the weakness of the Labor vote, even in working-class electorates. These electors were still prepared to vote for "liberalism", whether of the Turnerite or McLeanite variety.

It should not be thought that the labour movement was unanimous in its support of Turner and hostility to McLean. In January 1900, the THC discussed a motion deeming it undesirable that a want of confidence motion be moved against McLean until the amended Factories Act had been passed. Trenwith, who was present at the meeting, made clear his own support of Turner by strongly opposing the motion, but Findley described the praise showered on the Turner Government as "sickening, especially when it was remembered how Sir George Turner, at the last general elections, had marked the best of the Labor members for slaughter".[17] Findley's attitude, however, was atypical. Members of the PLP were even more uncompromising in their hostility to McLean than other members of the Opposition. At an Opposition caucus meeting in February to discuss Higgins's no-confidence motion in McLean, most of the Liberals expressed the intention of leaving the chamber when the division was called. Trenwith, Maloney and Sangster, on the other hand, favoured a vote against the Government.[18] Higgins's withdrawal of the motion saved Opposition members from having to resolve their disagreement.[19]

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[15]*Age*, December 21, 1899, p.6.

[16]*Age*, December 13, 1899, p.8.

[17]*Age*, January 13, 1900, p.11; *Argus*, January 13, 1900, p.10.

[18]*Argus*, February 14, 1900, p.9.

[19]John Rickard, *H.B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp.115-8.

The passage of the amended Factories Act in early 1900 had little impact on the Labor Party's attitude to McLean. In 1900, the Labor candidates appeared before the electors as members of the Opposition and supporters of the Turnerite Liberal Party.[20] Their aim was to heal the breach in the Liberal Party while representing the interests of "labour" within the Liberal alliance.[21] Prendergast thought that the community should "bring about a cleavage of the political parties, so that the Liberals should stand on one side in a solid body, and the Conservatives on the other".[22] Labor candidates regarded their party as the "advance"[23] or "democratic"[24] wing of the Liberal Party, as they had for most of the 1890s. Even the *Tocsin* conceded that many workers regarded Liberalism as their "natural creed.[25]

There were, however, signs of tension in the Lib-Lab alliance which indicated that the two sections had not quite returned to their cosy relationship of 1894. Sangster appeared before the electors "pledged to no Government but to support measures of an advanced liberal character". He had received a telegram from Turner "wishing success to a true Liberal", but thought that the Liberal leader had been "guilty of ignoring the labour party".[26] Frank Anstey, the Labor candidate for East Bourke Boroughs, occupied a nominally independent position in relation to the rival liberal groups.[27] The cry of "measures, not men" was once more heard throughout the land, but without the anti-liberal rhetoric of 1897.[28] The phrase was a misleading one so far as the Labor Party was concerned, because it implied a

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[20]For an account of the election, see D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria', in P.Loveday, A.W. Martin & R.S Parker, *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1977, pp.88-9.
[21]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p.110.
[22]*Age*, October 26, 1900, p.6.
[23]Barrett, *Age*, October 18, 1900, p.6.
[24]Trenwith, *Argus*, October 23, 1900, p.7.
[25]*Tocsin*, August 16, 1900, p.4.
[26]*Age*, October 23, 1900, p.6; *Argus*, October 23, 1900, p.7.
[27]*Age*, October 8, 1900, p.6; October 2, 1900, p.6.
[28]*Argus*, October 18, 1900, p.6.

position of political independence of both liberal leaders which the majority

of candidates had no immediate intention of embracing.

Still, Labor candidates were not averse to appealing to the class

consciousness of the workers. Charles Harris claimed to be "a working man

pure and simple...and he would be no man who was ashamed of the class to

which he belonged" while Findley urged electors to return "members of

their own class".[29] These modest appeals to the class consciousness of

electors exposed one of the tensions in the Lib-Lab "alliance". Labor

candidates appealed to the elector as a wage-earner who had some collective

political interests as a result of that identity. Most other liberals assumed a

more ambiguous relationship between class identity and political allegiance.

They regarded liberalism as a civil creed rather than class ideology, a

philosophy which could encompass the interests and ideals of all useful

sections of the community. The Labor Party, which represented a sectional

interest, could only effect social reform by taking its place within the broader

liberal movement. It followed that a representative of the labour interest

need not be a man who had worked with his hands until election day. In

late 1899, the *Age* had warned of the dangers inherent in the representation

of working men by working men in parliament:

> Too often it has been shown that the workman, who is necessarily not
> steeled against temptations which are inoperative on men of a
> different training, deteriorates rapidly both as a man and a member
> after a session or two in Parliament...he has a well oiled tongue, and no
> scruples about vilifying anyone who stands between him and the only
> billet in which a workman's wages are fixed by law and the amount of
> work to be done is fixed by his own inclinations.[30]

The main object of the *Age* in this instance was to advance the interests of

Mauger against Prendergast in the Footscray by-election: its class prejudice is

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[29]*Age*, October 29, 1900, p.5; October 23, 1900, p.6.
[30]*Age*, December 9, 1899, p.8.

apparent. In questioning the principal Labor rationalisation of its existence as a separate party, however, the *Age* 's statement belonged to a liberal tradition which had always been uneasy about political appeals to class consciousness.[31]

The question of who should represent the workers led to conflict in southern Melbourne in 1900, where the political situation was complicated by bitter religious sectarianism. There were two Labor Leagues in Emerald Hill: one of them, supporting Thomas Smith, the sitting member, was the successor of the South Melbourne Liberal and Labor League, which had emerged as a Protestant Labor body after a sectarian explosion in southern Melbourne in 1898.[32] In September 1900, a second Emerald Hill branch was formed by Councillor F.G. Knight. This was clearly a gesture of no-confidence in Smith, a manufacturer who entered the Assembly as a liberal, and whose links with the Labor Party had always been tenuous. At the meeting convened to form the branch, a representative of the Melbourne South branch of the ULP urged that the new branch be confined to "working men":

> In labor organisations they had had experience of men whose sympathies were not at all with the laboring classes, and who joined simply to suit their own purposes. The man who 'went to business' or held a 'salaried appointment' invariably rated himself vastly superior to the man who 'looked for a job in his working clothes, and toiled for wages'.[33]

The upshot was the nomination of rival candidates. One League supported Smith[34] while the new Emerald Hill League selected Charles Bishop, a member of the Glass Blowers' Society and the THC executive.[35] The

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[31]See pp.83, 94.

[32]*Age*, September 4, 1900, p.6; October 2, 1900, p.6.

[33]*Age*, September 4, 1900, p.6.

[34]*Age*, September 15, 1900, p.8.

[35]*Argus*, October 23, 1900, p.7; October 24, 1900, p.9.

Melbourne South branch of the Party approved of the new Emerald Hill branch's selection of Bishop, and refused to recognise the old branch which one member claimed had been set up by "a collection of house and land agents, who did not represent, and had no sympathy with labor".[36] This situation was complicated by the position of the THC, which repudiated Bishop's candidature and removed him from the executive, a measure endorsed by Bishop's own union.[37] The THC's selection of Smith, a middle-class radical, was in accordance with the ULP rule that a sitting member should not be opposed unless he had violated the Party's platform, but it was also an expression of its faith in the liberal notion that the working class could not work out its own political salvation alone.[38] The Emerald Hill fiasco, which resulted in a victory for Smith,[39] was an outcome of the disorganisation of the Labor Party: the absence of an authoritative central political body permitted the emergence of rival Labor branches in the electorate. The evidence of working-class hostility to Smith, however, as expressed in Bishop's candidature, was indicative of the tensions developing in working-class liberalism.

The election of 1900 continued a pattern of Labor support which had been evident since 1892. In 1900, as in 1892 and 1894, Labor success depended on broader electoral support for "liberal candidates". Ted Warde (UFTS) won the Essendon and Flemington seat while J.W. Billson, a bootmaker, won one of the Fitzroy seats. Prendergast regained Melbourne North from Watt. The only surprise was Findley's victory in the seat of Melbourne: the distribution of the non-Labor vote among several candidates permitted him to enter the parliament on a minority vote.[40]

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[36]*Age*, October 3, 1900, p.5.

[37]*Age*, October 30, 1900, p.6; THC, Minutes, November 16; December 7, 1900.

[38]*Age*, November 1, 1900, p.6.

[39]Smith: 1057; Bishop: 726. See Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1890-1964*, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, p. 56.

[40]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, pp. 52-70.

After the election, Trenwith was promoted to the Ministry by Turner as Minister for Railways and Commissioner for Public Works.[41] While it is not entirely clear why Trenwith did not try to combine the two offices, it is possible that he envisaged a potential conflict between these roles. Moreover, the tensions in his relations with the Labor radicals might have encouraged him to pass the leadership of the Party to somebody more in tune with their beliefs. Trenwith's departure from the Labor Party was amicable.[42] The PLP passed a resolution congratulating him "upon the High & Honorable position he [had] attained". Trenwith promised as a Minister to "strive to meet the Party's ideals...".[43] The departure of Trenwith, the high-priest of Lib-Lab politics, from the PLP was of more than symbolic significance. Despite his declining reputation in the labour movement, his authority remained considerable. Trenwith's resignation as leader removed a conservative influence from the party. He was replaced by Bromley, a much weaker leader, who was both an agent of the Licensed Victuallers Association and an enthusiastic consumer of its members' wares.[44] In the absence of Trenwith's leadership, and in the context of an anti-Labor political mobilisation, the voice of radical Labor would be once more heard in the land.

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[41]Bruce Scates, 'William Arthur Trenwith', *ADB*, Volume 12, p. 259.

[42]W.G. Spence portrayed Trenwith's acceptance of Ministerial office as a betrayal of the Labor Party. It was not seen in these terms at the time. See W.G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker Trustees, Sydney, n.d. (first published 1909), p. 203.

[43]Parliamentary Labor Party (PLP), Minutes, November 1, 1900, VSL MS 10914. There was also support for Trenwith's promotion within several unions. See VOBU, Minutes, November 26, 1900, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4; ASE (MDC), Minutes, November 20, 1900, UMA.

[44]*Tocsin*, August 3, 1899, p.2; *Argus*, July 29, 1899, p.10; Thorold Waters, *Much Besides Music: Memoirs of Thorold Waters*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1951, p.64.

## The Victorian Labor Party and the New Commonwealth

Humphrey McQueen has suggested that the Federation of the colonies had four consequences for the Victorian Labor Party.[45]  Firstly, Melbourne became the capital with the result that there were interstate Labor politicians in the city who could spread the Labor gospel.  Members of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP) would have been encouraged in this endeavour because the position of their Party and, especially, its prospects of ever winning office, depended on the Victorian organisation strengthening its organisation and improving its standing with electors.  Secondly, Labor had to organise the country districts because the Senate was a state-wide poll. Thirdly, the rise of the Labor Party in the Commonwealth "provided a source of confidence to the Victorian branch which it could never have obtained by itself".[46]  Finally, the transfer of the tariff issue to the Commonwealth arena had a profound influence on state politics.  At a stroke, the centre-piece of the Lib-Lab alliance had been transferred from local to national politics and, with the departure of many Victorian Liberals for federal politics, the conservative advocates of economical government now had their chance.[47]

The immediate effect of federation was, however, the necessity for an election.  Labor preparations for the first Commonwealth election began in late 1899 when the NSW Labor Party convened an intercolonial conference of labor parties to form an Australian Labor Party and frame a Federal Platform.[48]  The conference met in Sydney in January 1900 with all of the

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[45]Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1975, pp. 308-9.
[46]McQueen, 'Victoria', p.309.
[47]Kay Rollison, 'Groups and Attitudes in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 1900-1909', unpublished PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 1972, p.18.  These were Deakin, Turner, Isaacs, Best, Mauger, Hume Cook and Higgins.
[48]THC, Minutes, October 6, 1899.

mainland colonies represented, except Western Australia.[49] The delegates could not agree on a tariff policy, so they resolved that Labor candidates would be permitted a free hand on this vexed question. They adopted a program which comprised one adult, one vote; the initiative and referendum; the total exclusion of coloured and other undesirable races; and old age pensions.[50] When the THC considered the platform, it rejected the provision for a free hand on the tariff question, demanding that "Candidates in the Labor Interest must be pledged to a Protectionist Policy".[51] With the emergence of the Commonwealth, and the need to frame a new tariff, protection now assumed as much importance for the Victorian unions as at any time before 1901.

The other question on which some members of the THC dissented from the conference delegates was the "total exclusion of coloured or other undesirable races".[52] Solly, the radical bootmaker, objected to the plank, as he thought that "the Britisher should rather aim at raising coloured aliens to his own level".[53] He was not alone in his opposition to the clause, and Dupree (Curriers and Tanners), Brandt (Bakers) and Hyman (Bootmakers) also opposed the plank. However, J.K. Smith (Seamen) emphasised the necessity of excluding "coloured" labour, and after Dr. Maloney spoke strongly in favour of the original clause, it was adopted.[54] The views expressed by the dissenting delegates were clearly in the minority in the Council as in the Victorian labour movement as a whole, yet the fact that they could be seriously advanced by respected labour leaders at a THC

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[49]P. Loveday, 'The Federal Parties', in Loveday, Martin & Parker (eds.), *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, pp. 388-9; L.F. Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labour Party 1901-1951*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1955, pp. 25-6.

[50]*Tocsin*, February 8, 1900, p.6; March 15, 1900, p.4; *Argus*, February 17, 1900, p.11; *Age*, January 26, 1900, p.6.

[51]THC, Minutes, March 9, 1900; *Argus*, March 10, 1900, p.14.

[52]*Argus*, February 17, 1900, p.11.

[53]*Argus*, February 24, 1900, p.11.

[54]*Argus*, February 24, 1900, p.11; March 3, 1900, p.15.

meeting in 1900 suggests an internationalist tendency in the Victorian labour movement before Tom Mann's arrival in the colony in 1902. This same theme was apparent in a *Tocsin* editorial which appeared above the pseudonym 'Gavah the Blacksmith' (Bernard O'Dowd) in April 1901. O'Dowd criticised the labour movement for its failure to see the inconsistency of its attitude to people of other races with democratic principles: "...pure Democracy is as nobly colour-blind as it is blind to differences of sex, caste and creed".[55] O'Dowd's views, which owed much to his secularism, met with a favourable response from at least one reader. George Roberts, a hairdresser who later won a seat in the Legislative Assembly, saw the injustice in racial distinctions and looked forward to the day when the workers would open their associations to people of all races.[56] When a Labor Party branch was formed at South Yarra in October 1903, there was a consensus within the branch that Labor did not object to the entry of "blacks" or "yellows" as long as they did not undercut the wages of white workers.[57] One reason for this more questioning attitude in Victoria was the political isolation of the AWU. Its racism and dominant position in the NSW Labor Party gave to labour politics in that colony a virulently racist tendency that was only found within sections of the labour movement in Victoria.[58] This is not to deny the racism of the Victorian labour movement: after all, the unions of Melbourne and the AMA had long been

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[55]*Tocsin*, April 25, 1901, p.4.

[56]*Tocsin*, May 16, 1901, p.5.

[57]*Age*, October 16, 1903, p.5.

[58]Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, pp. 295-7. Even Nairn, who is sceptical about the pervasiveness of racism in the labour movement of New South Wales, acknowledges the extreme racism of the AWU, which he regards as having been "much influenced by the raucous and populist racism of the *Bulletin* ". See Bede Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism: The Beginnings of the Australian Labor Party*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1989, p.261. See also Jane Littlewood, 'The Racial Policies of the Australian Workers' Union 1900-1920', Unpublished BA Thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1987.

prominent in anti-Chinese agitation.[59] Still, it was at least possible to debate the White Australia policy in the Victorian labour movement.

The Liberals, in preparation for the 1901 election, formed the National Liberal Organisation (NLO) in late 1900.[60] In December 1900, the Victorian PLP sought an interview with the THC to determine "the Best Policy to adopt towards the National Liberal Organisation".[61] It is unclear whether any meeting occurred, but in January a conference of five NLO branches in southern Melbourne decided to approach the Labor Party in the hope that it would co-operate in the selection of a liberal candidate for Melbourne South to avoid a three-way contest.[62] On 18 January the THC, meeting in secret, debated a motion that "no member of the Labor Party be permitted to join any other Political Organisation except the Protectionist Association & the Anti-Sweating League". Dr. Maloney, whose relations with the NLO appear to have been friendly - he received its endorsement for the Melbourne electorate - moved an amendment that

> no member of a Labor Organisation be permitted to join any other Political Party or League except on the Condition that wherever their interests Clash with the Labor Party such member shall only vote & work for the Labor Party...

The debate then adjourned until the end of January.[63] Labor Party members were unsure about how to respond to the NLO. J.B. Ronald, a Presbyterian Minister and leading member of the Melbourne South ULP branch, favoured co-operation with the NLO, but opinion within the branch ranged from outright opposition to support for amalgamation.[64] Other Laborites

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[59]Andrew Markus, 'Divided We Fall: The Chinese and the Melbourne Furniture Trade Union, 1870-1900, *Labour History*, 26, 1974, pp.1-10; D. Gibb (ed.), *The Making of 'White Australia'*, Victorian Historical Association, West Melbourne, 1975, pp.45-53.

[60]Loveday, 'Federal Parties', pp. 391-2.

[61]PLP, Minutes, December 19, 1900, VSL MS 10914.

[62]*Age*, January 18, 1901, p.6; THC, Minutes, January 18, 1901.

[63]THC, Minutes, January 18, 1901.

[64]*Age*, January 23, 1901, p.6.

were less cautious. At a Labor meeting in East Melbourne, J.C. Fitzgerald

thought the NLO "was not entitled to be called liberal, because it numbered

in its ranks men who had consistently opposed reform" while P.J. Brandt

opposed "any attempt to sink the political power of the workers in the

National Liberal Organisation".[65] When the THC met again on 31 January,

it rejected Maloney's amendment, as well as another moved by John

Lemmon preventing Labor Party members from joining the Anti-Sweating

League. Lemmon's motion was probably a consequence of rivalry between

the League and the THC organising committee, of which he was secretary.

Brandt moved a further amendment that "all democrats be urged not to

connect themselves with any Political Body except the Leagues associated

with the Political Council of the Trades Hall", which was defeated at another

THC meeting on 6 February.[66] The THC resolved to run candidates for the

Senate, a decision which sealed the fate of the proposed alliance with the

NLO.[67] Labor activists in the electorates now expressed hostility to the NLO.

Hannah told a Liberal meeting in Brunswick in early February that there

was no need for such an organisation when a Labor Party branch already

existed in the suburb.[68] Some Labor activists appear to have been actively

undermining the NLO. At a Carlton meeting, Anstey successfully moved

for the postponement of any move to organise an NLO branch.[69] The

newly-elected member for Melbourne, Findley, was particularly colourful in

his denunciation of the NLO. At a Labor meeting in Melbourne, he declared

that the NLO comprised "shandygaff Liberals, crusted Conservatives,

discredited protectionists, Parliamentary hacks and political mendicants".[70]

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[65]*Argus*, January 30, 1901, p.9. The Agricultural Implement Makers' Union was officially opposed to an alliance with the Liberals. See AIMU, Minutes, January 24, 1901, UMA 2/1/1/2.
[66]THC, Minutes, January 31; February 6, 1901.
[67]THC, Minutes, February 6, 1901.
[68]*Argus*, February 7, 1901, p.6.
[69]*Argus*, March 20, 1901, p.6.
[70]*Age*, February 15, 1901, p.6.

In this climate, NLO overtures towards the Labor Party met with little success despite the Liberals' hope that "Labor party supporters and Liberals would work together...in the protectionist interest".[71] The secretary of the Brunswick branch of the NLO proposed an amalgamation with the Labor Party, and the liberals added a plank to their platform demanding "protection to the worker" in an attempt to attract working-class support.[72] However, Hume Cook, the NLO candidate for the seat of Bourke, soon found himself in opposition to the Labor nominee, Martin Hannah. In Melbourne South, when the local ULP branch received a request from the NLO for a conference, Ronald thought it was desirable "to keep clear of the National Liberal Organisation, and to deal with labor organisations".[73] The trend towards Labor hostility to the NLO was confirmed on 19 February when a conference of Labor branches in southern Melbourne decided that they would have nothing to do with the NLO.[74] As a consequence of this decision, the Albert Park branch of the NLO, under the leadership of H.H. Champion, dissolved itself and the majority of its members joined the Labor Party.[75] The *Tocsin* summarised the Labor Party's objections to the NLO, arguing that the NLO debased liberalism by reducing it to mere protectionism. It contrasted this "sham" liberalism with the new liberalism, which made concessions to the labour movement. The character of liberalism, the *Tocsin* argued, was defined by the company it kept:

> ...even genuine Liberalism, whenever it has not a Radical Party, or a Labour Party to inspire it, has always shrunk to a meaningless nonentity, merged, in all but name, in the Conservative body...[76]

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[71]*Age*, February 7, 1901, p.5.

[72]*Age*, February 14, 1901, p.6.

[73]*Age*, February 13, 1901, p.5.

[74]*Age*, February 20, 1901, p.5; *Argus*, February 20, 1901, p.6.

[75]*Age*, February 22, 1901, p.5; *Argus*, February 22, 1901, p.6.

[76]*Tocsin*, February 21, 1901, p.4.

The *Tocsin* critique suggested that Victorian liberalism could be a progressive force only when it was invigorated by labour. The NLO, however, because of its preoccupation with the fiscal question and neglect of social reform, would be unable to advance the welfare of the working class. The inclusion of McLean on the committee which drafted the NLO cannot have increased Labor confidence in its authenticity.[77] There were other reasons for Labor suspicion. Ronald claimed that the southern Melbourne branches of the NLO were dominated by members of the Loyal Orange Lodge, an accusation which had some substance.[78] Orangemen who had participated enthusiastically in the sectarian squabbles in southern Melbourne in the late 1890s were now prominent NLO members in the district.[79] From 1898, Protestant sectarian hostility to Labor focused on the alleged extremism of the "Yarra Bank and the Trades Hall".[80] The developments in southern Melbourne indicated that militant Protestant opinion would be channelled into anti-Labor politics.

The *Age* rejected the Labor Party's interpretation of the political landscape. It criticised Labor for running its own candidates and "cutting itself off from the fellowship of its natural colleagues and allies, and aiming to set up a separate cult, based on nothing except a name".[81] It is indicative of the symbolic importance of liberalism in Victoria that political conflict between the Labor and Liberal Parties should have taken the form of a disagreement over the meaning of the creed. Labor propagandists tried "to carve out a Labor vote as distinct from the Liberal protectionist vote", but they did not seek to provide a distinct alternative to liberalism.[82] The

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[77]Loveday, 'Federal Parties', pp. 391-2.
[78]*Age*, January 23, 1901, p.6; February 13, 1901, p.5; February 14, 1901, p.6.
[79]*Age*, January 18, 1901, p.6.
[80]*Tocsin*, September 1, 1898, p.5; *Age*, October 24, 1900, p.8.
[81]*Age*, March 8, 1901, p.4.
[82]*Age*, March 8, 1901, p.4.

*Tocsin* published a poem at this time which warned electors to be wary of candidates who were "not straight out for Labour":

> Do not trust him, fellow-worker,
>     Who, in full and flowery speech,
> Stands before you on the hustings,
>     Loud his politics to preach.
> He's a 'Liberal' - mark him closely,
>     Get an answer on the spot,
> If he's not straight out for Labour,
> Fellow-worker, trust him not![83]

While Labor activists emphasised a more independent political role for labour, they never abandoned the idea that social reform would be effected not by the manual toilers alone, but in alliance with other social groups sympathetic towards the Labor program. After 1900, the dominant note in labour political language was loyalty to an inclusive Party rather than the *ouvrieriste* discourse which union leaders had used to justify labour's intervention in parliamentary politics in the 1890s.[84] Labor candidate Bishop's claim in 1897 - "No man could represent the working classes who himself was not a worker" - would rarely be echoed by Laborites in the early 1900s.[85] Labor candidates claimed to represent the political interests of "labour" against "capital", but they did not base their appeals for electoral support primarily on the common class experience of candidate and elector.[86] As Labor substituted caucus, pledge and Party machine for the informal electoral organisations of the 1890s, political appeals to constituents were mediated by an emphasis on the desirability of loyalty to a democratic Party organisation governed by rigid rules enforcing the

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[83]*Tocsin*, February 28, 1901, p.9.
[84]See pp.81-3, 91-2, 94-5.
[85]*Argus*, October 2, 1897, p.10.
[86]Solly, *Argus*, November 28, 1903, p.17; Bromley, *People's Daily*, April 26, 1904, p.2; Anstey, *Age*, September 1, 1903, p.6; Lemmon, *Bendigo Advertiser*, November 7, 1903.

adherence of its candidates, whatever their social background, to the cause of the workers.[87] While many Liberals abhorred the formalisation of party organisation as a betrayal of liberalism, Labor's emphasis on the role of the Party in preserving popular sovereignty indicated a continuing affinity with the liberal tradition.[88] Moreover, Labor's willingness to accept the bona fides of middle-class radicals such as Ronald and Maloney who were prepared to sign the pledge indicated that the liberal vision of an alliance of the productive classes in the cause of progressive reform survived the emergence of an independent Labor Party in the early 1900s. At the same time, the emergent labourism contained a stronger emphasis on working-class political agency than had colonial liberalism. It was through the development of a disciplined Party machine, based on the principles and practice of unionism, that the working-class would cause its own emancipation and inaugurate the reign of the "wealth producers".[89]

In some inner suburbs, there were indications of the crystallisation of an independent Labor Party vote. Frank Tudor, the felt hatter and THC president, defeated several candidates who claimed to carry the Liberal flag in Yarra, which included the working-class suburbs of Richmond and Collingwood. As a product of the Victorian liberal craft union tradition, he was likely to frighten few voters with his high-minded radicalism.[90] Still, disagreements among the liberal-protectionists in Yarra made a significant contribution to Tudor's narrow victory since there were three Protectionist candidates opposing the Labor Party, and Tudor won with only one-third of the primary vote. The other successful candidate in 1901 was Ronald, who had been involved with Higgins in the campaign against the Federal Bill. His earliest electioneering experience had been as a member of Gladstone's

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[87]See pp.158-60.
[88]For the Liberals' attitudes to Labor Party organisation, see pp.232-3.
[89]*Tocsin*, February 28, 1901, p.7.
[90]Janet McCalman, 'Francis Gwynne Tudor', *ADB*, Volume 12, pp. 281-2; *Punch*, April 4, 1901, p.377.

committee in 1880. As a local preacher in South Melbourne, prominent in progressive politics, his selection as the Labor candidate for the district was not surprising.[91] In the other electorates contested by Labor candidates, the Political Labor Council (PLC)[92] had little to celebrate. Hume Cook easily defeated the Labor candidate Hannah in Bourke while Maloney was unsuccessful in Melbourne, despite the support of the NLO.[93] That the PLC did not even offer opposition to Mauger in Melbourne Ports is indicative of the limited nature of the Labor challenge to liberalism in 1901. Similarly, in Northern Melbourne, Higgins had the informal support of the Labor Party.[94] Labor contested only four seats for the House, which was indicative of the weakness of the Party's organisation.[95] In the Senate election, only one of the three Labor candidates, Barrett, was elected. He also received the support of the *Age*, the NLO and the PAV. Barrett was the recipient of a broad liberal vote, rather than just Labor support.[96]

**The Labor Party, Liberalism and a Foul Libel Upon the King**

One reason for the hostility of the Labor Party towards the NLO in 1901 was growing Labor disenchantment with the Turner Ministry. As Kay Rollison has shown, this dissatisfaction with the Liberals continued when Alexander

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[91]James Smith (ed.), *The Cyclopedia of Victoria*, Volume II, The Cyclopedia Company, Melbourne, 1904, pp. 190-1; *Punch*, April 11, 1901, p. 405; *Bulletin*, April 13, 1901, p.13.
[92]The PLC succeeded the ULP as Labor's extra-parliamentary organisation in 1901. For the formation of the PLC, see pp.170-1.
[93]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives 1901-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, pp.4-7; *Tocsin*, March 28, 1901, p.5.
[94]*Age*, February 8, 1901, p.6; February 14, 1901, p.6. Executive officers of three Labor branches in Northern Melbourne were said to be on Higgins's election committee. See *Age*, March 28, 1901, p.6. See also Tunnecliffe to Higgins, January 21, 1901, Higgins Papers, NLA MS 1057/76. Tunnecliffe revealed to Higgins that Anstey and Prendergast were likely candidates for this seat, but would almost certainly withdraw if Higgins would sign the PLC platform and pledge. He added that the entry of Prendergast into the contest as a Labor candidate would prevent Higgins from winning the seat. "[T]he cry of direct labour representative had been raised", wrote Tunnecliffe, but "I want you to go out as the only democratic candidate".
[95]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives*, pp.4-7.
[96]PAV, Minutes, March 12, 1901, in Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13.

Peacock succeeded Turner as premier. Labor hostility to Peacock was based on the Government's reduction of old age pensions and its failure to set up a convention to discuss constitutional reform. The continuing split in the Liberal Party, the policy vacuum created by the disappearance of the tariff issue from state politics, and a worsening financial crisis led to Ministerial stagnation. Despite Labor's unhappy relationship with the Peacock Government, however, its relations with the Opposition led by Irvine (who had replaced McLean when he entered the Commonwealth Parliament) were even worse. Still, there were now no major issues separating Government from Opposition and, during 1901, the Labor Party increasingly found itself outside a political consensus involving most non-Labor members of the House.[97]

It was in this climate that the Findley affair erupted. The main details of the episode are well-known.[98] The British Government suppressed an issue of the Dublin weekly, *Irish People*, containing an article derogatory to King Edward VII. The article was republished in the *Tocsin* in the context of another article, probably written by O'Dowd, condemning the Government's actions and defending the freedom of the press.[99] A representative of the *Argus* drew Peacock's attention to the article, and the

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[97]This discussion depends on Rollison, 'Groups', pp. 13-50.

[98]Victor Kennedy & Nettie Palmer, *Bernard O'Dowd*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1954, pp. 116-20. Kennedy and Palmer's account is marred by an extremely unflattering portrayal of Findley ("a sincere but rather shallow, little man, not fortified by any great strength of will or intellect...") and a failure to place the actions of the protagonists, especially on the Labor side, in their proper historical context. For example, the THC and Labor Party dissociated themselves from the *Tocsin* article not, as Kennedy and Palmer imply, because they lacked principle but more likely because they were loyal subjects of His Majesty who disagreed with the publication of such an attack upon him. Moreover, the authors identify Thomas Bent, who was one of the small minority which voted against the expulsion of Findley, as "one of the chief participants in the blood-hunt". See also Hugh Anderson, *The Poet Militant: Bernard O'Dowd*, Hill of Content, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 60-1; Raymond Wright, *A People's Counsel: A History of the Parliament of Victoria 1856-1990*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, pp. 144-5; McQueen, 'Victoria', p. 307; Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, pp. 204-7; Peter Love, 'Frank Anstey: A Political Biography', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1990, pp. 108-9.

[99]*Tocsin*, June 20, 1901, pp.4-5.

premier resolved to act.[100]  The Lieutenant-Governor, acting on Peacock's advice, cabled the Secretary of State for the Colonies, describing the *Tocsin* as a "newspaper in Melbourne of no great influence, but ill-disposed...", and sought advice about how to act.  He asked whether the Imperial Government would endorse the actions of the Victorian Government if it suppressed the newspaper as an act of State.  Chamberlain advised against such a course in the absence of local authority to do so.[101]

The *Argus* gave considerable publicity to the *Tocsin* article.  On 21 June, it reported that the THC was

> reported to be the holder of shares in the enterprise, but it is scarcely to be supposed after this offence that there can be any direct editorial responsibility on its part.[102]

It was unusual for the *Argus* to assist the THC in dissociating itself from disloyalty.  A few days later, it quoted Stephen Barker, who declared that the THC had nothing to do with the editorial policy of the *Tocsin* which was "quite independent of the council".[103]  By 25 June, the day Parliament was due to meet to discuss the affair, the reason for the *Argus*'s "generosity" became apparent.  Findley, the Labor MLA for Melbourne, was nominal publisher of the *Tocsin*, and it was his seat that the *Argus* coveted.[104]  In its editorial of 25 June, it emphasised Findley's responsibility for the article - it even implied that he had written it, which was certainly untrue, although he was no friend of the monarchy.[105]

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[100]*VPD*, XCVII, June 25, 1901, p.108.

[101]*VPD*, XCVII, July 16, 1901, p.271.

[102]*Argus*, June 21, 1901, p.4.

[103]*Argus*, June 24, 1901, p.5.

[104]The *Argus* had certainly been disturbed by the fact that the "city men" had been unable to hold the "city" [Melbourne electorate] because of the split non-Labor vote in the 1900 general election. See *Argus*, November 2, 1900, pp. 4-5.

[105]*Argus*, June 25, 1901, p.4.  The fact that Findley had little sympathy with the monarchy was revealed in a comment made in a letter to O'Dowd written a few weeks before the *Tocsin* affair, regarding the attempt to raise a subscription for a statue to commemorate Queen Victoria: "Statu[e]s, even for 'dear' dead Queens, don't seem to catch on in Vic. when the

When Parliament met, Peacock demanded an explanation from Findley, who denied having written the article, authorised its publication, or even having read it until the *Argus* gave it publicity. He also defended the *Tocsin*, declaring that it had made no allegations about the King, but had defended him from the charges in the *Irish People* article. Peacock, deeming his explanation inadequate, moved for Findley's expulsion from the Parliament.[106] Labor members interpreted the move as a politically motivated attempt to damage their Party.[107] They explained the interest of the *Argus* in the affair as an attempt to regain "the financial centre of the State of Victoria" for the Conservatives.[108] Peacock's motion was successful, and Findley was expelled. The Labor members voted solidly against expulsion, and were supported by a small number of Catholics and Liberals. Trenwith's support of the motion further isolated him from his former colleagues.[109]

The *Age* and the *Argus* now tried to convince their readers that public opinion supported Peacock's drastic measure, but the shire councils and stock exchanges they reported as favourable indicated that this was solidly middle-class opinion.[110] Among working-class Victorians, there was considerable sympathy with Findley. In Fitzroy, a public meeting convened by the Mayor to protest against the votes of the local members against expulsion developed into what the *Argus* described as "a turbulent exhibition of sympathy with the Labour party". The meeting carried a resolution approving the action of the Fitzroy representatives "in voting

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people have to pay for them directly. Hip, hip hooray!!!". Findley to O'Dowd, April 28, 1901, O'Dowd File, Merrifield Collection, VSL.

[106]*VPD*, XCVII, June 25, 1901, pp.110-4.

[107]Prendergast, Billson, *VPD*, XCVII, June 25, 1901, pp.126-7.

[108]Maloney, *VPD*, XCVII, June 25, 1901, p. 114.

[109]*VPD*, XCVII, June 25, 1901, p.134.

[110]*Age*, June 27, 1901, p.5; June 28, 1901, p.5; June 29, 1901, p.9; July 2, 1901, p.5; July 3, 1901, p.6; July 4, 1901, p.6; July 6, 1901, p.6; *Argus*, June 27, 1901, p.5; June 28, 1901, p.5; June 29, 1901, p.13; July 2, 1901, p.6; July 3, 1901, p.5; July 4, 1901, p.6; July 5, 1901, p.6.

against the injustice ...".[111]  Labor branches passed resolutions expressing

sympathy with Findley.[112]  Ronald thought that the Findley episode should

force Labor to reconsider its attitude to the Peacock Government: "Ours

must be an attitude of uncompromising hostility".[113]  The THC carried a

motion expressing "alarm and consternation [at] the unconstitutional action

of parliament, led by the Peacock Government" and invited "the co-

operation of lovers of liberty and justice throughout the Commonwealth in

providing funds to test the question, if necessary, before the highest

Tribunal in the Empire".[114]  Meanwhile, the PLP sought the advice of

Higgins, who was opposed to the Government's action.[115]

The significance of the Findley affair for the development of the Labor

Party in Victoria has been discussed by historians.  Kiernan and McQueen

both cite a statement made by Bromley in November 1901 to demonstrate

that the affair had little effect upon the Labor Party's attitude to the

liberals.[116]  Bromley said that the episode would not "turn one vote from

our members against the Government.  Mr. Irvine was more bitter on that

question than Mr. Peacock".[117]  This statement was accurate, but it does not

mean that the affair was without significance.  The Findley episode was one

of several issues which increased Labor dissatisfaction with the Peacock

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[111]*Argus*, July 2, 1901, p.6.  See also *Tocsin*, July 4, 1901, p.5.

[112]*Tocsin*, July 4, 1901, p.2; *Argus*, July 5, 1901, p.6; July 9, 1901, p.6.

[113]*Tocsin*, July 25, 1901, p.6.

[114]THC, Minutes, July 19, 1901.

[115]State Parliamentary Labor Party (SPLP), Minutes, July 18; July 29, 1901, VSL MS 10914.
Higgins thought there were three possible courses of action:
(i) That Findley challenge the Premier in writing to prosecute him for seditious libel.
(ii) That action be brought against the Government for reimbursement of expenses.
(iii) That the opinion of the best British counsel be sought on the constitutionality of
expelling Findley.
Findley expressed his willingness to be placed on trial for libel if the Party though it wise for
him to do so.  Despite Higgins's advice, the PLP seems not to have proceeded further with the
matter.  For Higgins's opposition to the expulsion of Findley, see *Argus*, July 13, 1901, pp.13-
14.

[116]C.P. Kiernan, 'Political Parties in The Victorian Legislative Assembly 1901-1904',
unpublished MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1954, p. 117; McQueen, 'Victoria', p. 307.

[117]*Argus*, November 21, 1901, p.5.

Government during 1901-2. Others were the reduction of old age pensions, the failure of the Government to set up a convention for constitutional reform, its alleged apathy in bringing new trades under the Factories Act, and its failure to enact conciliation and arbitration legislation.[118] Trenwith's performance as a Minister also caused considerable dissatisfaction to the Labor Party.[119] If the Labor members did not switch their votes from Peacock to Irvine, this was less a consequence of love for Peacock than hostility to Irvine. In any event, the Labor Party felt increasingly isolated, for it could find little to admire in either alternative. When Irvine introduced a motion of no-confidence in the Peacock Ministry in November 1901, Beazley and Wilkins, old liberals who belonged to the right-wing of the SPLP, moved in a meeting of that body that it vote against the motion. Prendergast and Maloney, however, proposed an amendment that the "members of this Party either vote with the Government, or absent themselves from the Division". This was an expression of radical Labor dissatisfaction with Peacock, but the SPLP rejected it in favour of the motion.[120] The Findley affair might not have affected the number of Labor votes cast for Peacock (except in reducing it by one, that of Findley), but it did contribute to Labor Party discontentment with the Ministry's performance.

The Findley affair entered Labor folklore. Years later, Laborites portrayed the expulsion of Findley as an example of Liberal perfidy.[121] A further effect of the Findley affair was in pointing "towards the shape of things to come" - less the expulsion of Findley itself, as McQueen implies, but in the Melbourne East by-election held in its aftermath.[122] The PLC

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[118]THC, Minutes, July 26, 1901; September 13, 1901; September 27, 1901; October 11, 1901; October 18, 1901; December 6, 1901; Painters, Minutes, October 16, 1901, UMA 1/2; *Argus*, November 21, 1901, p.5.

[119]*Punch*, June 20, 1901, p.721; August 8, 1901, p.145.

[120]SPLP, Minutes, November 26, 1901, VSL MS 10914.

[121]*Ballarat Courier*, May 2, 1904, p.7; Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, pp.204-7. See also Love, 'Frank Anstey', pp. 120-1.

[122]McQueen, 'Victoria', p. 307.

decided not to select Findley to run for the Melbourne seat but, instead, that he would contest Melbourne East which had fallen vacant on the death of the sitting member. When Government and Opposition candidates were nominated in opposition to Findley, the *Argus* raised a cry that a split non-Labor vote would result in a victory for the Labor candidate. It pointed out that only the proposal for a constitutional convention stood between Government and Opposition, a relatively minor disagreement beside the issue of whether the Parliament would be "besmirched by an indirect association with obscenity and disloyalty".[123] After protracted negotiations, the eleventh-hour withdrawal of the Opposition candidate (Watt) was effected, and J.F. Deegan, "the loyalist candidate" was supported by both Peacock and Irvine against Findley and an independent candidate.[124] Deegan, with 1737 votes won easily in a constituency which had never been Labor, but the 955 votes polled for Findley indicate that the "community" was far from unanimous in its support for his expulsion.[125]

Peacock and Irvine regarded the Melbourne East by-election as a special case which demanded a non-Labor consensus, but that they were able to sink party differences in opposition to Labor was the harbinger of a realignment of political forces in Victoria which would see the Labor Party increasingly isolated. According to Rickard, there was a movement to form a Peacock-Irvine coalition government in 1901.[126] Conservative commentators portrayed the cleavage between the non-Labor parties as anomalous, and called for a combination against Labor.[127]

It should be added that some observers of these events detected a sectarian undercurrent in the whole episode. Some thought that anti-

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[123]*Argus*, July 9, 1901, p.4.
[124]*Argus*, July 5, 1901, p.6; July 6, 1901, p.14; July 12, 1901, p.5; July 13, 1901, pp.12-13; July 15, 1901, p.5; July 16, 1901, pp. 5-6; *Age*, July 13, 1901, p.9; July 16, 1901, pp.4-5; *Punch*, July 11, 1901, p.29.
[125]*Argus*, July 17, 1901, p.5.
[126]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p. 176.
[127] *Argus*, November 27, 1901, p.6; *Punch*, July 25, 1901, p.90; November 28, 1901, p.613.

Catholic feeling against Findley and the *Tocsin* had much to do with the expulsion.[128] In mid-1901, the Boer War was continuing, and many loyalists suspected that Catholics were only half-hearted in their support for the Empire's cause. Protestant anti-Catholicism thus intersected with conservative imperialism in an emerging alignment.[129] There is, however, little direct evidence to suggest that anti-Catholic sentiments were uppermost in the minds of Findley's enemies, unless we include the secularist Joseph Symes, who saw the whole affair as a Popish plot.[130] It is noteworthy, however, that Symes was not alone in his accusation that the *Tocsin* was run in the interests of Catholicism and Fenianism though "pretending to be a labour journal".[131] In early 1900, Stephen Barker had accused the newspaper of being "a partisan for a clique largely coloured green".[132] The *Tocsin* criticised sectarianism, and denied that it was a Catholic organ, but it was never entirely even-handed in identifying the sources of sectarianism. Still, the accusation that it was a Catholic organ was untrue.

**The Labor Party and Kyabram**

The need to reduce the number of parliamentarians and to effect other economies in public expenditure had been discussed throughout 1901, but it was not until late in the year that a reform movement with these objects was inaugurated. Movements for greater government economy had emerged previously in country Victoria,[133] but there had never been

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[128]Spence, *Australia's Awakening*, p. 206.

[129]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp. 199-202.

[130]*Liberator*, June 29, 1901, pp.1919, 1924; July 13, 1901, p.1943; July 20, 1901, p.1960.

[131]*Liberator*, July 13, 1901, p.1943.

[132]*Tocsin*, January 11, 1900, p.3.

[133]In 1894, a Triple Reform League was established by a group of Goulburn Valley farmers with the objects of parliamentary reform (elective ministries, reducing the number of parliamentarians and salary cuts for members of parliament and ministers), lowering the tariff and reforming state finances in the direction of reducing public expenditure. Some Melbourne businessmen set up a Financial Reform League with a similar program in the

anything to compare with the reform movement initiated at a public meeting held in the Goulburn Valley town of Kyabram in November 1901.[134] By this time, rural Victoria was in the grip of a serious drought which had reduced farm incomes.[135] Many farmers, however, blamed government extravagance for their plight, and they saw in the reduction of government a solution to their problems. In early 1902, a Reform Committee was formed in Melbourne, representing commercial and financial interests and, in April, at a conference held in Melbourne, the National Citizens' Reform League (NCRL) was established.[136] It soon claimed a membership of over 15 500.[137]

The avowed object of the NCRL was "to promote economy in Parliamentary and public expenditure". It proposed a reduction in the number of Ministers to five, members of the Assembly to forty-six, and Councillors to twenty-three. The League called for greater efficiency and retrenchment in the public service and the railways while public borrowing was to be restricted to "works of an undoubtedly reproductive character or the redemption of loans". The NCRL would oppose all candidates who refused to pledge themselves to support its platform.[138]

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metropolis, and a Central Reform Committee emerged to combine the two leagues for election purposes. The Committee was active in the 1894 election. The founder of the Triple Reform League was the horticulturalist, John West, who was also a leading light in the Kyabram movement from its inauguration in 1901. The pattern of Goulburn Valley initiative and attempts by conservative metropolitan interests to direct the movement to their own ends was common to both the Triple Reform League and the Kyabram movement. See M.G. Finlayson, 'Groups in Victorian Politics, 1889-1894', unpublished MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1963, p. 188; Rawson, 'Victoria', pp. 72-3; Isabel Thomas, 'The Kyabram Reform Movement 1901-1903', unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1977; Margaret Steven, 'John West', *ADB*, Volume 12, pp. 445-6.

[134]W.H. Bossence, *Kyabram*, The Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1963, pp.78-80.

[135]Geoffrey Blainey, *Our Side of the Country: The Story of Victoria*, Methuen Haynes, North Ryde, 1984, p.142.

[136]Thomas, 'Kyabram', pp. 1-7.

[137]H.L. Nielsen, *The Voice of the People, or the History of the Kyabram Reform Movement*, Arbuckle, Waddell & Fawckner [Printers], Melbourne, 1902, p. 77.

[138]National Citizens Reform League (NCRL), *Platform*, in Cain Papers, VSL MS 10820/1.

This was a drastic program, based on a conservative hostility to big government and a classical populist belief that city politicians and civil servants were bleeding the rural producer dry. Rickard has seen Kyabram as an anti-Labor political movement,[139] while Isabel Thomas has emphasised its more instrumental objects, regarding it as a movement "to alleviate the burden of taxation", especially on drought-stricken farmers.[140] The rhetoric of "parliamentary reform" was not, in the early stages of the movement, explicitly anti-Labor. Indeed, if the statements of the leaders of the movement are to be believed, they hoped that their people's movement would encompass the Labor Party.[141] A myth cherished by the reformers was that they were non-political, but it would be more accurate to describe the main impulse behind the movement as anti-parliamentary.[142] The agitation was an attempt to reduce expenditure in line with declining revenue in order to avoid a land tax, which was a central plank in the Labor platform.[143] A circular sent out by the Kyabram Committee also claimed that an aim of the movement was to "set bounds to the class legislation which seriously threatens the natural industries of the country".[144] This rhetoric had strong anti-Labor overtones, and it echoed the the Victorian Employers' Federation (VEF), which was agitating against the wages board system at this time. The contemporaneous activities of the two movements would have done much to convince Labor that it was the victim of a capitalistic conspiracy. Rickard has suggested that this view might not have been without foundation.[145]

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[139]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp. 177-9.
[140]Thomas, 'Kyabram', p. 25.
[141]Nielsen, *Voice*, pp. 31, 56, 60.
[142]Nielsen, *Voice*, p. 40.
[143]Nielsen, *Voice*, p.9.
[144]Nielsen, *Voice*, p. 19.
[145]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp. 177-8.

The Labor Party had a very different notion of reform from the NCRL, and the conflict between Labor and Kyabram was a political struggle over the meaning of "reform". The NCRL distinguished between constitutional and economic reform; the latter variety had priority in the Kyabram scheme of things.[146] The Labor Party, however, regarded democratic reform of parliamentary institutions as far more important than the reductions proposed by the NCRL. A further reason for the hostility which developed between the PLC and the NCRL was that Labor's organisation and policies were intended to advance the interests of Melbourne workers, and the Party's ethos was distinctly metropolitan. While it has been suggested that the formation of the NCRL in March 1902 represented a takeover of the movement by metropolitan commercial and trading interests (and there is no doubt that these interests did direct the course of the movement to suit their own purposes),[147] the core of the League's membership was rural. The confrontation of the PLC and the NCRL was thus, in part, a conflict between city and country, as well as part of the "largely one-sided class struggle" to which McQueen refers.[148]

In defiance of Kyabram, the SPLP and the PLC continued to support the Peacock Government's policy of a popular convention.[149] Labor propagandists interpreted the movement as a conspiracy against the Labor Party.[150] Members of the Preston branch of the PLC, for example, decided not to take part in a local parliamentary reform meeting "members being under the impression that it was a movement to try and dish the Political Labour Party...".[151] At a Labor meeting in Port Melbourne, speakers such as

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[146]Nielsen, *Voice*, p.58.
[147]Thomas, 'Kyabram', pp. 9-10.
[148]McQueen, 'Victoria', p. 309.
[149]SPLP, Minutes, April 2, 1902, VSL MS 10914; PLC, Minutes, April 5, 1902, VSL MS 10389; *Argus*, April 14, 1902, p.5.
[150]*Tocsin*, April 10, 1902, p.5; *People's Protest*, September 23, 1902, p.1.
[151]*Tocsin*, April 24, 1902, p.6.

Joe Morris (Stevedores), Prendergast and Sangster warned workers not to be led away by the Kyabram proposals.[152] W.H. Colechin told a meeting of the Socialist League that the crowd crying for reform were always "the direst enemies of true reform".[153]

On 3 May, the PLC adopted a parliamentary reform program of its own.[154] This was much more comprehensive than the NCRL platform. The PLC proposed democratic reform of the Legislative Council: payment of members, abolition of property qualifications, adult suffrage and triennial elections. It accepted the Kyabram figures of twenty-three members for the Council and five Ministers, but it embraced sixty-nine as the figure for the Assembly. It added the democratic planks of elective ministries, and initiative and referendum. Like the NCRL, the PLC called for rigid economy in state departments, but favoured salary reductions for highly-paid public servants and a "fair minimum wage" for the lowest paid. It also called for a reduction in state pensions, with the exception of old age pensions.[155] The PLC program was an attempt to respond to a political climate in which the calls for greater government economy were becoming insistent. It also aimed, however, to place the financial burden on those best able to bear it, as well as to democratise the political system. It was an attempt to reclaim the label of "reform" for the Labor Party.

With the help of the *Age* and the *Argus*, the narrower Kyabram definition of reform prevailed. This was not a propitious political environment for the Labor Party. The question of reducing parliamentary numbers was only of minor interest to Labor, and it advocated a moderate course with regard to civil service and railway retrenchment.[156] This raised

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[152]*Tocsin*, May 1, 1902, p.8.

[153]*Tocsin*, April 24, 1902, p.8.

[154]Political Labor Council (PLC), Minutes, May 3, 1902, VSL 10389.

[155]PLC, *Reform Platform*, Tocsin [Printers], Melbourne, 1902, in PLC File, Merrifield Collection, VSL.

[156]*Argus*, April 14, 1902, p.5.

the ire of the reformers, who portrayed Labor as the tool of a privileged sectional group in defiance of the voice of the people.[157] There is little doubt that the Labor Party was caught wrong-footed by the Kyabram enthusiasm. In May 1902, a correspondent to the PLC pointed out "that no action was being taken by the Labor Party in opposition to the Kyabram scheme...".[158] While the NCRL was largely unsuccessful in its efforts to advance the cause in the working-class suburbs of Melbourne,[159] the PLC made little effort to counter the Kyabram propaganda. In late June, the PLC's reform proposals were still being discussed by the Labor branches[160] and, at the end of August, the Richmond branch requested the PLC Central Council to hold meetings "urging that the finances should be made good by imposing land income and absentee taxes, instead of lowering the salary of civil servants". The PLC accepted these suggestions, but the general election campaign intervened.[161]

In May 1902, when Irvine moved his second want of confidence motion in Peacock, it was in a political environment which had been transformed by the activities of the NCRL and the VEF. The PLP voted solidly for Peacock, who had been the main object of Kyabramite hostility. Even this could not save the tottering Ministry and Irvine replaced Peacock as premier.[162] Irvine was sympathetic towards the reform movement, and compromised with it. Thereafter, he received its measured support.[163]

These events encouraged the Labor Party to consolidate its organisation and strengthen party cohesion. In late 1899 when the fate of the Turner Government was at stake, the PLP, at Trenwith's instigation, had agreed for the first time to a "Solidarity pledge" and resolved to vote for Turner.[164]

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[157]*Age*, September 13, 1902, p.12.

[158]PLC, Minutes, May 17, 1902, VSL MS 10389.

[159]*Tocsin*, May 8, 1902, p.3; June 5, 1902, p.4; *Argus*, April 12, 1902, p.17.

[160]PLC, Minutes, June 28, 1902, VSL MS 10389.

[161]PLC, Minutes, August 23, 1902, VSL MS 10389.

[162]*VPD*, C, June 3, 1902, pp. 59-60.

[163]*Tocsin*, July 10, 1902, p.5; Nielsen, *Voice*, pp.71-6.

[164]*Tocsin*, December 7, 1899, p.4; Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p.120.

The association of Trenwith with this departure might have had more to do with his ministerial ambitions than any desire to establish caucus solidarity as a precedent. The Labor Party embraced a wide-ranging caucus pledge in June 1902. On this occasion, it resolved

> that on all questions of vital importance to this party the questions should be discussed by the Party & a majority vote in Caucus should bind the members to vote solidly in the House (except when permission be granted by the Party). The Leader to decide what is a vital question.[165]

On the day following the caucus meeting which passed the resolution, the Peacock Ministry was defeated.[166] Irvine demanded unbending loyalty from his followers and, after his electoral victory of 1902, he usually received it from a party with a very high level of internal cohesion.[167] For the first time, a small isolated Labor Party was faced by a powerful and united foe. These political circumstances might have been enough to encourage Labor to consolidate its party organisation, but a knowledge of the consequences of loose party organisation in the 1890s, and the agitation of the socialists, especially in the *Tocsin*, for greater party discipline reinforced this movement.

It was partly in response to these political changes that in June 1902, the PLC convened a conference to discuss "[t]he Best method of organising the Labor vote in this state and in extending political action in accordance with the platform of the PLC".[168] When the conference met on 26 June, 130 delegates represented sixty-seven unions and branches and, according to the *Tocsin*, over 60 000 workers.[169] This was a gross exaggeration. The most important decision of the conference was that unions and branches would

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[165]SPLP, Minutes, June 2, 1902, VSL MS 10914.
[166]*VPD*, C, June 3, 1902, pp. 59-60.
[167]Rawson, 'Victoria', pp. 91-5.
[168]PLC, Minutes, May 3, 1902, VSL MS 10389.
[169]*Tocsin*, July 3, 1902, p.6.

pay sixpence per member to a PLC organising fund each year. This entitled each member of a trades union affiliated with the PLC to vote in preselections in the electorate in which he or she resided without further contribution.[170] The clause was strongly resisted by the Labor leagues, who considered that it gave too much power to often apathetic unionists.[171] It aroused little enthusiasm in the unions themselves, and was abandoned.

During 1902, the PLC endeavoured to consolidate the organisation of the Labor Party in other ways. In July 1902, the PLC ruled that in future, all Labor candidates would have to submit themselves to branches of the PLC for selection. In the past, a Labor member did not have to do this unless he had violated the Party platform.[172] The PLC also took steps in July 1902 to ensure that no member of the Party would accept a portfolio "unless the Parliamentary Labour Party have a majority of Portfolios in any ministry".[173] Maloney had introduced a motion with this object as early as August 1901 after Trenwith's and Burton's support for the expulsion of Findley from the Legislative Assembly, but nothing had eventuated.[174] The Party's decision not to permit Labor members to accept portfolios in non-Labor ministries was part of a broader consolidation of Labor political organisation. If Labor members were to be held responsible to the PLC, they could not participate in a non-Labor Ministry that might embrace policies contrary to the Labor platform.[175] As the *Tocsin* remarked, "such alliances are inadvisable unless the Labor Party is to be held a mere wing of the Liberals".[176] The atmosphere of flattery and social bribery, opportunities for advancement within the Ministry and the audacity of officials towards the

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[170]*Tocsin*, July 3, 1902, p.2.
[171]*Tocsin*, August 7, 1902, p.3; September 11, 1902, p.3; PLC, Minutes, September 6, 1902, VSL MS 10389.
[172]*Tocsin*, July 31, 1902, p.1.
[173]PLC, Minutes, July 12, 1902, VSL MS 10389.
[174]SPLP, Minutes, August 8, 1901; October 15, 1901, VSL MS 10914.
[175]*Tocsin*, November 14, 1901, p.1; November 21, 1901, p.1.
[176]*Tocsin*, December 20, 1900, p.2.

new Minister would drive a wedge between the Minister and the Labor
platform.

## The 1902 Election

When the Irvine Government was defeated in the Assembly on the issue of
public service salary reductions in September, the premier arranged for the
dissolution of the House.[177]  One consequence was the expiry of the wages
board clause in the Factories and Shops Act and Labor fought the election
primarily on this issue, portraying the dissolution of parliament as a
capitalistic attempt to destroy the wages board system.[178]  This might have
won Labor support in some of the metropolitan constituencies, but Irvine's
promise to renew the Act after the election limited the electoral
effectiveness of the claim.[179]  Labor also posed as defender of the public
servants against the retrenchment proposals of the Government.  It
acknowledged that the public servants had shown little concern for their
fellow workers in the past but Labor, as "the guardian of great principles",
could not stand by while the Government attacked the wages of its
employees to make up a deficiency in revenue.[180]  Labor's support of the
civil servants attracted the criticism of the *Age*, which referred to "the
unholy alliance" between the Party and the civil service. The *Age* thought
they should either be disfranchised or given special representation.[181] It
accused Labor of having "wandered completely away from the principles of
liberalism "by advocating special privileges for a class rather than equality of
opportunity".[182] Indeed, the *Age* at once staked its claim to the liberal

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[177]Rawson, 'Victoria', p.91.
[178]*Argus*, September 15, 1902, p.5; September 19, 1902, p.6; September 23, 1902, p.6; *Age*, September 12, 1902, p.6.
[179]*Argus*, September 22, 1902, p.5.
[180]*People's Protest*, September 30, 1902, p.2.
[181]*Age*, September 13, 1902, p. 12.
[182]*Age*, September 29, 1902, p.4.

# AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE ?



**THE TRADES-DUDES' UNION.**

*Civil Servant (to Trades Hall party).*—"By Jove! old Horny Hand, we're great pals, aren't we?"
*Horny Hand.*—"My word, Kid Gloves; we'll take a lot of beating, won't we?"

tradition and denied Labor a part of this heritage when it coupled the Labor

Party and the Legislative Council as the representatives of narrow class

interests and the opponents of desirable reform.[183]  The strategy was

successful since after the 1902 election, Labor was not only confined to a

metropolitan "ghetto" but seemed to have few prospects of extending its

influence in other parts of the country.  The success of Kyabram

movement's conservative populist rhetoric, for which it owed the *Age*  and

the *Argus*  a great debt, meant that Labor was identified in the minds of the

majority of electors as antagonistic to public opinion.

Reform and retrenchment dominated the election of 1902, driving a

wedge between Labor and other political groups.  The Labor Party was

necessarily defensive, with Bromley claiming that it "was as much in favour

of reform as the National Citizens' League".[184]  It was, however, the NCRL,

with the assistance of the *Age*  and the *Argus*, which controlled the

campaign agenda.  In this political climate, Labor was increasingly isolated.

The Labor election paper, *The People's Protest*,[185] claimed that Labor was

"the real Opposition Party, the Ishmael Party of this State".[186]  The support

of the VEF, the NCRL, the *Age*  and the *Argus*  for the Irvine Government

emphasised this isolation.[187]  Labor, however, made some minor gains - the

stonemason, George Elmslie, won Albert Park while Anstey was successful

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[183]*Age,* November 5, 1902, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Council Papers, ML MSS 308/3.
[184]*Argus,* September 19, 1902, p.6.
[185]*People's Protest*  was edited by Senator Higgs of Queensland.  See *Tocsin,* October 1, 1902, p.5.  The idea of an election paper emanated from the Melbourne Typographical Society, which saw it "as a means of educating the masses as against the published statements in the daily morning press".  See MTS, Minutes, September 13, 1902, PKIU Archives.
[186]*People's Protest*, September 23, 1902, p.1.
[187]Lorraine Benham & John Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', in John Iremonger, John Merritt & Graeme Osborne (eds.), *Strikes: Studies in Twentieth Century Australian Social History*, Angus and Robertson in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1973, p.4; *People's Protest*, September 27, 1902, p.4.

in East Bourke Boroughs.[188] The Liberal followers of Peacock, however, lost

several seats - only about eighteen remained in the Assembly.[189]

This was the first election in which the Labor extra-parliamentary

organisation successfully enforced a pledge, but it was not achieved without

resistance from the SPLP.[190] It objected to the clauses compelling a sitting

member to resign in favour of a candidate selected by the PLC if called on to

do so and requiring successful Labor candidates to contribute five per cent of

income to a fighting fund.[191] Moreover, a deputation from the SPLP asked

the PLC "to offer no opposition to any Labour member who had done

nothing wrong politically".[192] This appeal was intended to include George

Sangster. Earlier in the year, the Port Melbourne branch of the Party had

expelled Sangster, the secretary of the Seamen's Union, for

misappropriating funds from the Union, and accepting a cheque from Sir

Malcolm McEacharn, a shipowner, to cover the shortfall.[193] These

accusations appear to have been substantially true, but the SPLP and the PLC

were unwilling to uphold the action of the Port Melbourne branch.[194]

Articles in the society paper *Table Talk* ensured that the matter received

plenty of publicity.[195] Meanwhile, the PLC executive investigated the matter

and, in late August, recommended that Sangster be no longer recognised as

a Labor member. The PLC accepted this recommendation despite the Labor

leader Bromley's obstruction.[196]

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[188]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, pp. 71-87.
[189]Rollison, 'Groups', pp. 80-1.
[190]PLC, Minutes, September 13, 1902; September 17, 1902; September 19, 1902; September 22, 1902, VSL MS 10389.
[191]*Age*, September 16, 1902, p.6.
[192]PLC, Minutes, September 13, 1902, VSL MS 10389.
[193]*Table Talk*, July 24, 1902, pp. 2-3; PLC, Minutes, July 12, 1902, VSL MS 10389.
[194]Sangster admitted at an election meeting in September 1902 that he had "borrowed" the funds of his Union. See *Argus*, September 29, 1902, p.5. See also SPLP, Minutes, May 14, 1902, VSL MS 10914; PLC, Minutes, May 17, 1902; June 14, 1902, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, May 22, 1902, p.6.
[195]*Table Talk*, July 24, 1902, pp.2-3; August 21, 1902, pp. 12-14.
[196]PLC, Minutes, August 23, 1902, VSL MS 10389.

George Sangster

The PLC decided to nominate a candidate in opposition to Sangster. When the Port Melbourne Labor League called for nominations, Findley submitted his name but under pressure from the SPLP which desired the election of Sangster as an independent Labor member, he withdrew his nomination. The interference of the SPLP was bitterly resented by the local branch and the PLC.[197] The Port Melbourne branch took the extraordinary step of announcing its support of the NCRL candidate in opposition to Sangster.[198] The PLC refused to endorse this selection, so the Port Melbourne branch selected Harry Beard, a bricklayer and president of the PLC.[199] Beard justified his candidature by arguing that "if they intended to make Labor politics a factor in Victoria the Parliamentary Labor party must be subservient to the organisation that controlled it".[200] Sangster's comfortable victory, however, demonstrated that it was possible for a candidate with a strong base of personal support to win a seat in a working-class electorate.[201] Still, the SPLP was forced to accept that Sangster's expulsion from the PLC barred him from attending meetings of the SPLP and he was only readmitted to the Party in 1906.[202] The PLC also refused to endorse Trenwith's candidature in 1902 when he declined to sign the pledge but, like Sangster, he was successful without Labor endorsement.[203]

After the election, Labor celebrated its new independence and the consolidation of its vote. The THC passed a resolution congratulating the PLC on its "political victory gained in the face of united capitalistic

[197]*Age*, September 18, 1902, p.5.

[198]*Age*, September 18, 1902, p.6; September 19, 1902, p.6.

[199]PLC, Minutes, September 22, 1902, VSL MS 10389; *Age*, September 22, 1902, p.6; *Argus*, September 20, 1902, p.13; September 22, 1902, p.7; *People's Protest*, September 30, 1902, p.2.

[200]*Age*, September 23, 1902, p.6. See also *People's Protest*, September 30, 1902, p.7

[201]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, p.81; *Age*, September 25, 1902, p.6.

[202]SPLP, Minutes, September 3, 1902; July 19, 1905, July 11, 1906; VSL MS 10914; PLC CE, Minutes, July 8, 1905; November 11, 1905, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, June 7, 1906, p.8; July 12, 1906, p.8.

[203]PLC, Minutes, September 17, 1902, VSL MS 10389; Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, p.81.

opposition".[204]  Lemmon, parodying the *Age*, referred to "an unholy

capitalistic and press combination" against Labor while Prendergast thought

that they "had come to a definite line of cleavage, and the bulk of the

Opposition was composed of Labour men.  The Party would in future be a

militant one".[205]  There remained a slight gap between the rhetoric and the

reality, however, because members of the SPLP continued to attend

meetings of the Opposition caucus.[206]  In February 1903, the Labor Party

voted to attend such a meeting[207] and as late as June 1904 the SPLP called

attention "to the necessity of a joint meeting of the opposition".[208]  By 1903,

however, the decline of the Liberal Party as a parliamentary force in Victoria

made a fully independent SPLP virtually inevitable.[209]

## Organisation

In the early 1900s, Labor Party propagandists argued that only when

parliamentarians were bound to an organisation governed by rigid rules

enforcing solidarity and discipline could the electors be assured that

promises made on the hustings by candidates would be kept.  A populist

suspicion of politicians and their promises was one of the impulses behind

this claim.  Since politicians were basically untrustworthy, especially once

exposed to the corrupt parliamentary environment, they had to be made

accountable to an organisation capable of enforcing discipline:

> The Labour Party was founded with a view to giving to the people not
> only the right to select their representatives, but to keep a strong hand
> over them after election.  Experience had shown that many glib
> promisers on the hustings were poor performers in the House, that

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[204]THC, Minutes, October 1, 1902.

[205]*Tocsin*, October 9, 1902, p.3.

[206]*Argus*, October 15, 1902, p.6; *Tocsin*, October 30, 1902, p.7.

[207]SPLP, Minutes, February 17, 1903, VSL MS 10914.

[208]SPLP, Minutes, June 16, 1904, VSL MS 10914.

[209]Benham & Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', p.3; *Tocsin*, October 9, 1902, p.2.

most men had their price, and that in some cases it was not very high.
The organisation was called into existence to remedy that state of affairs
in the interest of the people...[The PLC's] organisation is the best that
the wit of man has yet devised for keeping jibbers up to the collar.[210]

James Mathews, successful Labor candidate for Melbourne Ports in 1906,

expressed a similar view:

> The worker could not trust any man, and therefore an outside
> organisation was necessary to watch members of Parliament.  If labour
> members were not watched they might degenerate into
> conservatives.[211]

Parliament was a corrupting influence, whose culture was naturally

conservative.  When Labor members entered parliamentary institutions,

therefore, they were in the territory of the class enemy and risked becoming

socially remote from their constituents.  One solution was to bring the

culture of the trade unions and the working class into the realm of

parliament.  As the *Tocsin* editor (from 1905) N.A. McLeod declared, Labor

"imported into politics the trade union principles of solidarity and

exclusiveness from other parties".[212]

Labor developed an understanding of political representation in which

the parliamentarian was a delegate who would register the written

instructions of the electors rather than a representative with a free hand

between elections.[213]  The Labor Party thus maintained "the sovereignty of

the sovereign people."[214]  In March 1904, the PLC adopted a new pledge,

which all candidates had to sign:

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[210]*Tocsin*, June 21, 1906, p.4.
[211]*Argus*, October 19, 1906, p.6.
[212]*Labor Call*, November 26, 1908, p.4.
[213]*Labour Ticket*, December 2, 1903, p.1.
[214]*Labor Vanguard* (Ballarat), January 21, 1910.

> I hereby pledge myself not to oppose the selected candidate of this or
> any other branch of the Political Labor Council of Victoria. I also pledge
> myself, if returned to Parliament, on all occasions to do my utmost to
> ensure the carrying out of the principles embodied in the Labor
> platform, and [on] all such questions, and especially on questions
> affecting the fate of a Government, to vote as a majority of the Labor
> party may decide at a duly constituted caucus meeting.[215]

The level of Party discipline suggested by this pledge was a far cry from the
informality of the early 1890s. In 1904, the *Argus* asserted that "[t]he Labour
party is the only one that is backed by strong organisation", but this was an
exaggeration.[216] The tendency towards formalisation of Party organization
affected both Labor and anti-Labor parties, although it was most obviously
manifested in the Labor Party's increasingly elaborate apparatus. In
September 1904, the Metropolitan District Council of the PLC "strongly
urged [the central executive] to have rigid rules to enforce party discipline
on members of Parliament".[217]

There was a strengthening conviction among Party members that the
advance of the Labor Party was dependent on a solid and cohesive
organisation, and only by strict adherence to the Party's rules could its
integrity be maintained.[218] The experiences of both the New South Wales
and Victorian Labor Parties in the 1890s influenced the attitudes of Laborites
to political organisation. Their quest for organisational cohesion did not
necessarily imply that the PLC had to be a centralised body with no
provision for local autonomy. While it had been PLC policy since 1902 that
branches "should act in conformity with the Central Council", local
branches had control of their own affairs subject to the Party constitution.[219]

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[215]*Age*, March 19, 1904, clipping in PLC File, Merrifield Collection, VSL. See also Rollison,
'Groups', pp. 184-5.
[216]*Argus*, March 10, 1904, p.5.
[217]PLC Metropolitan District Council (MDC), Minutes, September 24, 1904, VSL MS 10389.
[218]PLC, Minutes, October 1, 1904, VSL MS 10389.
[219]PLC, Minutes, September 6, 1902, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, July 23, 1903, p.9.

Moreover, in May 1903, the PLC provided for district councils in Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong.[220] The precise purpose of these councils remained unclear, and there was no immediate progress towards making them an actuality. In September 1903, a PLC conference was held with the object of reconstructing the Party along the lines of the NSW Labor Party. The conference approved a recommendation of the PLC that a system of district councils be established to facilitate the work of the PLC.[221] This was "a concession to the desire for decentralisation on the part of the Country Electorates".[222] The conference appointed a committee of ten to draft a constitution which could be submitted to the 1904 Annual Conference.[223]

In July 1904, the PLC announced a new scheme of organisation which had as its object "to free the country entirely from the domination of the metropolis...Those who still cry 'Trades Hall domination' simply show their ignorance or their malice".[224] The state would be divided into various districts, each governed by a council consisting of representatives of the unions or branches within its borders. Melbourne and the suburbs were to be one district governed by a Metropolitan District Council (MDC). The central council was abolished; district councils would act under the supervision of the central executive of the PLC. They would receive twenty per cent of the election funds derived from the four pence contributed by the unions and branches on behalf of each member annually. Each union and branch would also contribute one guinea to a management fund yearly. The district councils would have the power to establish branches and sub-branches; organise the Labor Party within their jurisdictions; resolve disputes, subject to appeal to the central executive and the annual

[220]PLC, Minutes, May 16, 1903; May 30, 1903, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, June 4, 1903, p.8.
[221]*Tocsin*, September 10, 1903, p.2.
[222]PLC, '(Suggested) Constitution for the Political Labor Party of Victoria', 1904, p.90, VSL MS 11927 2478/1a.
[223]*Tocsin*, September 10, 1903, p.2.
[224]*Tocsin*, July 7, 1904, p.3, clipping in Merrifield Collection, PLC File, VSL.

conference; and establish women's organising committees.[225] The PLC

District Councils Committee recommended that councils be formed in

Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Hamilton, Ararat and Maryborough.[226] The

slowness of the PLC decision-making process, however, had prompted Labor

Party members in some districts to act on their own initiative. District

councils based in Hamilton and Ballarat were established in the early

months of 1904.[227] The PLC thus attempted to strike a balance between local

autonomy and central authority. Labor's initial successes in the non-

metropolitan area in the 1904 general election suggested that the cry of

"Melbourne Trades Hall" domination no longer had the powerful

resonance it had enjoyed at the height of the Kyabram agitation. While

there was still occasional provincial hostility to the PLC, complaints about

political centralisation were rare in radical circles after 1904.[228]

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[225]*Tocsin*, July 7, 1904, p.3, clipping in Merrifield Collection, PLC File, VSL; *Age*, March 19, 1904; *Australasian Typographical Journal*, April 19, 1904, p.7; VOBU, Minutes, August 15, 1904, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/5.

[226]PLC, District Councils Committee Report, July 30, 1904, in PLC CE, Minutes, VSL MS 10389. Subsequently, the District Councils Committee divided the state into eleven districts, excluding the metropolis, for organisational purposes. PLC CE, Minutes, October 15, 1904.

[227]*Hamilton Spectator*, January 9, 1904; *Ballarat Courier*, February 15, 1904, p.2.

[228]*Ballarat Courier*, February 13, 1904, p.3.

# CHAPTER FIVE:
## TRADE UNIONS AND THE LABOR PARTY: URBAN INDUSTRY, COMMERCE AND TRANSPORT, 1900-1914

### Introduction: Capital, Labour and the State

The distinctions between Social Democratic and Labour Parties have been recognised by historians. According to D.W. Rawson, a Labour party is an example of an "extraneous" party, formed "by some other organization or organizations which are not themselves parties".[1] Labour parties are initiated by trade unions, and retain union affiliates while Social Democratic parties are formally independent of the union movement. Rawson's treats the union movement as an organised interest group and the Labor Party as the means by which unions seek to advance their political interests. His approach has the virtue of identifying some distinctive organisational features of Labor parties, and any consideration of the political strategies and policies of the Labor Party should consider its function as a trade union political party while recognising that as trade unions grew "they took in an increasing proportion of members who were either politically apathetic or actually opposed to Labor".[2] One problem with this liberal pluralist approach, however, is that tends to ignore the fact that the Labor Party was never merely the political wing of the labour movement. It developed a social democratic life of its own, extending its field of concern beyond the world of work. Labor activists believed that their Party would not only serve the interests of the organised working class, but regenerate society and

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[1]D.W. Rawson, 'The Life-Span of Labour Parties', *Political Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, p.315. See also Raymond Markey, 'A Century of Labour and Labor: New South Wales, 1890-1990', in Michael Easson (ed.), *The Foundation of Labor*, Pluto Press in association with the Lloyd Ross Forum & the Labor Council of New South Wales, Sydney, 1990, pp.41-2.

[2]D.W. Rawson, 'Labour, Socialism and the Working Class', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 7, No. 1, May 1961, p.87.

bring to fruition a new moral order. In this sense, labour was more than an interest group. It was a social movement with the aspiration to replace competitive capitalism with a "Co-operative Commonwealth".[3]

In the period after 1900, a Labor Party on the model suggested by Rawson - formed and sponsored by the trade union movement - emerged in Victoria, but the process was protracted. Indeed, while Labor benefited from the revival of unionism in the early years of the century, the Party had few affiliated unions before 1909. From the late 1890s, Victorian unionists desired a transition to a system of collective bargaining which would permit them a role in the regulation of industrial conditions and reduce the power which had been exercised by management in most industries during the depression. They recognised, however, that a system of industrial relations based on voluntarism would fail because the unions were too weak to compel employer participation or enforce agreements. Indeed, the inability of most unions to enforce employer adherence to industrial agreements in the 1880s limited the effectiveness of collective bargaining and eroded union support for formalised procedures.[4] In the later 1890s and early 1900s, the unions and their liberal allies proposed to use state power to remedy the deficiencies in a voluntary system of collective bargaining. The state wages board system and federal compulsory arbitration would compensate the unions for their lack of bargaining power in an unregulated labour market. Moreover, Labor radicals hoped that these systems would eventually transform class relations by bringing the division of profits and wages within the realm of state authority. Wages boards and arbitration courts thus foreshadowed the socialist society of the future.[5] It was not until

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[3]W.G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker Trutees, Sydney, n.d. [first published 1909], pp.377-82.
[4]*Age*, October 3, 1888, clipping in Melbourne Trades Hall Papers, ML MSS 308/12.
[5]*Labor Call*, June 25, 1908, p.4.

syndicalist ideas began to influence the labour movement from about 1908 that these assumptions were seriously questioned in Victoria.[6]

The increasing "politicisation" of work through the development of a state industrial relations system provided the context for the development of the Labor Party in Victoria after 1900. Struggles over wages, hours and the organisation of work are political matters because they concern a power relationship involving workers, employers and the state. At the same time, issues which impinged directly on industrial relations remained on the periphery of parliamentary politics while there was no section of colonial society with the motivation or the authority to invest them with a broader political significance. While most decision making occurred in the workplace rather than through more formal institutions and procedures of mutual negotiation, the significance of relations between capital and labour for colonial politics was circumscribed. Even when an employer's refusal to accept union rules was the point at issue in an industrial dispute, there was no process of osmosis by which the experiences of a small group of employees in a particular workplace acquired broader class or political meanings.

The emergence of a more formalised system of industrial relations in some industries in the second half of the 1880s also had limited repercussions for parliamentary politics because, before 1895, the unions were reluctant to assent to direct state intervention in their relations with the employers. Moreover labour, such as it existed as a political entity before 1900, was as much preoccupied with liberal concerns such as protection, land reform and democratic constitutional reform as with matters which directly affected the power and status of the unions. It did not define its political

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[6]Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900-1921*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp.55, 59-67.

role in purely class or trade union terms, but identified with the Victorian liberal tradition and retained strong links with middle-class radicalism.[7]

The calamities of the 1890s, and the formulation of a political solution acceptable to the union movement in the form of the state wages board system, shifted the attitudes of unionists and gradually transformed the political terrain. Raelene Frances has suggested that the wages board system had a significant impact on the development of the clothing, boot and printing industries, encouraging a transition to modern factory production.[8] Moreover, both Frances and Jenny Lee have argued that male unionists used the state wages boards to maintain a sexual division of labour which favoured men.[9] Male unionists marginalised women workers whom they believed ought to be occupied in the home as wives and mothers, "their best sphere of usefulness".[10] The Labor Party supported the concept of a "family wage" which, in practice, upheld the rights of male breadwinners and prevented the possibility of women earning enough to achieve a measure of economic independence.[11]

With the extension of the state wages board system in 1900 and the emergence of federal compulsory arbitration after 1904, relations between capital and labour acquired broader political meanings. Wages boards and arbitration courts were emblematic of the presence of the union movement in society and politics (Unions were actually required to register with the Federal Arbitration Court). With a white Australia, old age pensions and tariff protection, they were the foundation of labour's incorporation in the

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[7]See ch.3.

[8]Raelene Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria, 1880-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp.81-129.

[9]Frances, *The Politics of Work*, p.79; Jenny Lee, 'A Redivision of Labour: Victoria's Wages Boards in Action, 1896-1903', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 88, April 1987, pp.353-4, 371.

[10]Tunnecliffe, *Argus*, December 3, 1906, p.9. See also Tudor, *Argus*, November 28, 1903, p.17. Some Labor women held similar views. See Mulcahy, *Labor Call*, September 8, 1910, p.7.

[11]Edna Ryan & Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1989, p.91. For Labor women's demands for greater economic independence for women, see *Labor Call*, June 15, 1911, p.9. See also *Labor Call*, April 18, 1912, p.22.

national settlement of the early Commonwealth.[12]  In Victoria, the Labor

Party itself was a junior partner in this enterprise.  It was the Liberals who

played the most important role in the delivery of the working class to this

national settlement but, paradoxically, the character of the settlement

further politicised the "Labour Question" and encouraged the unions to

increase their commitment to the Labor Party.

**The Melbourne Trades Hall Council and Politics, 1899-1904**

In the late 1890s, the trade unions' influence over the PLP had never been

weaker and, in the absence of radical social and industrial reform, they

became dissatisfied with the PLP's performance.  Findley's attitude was

common among union leaders:

> ...there were very few genuine men in the party.  There were many
> shady ones who crept and crawled until they managed to get into
> Parliament on the back of labor and then suddenly became
> independent and shook themselves free altogether.[13]

In October 1899, the THC published a new platform and scheme of

organisation which sought to "increase the power of the Trades Hall in

controlling Labor representatives in Parliament".[14]  The THC leaders

believed that the ULP should not have any legitimacy beyond that bestowed

on it by the Council; they did not envisage a broadly-based social democratic

party.  This observation would suggest that Lorraine Benham and John

Rickard's assessment that in the 1890s, the THC "executive - beset by

poverty, lack of manpower and the continuing distrust of a political role still

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[12]Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, pp.311-16.

[13]*Age*, June 3, 1899, p.9.  See also THC, Minutes, June 2, 1899; *Tocsin*, June 8, 1899, p.2; *Argus*, June 3, 1899, p.9.

[14]*Age*, October 7, 1899, p.10.  See also THC, Minutes, October 6, 1899; *Tocsin*, October 12, 1899, p.7; *Argus*, October 7, 1899, p.4.

felt by many of its own supporters - would gladly have relinquished all direct political activities" needs revision.[15] Indeed, one reason for the failure of the Victorian unionists to create an autonomous political organisation in the 1890s was the social prestige of the THC. Even in its weakened condition, it occupied the leading position in the colonial labour movement, and was recognised by most Victorians as the official mouthpiece of the unions, especially in political matters. When conservatives used the metonym "Trades Hall domination", they did more than vent their paranoia about this land where the working man was King. They also bore witness to the authority of the THC in the Victorian labour movement. Sidney Webb, on a short visit to Victoria, noticed this failure of Labor to emerge as a party with its own identity, separate from the THC. In Victoria, he remarked,

> The Labor party was much more of a Trade Union party than that in New South Wales and South Australia, and it centred round the Trades Hall...There seemed to be no great statesmen in the Victorian Labor party.[16]

After protracted discussions, the THC adopted a new scheme of organisation in January 1900.[17] The constitution of the new body, like the 1896 ULP scheme, contained a provision for a THC veto over branches by granting the THC executive *ex officio* representation on the central council and the right to refuse admission to delegates of the branches. The power of the Council was extended further by a THC amendment that only branches with at least

[15]Lorraine Benham & John Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', in John Iremonger, John Merritt & Graeme Osborne (eds.), *Strikes: Studies in Twentieth Century Australian Social History*, Angus & Robertson in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1973, p.2.

[16]*The People and the Collectivist*, October 21, 1899, clipping in Victorian Socialist League File, Merrifield Collection, VSL.

[17]*Age*, January 16, 1900, p.5; *Argus*, January 16, 1900, p.9; The United Labor Party of Victoria, *Platform and Organisation*, n.d. [1899], in Hume Cook Papers, NLA MS 601/3/34.

seventy-five financial members could take part in selections.[18] Labor

meetings were held in the suburbs, but the ULP made little progress.[19] Even

branches in solidly working-class suburbs such as Richmond and

Collingwood soon lapsed.[20] The unions supported the new organisation as

little as its predecessors, and most union leaders had lost interest in the idea

of fostering a political movement which was not entirely under the THC's

control.[21]

The THC began its preparations for the 1900 elections in May of that

year. The executive, which had been acting as ULP organising committee,

recommended that "for these elections the best method to adopt at the

present time was that Candidates should be chosen by the Executive subject

to approval of the Council".[22] In June, the THC resolved to select candidates

for the coming federal and state elections. An amendment that the THC

form a Political Council comprising the THC, two delegates from each

union and two delegates from each electorate to select Labor candidates was

defeated.[23] The THC was thus responsible for selecting parliamentary

candidates; it envisaged no role for local branches in this process. The

*Tocsin* criticised this approach as the "usurpation by the Trades Union

Council of the functions and powers of the Victorian Labour Party outside

Parliament".[24] The THC, however, ruled that every candidate running

under its auspices would have to sign a pledge:

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[18]THC, Minutes, January 15, 1900.

[19]THC, Minutes, February 23, 1900; *Argus*, February 23, 1900, p.4.

[20]THC, Minutes, February 9, 1900; March 2, 1900; March 23, 1900; *Age*, February 7, 1900, p.9. For revival of Collingwood and Richmond Labor branches, see *Argus*, February 25, 1901, p.6; February 28, 1901, p.7.

[21]*Tocsin*, September 21, 1899, p.8.

[22]THC, Minutes, n.d., [May 18], 1900.

[23]THC, Minutes, June 1, 1900; June 20, 1900.

[24]*Tocsin*, August 16, 1900, p.4. See also *Tocsin*, August 23, 1900, p.4.

> I hereby pledge myself to support every plank of the platform & if at
> any time nominated for selection for Parliamentary or Municipal
> Honours if not selected to retire & support the Selected Candidate.[25]

The Labor parliamentarians decided unanimously that they could not sign

the THC's pledge and platform although "they were willing to sign as

members of Leagues or Associations under the scheme".[26] The PLP was

evidently sensitive about formally binding itself to the THC, probably

because the politicians feared losing the support of non-union voters in

their electorates. The THC discussed a motion to "ignore the Labor Party &

run direct Candidates for their seats" but it was unwilling to take such an

uncompromising stand and a majority voted to rescind the resolution

relating to the pledge, and to confer with the PLP.[27] From this point,

however, the Council played only a minor role in the elections. Campaign

work and the selection of candidates were carried out by a committee

comprising the THC executive and the PLP, and local branches and

committees.[28]

The Party was still in a state of organisational confusion at the time of

the first Commonwealth election in 1901. In December 1900, the THC

decided to form a Political Labor Council composed of representatives of

unions affiliated with the THC for the purpose of forming Labor Leagues in

the electorates.[29] An organising committee of ten was elected to act until

the PLC had been brought into existence.[30] On 7 February 1901, a conference

of unions agreed to a scheme which provided for branch participation in the

organisation. Each affiliated union or league was entitled to one

representative on the central council of the PLC but the THC was not

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[25]THC, Minutes, June 26, 1900.
[26]THC, Minutes, August 3, 1900.
[27]THC, Minutes, August 3, 1900; August 10, 1900.
[28]*Age*, November 1, 1900, p.6.
[29]THC, Minutes, December 1, 1900; December 15, 1900.
[30]THC, Minutes, December 21, 1900.

permitted *ex officio* representation, a decision which caused dissatisfaction in that body.[31] The lack of provision for direct THC participation was probably an oversight. It was certainly a strange outcome in light of the trend of labour political organisation after 1896, which was in the direction of increasing THC control over the political movement. On the other hand, it is possible that some union delegates recognised that direct THC control over the political wing would reduce Labor's chances of gaining broader political support. As J.E. Ager (VOBU) remarked a few months later, "there was a Large number of the middle Class who sympathised with the Labour movement - he did not agree with the members of the T. Hall Council selecting themselves".[32]

The approach of the federal elections added urgency to this process of reorganisation. The THC political organising committee revived the Labor leagues in the suburbs in preparation for the campaign.[33] The division of responsibilities between the PLC and its branches, the PLP and the THC, however, remained unclear. At a meeting on 6 February, the THC decided to run candidates for the Senate.[34] It accepted nominations from various labour bodies, mainly in Melbourne and Bendigo, and selected three candidates for the six vacancies.[35] The THC executive and the PLP conferred to plan the campaign[36] and in early March, a manifesto signed by Tudor, president of "the associated trades unions" (neatly avoiding "Trades Hall

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[31]'First Meeting of Conference called for the purpose of forming a Political Trades Council, in PLC, Minutes, February 7, 1901, VSL MS 10389.

[32]VOBU, Minutes, July 8, 1901, NBAC, ANU T5/1/5.

[33]Labor branches were formed in Footscray (*Age*, January 10, 1901, p.5), Melbourne West (*Age*, January 16, 1901, p.5), Brunswick (*Argus*, January 23, 1901, p.5), Melbourne, East Melbourne (*Age*, February 15, 1901, p.6), Richmond (*Argus*, February 25, 1901, p.6), Collingwood (*Argus*, February 28, 1901, p.7). There were also branches in Fitzroy, Melbourne North, Carlton North, Carlton and Coburg (*Age*, January 25, 1901, p.6; February 14, 1901, p.6; *Argus*, March 1, 1901, p.7)

[34]THC, Minutes, February 6, 1901.

[35]These were J.G. Barrett, Stephen Barker and A.J. Hampson, a Bendigo businessman who had been active in the labour movement throughout the 1890s. See*Bendigo Advertiser*, February 14, 1901; THC, Minutes, February 15, 1901.

[36]THC, Minutes, February 22, 1901; March 1, 1901; *Age*, February 27, 1901, p.6.

Council"), Bromley (the leader of the PLP), David Smith (president of the

"Bendigo labour party") and the three candidates, was issued. They claimed

to represent eighty labour bodies affiliated with the Labor Party, and

published a comprehensive platform.[37]

The decision of the THC to run candidates for the Senate attracted

some criticism from Labor Party members who argued that this task

properly belonged to a separate political council.[38] An attempt by some THC

members, however, to have a motion carried handing over to the PLC the

responsibility for the selection of Senate candidates failed.[39] The confusion

surrounding this division of responsibilities, and the tensions to which it

gave rise, were the logical outcome of the failure of the THC to create a

political Labor organisation with its own identity in the 1890s.[40] Moreover,

the trade union leaders who favoured the THC handing over its political

functions to the PLC did not see this as anything more than an

administrative division made necessary by the THC being overwhelmed by

a vast amount of political business.[41] It was left to the socialist *Tocsin* to

point to the intrinsic value of a political party organised independently of

the trade union movement in which the Labor Leagues, comprising both

unionists and non-unionists in sympathy with the Labor platform, would

have a powerful voice.[42]

The disorganisation of the Labor Party in 1901 was highlighted by the

Fitzroy by-election, necessitated by R.W. Best's departure for federal politics.

The Fitzroy Labor League selected P.J. O'Connor, who had recently opposed

Tudor for the federal seat of Yarra.[43] The PLC rejected the local branch's

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[37]*Age*, March 7, 1901, p.6; *Tocsin*, March 14, 1901, p.5. See Appendix K.
[38]*Argus*, February 13, 1901, p.6.
[39]THC, February 15, 1901.
[40]*Age*, March 1, 1901, p.6; March 7, 1901, p.6; March 13, 1901, p.8; March 22, 1901, p.5.
[41]*Age*, March 9, 1901, p.9; Plasterers, Minutes, May 22, 1901, NBAC, ANU T 9/1/1.
[42]*Tocsin*, May 23, 1901, p.4.
[43]*Age*, April 30, 1901, p.6.

selection, and demanded that the branch select a "*Labor* candidate".[44] The

Fitzroy branch refused to withdraw its nomination, so the PLC selected P.W.

McGrath, secretary of the Breadcarters' Union, to contest the election as the

official PLC candidate.[45] O'Connor, at an election meeting, described the

PLC as "a sort of Star Chamber...it usurped power that belonged alone to the

local league...and nominated a man in defiance of the local feeling".[46]

Even the *Tocsin* thought that the PLC handled the affair badly, although it

had no sympathy for O'Connor.[47] Meanwhile, the THC acted totally

independently of the PLC. On 10 May, it received a request for support from

E.H. Williams, a Fitzroy physician.[48] The Council debated the question of

supporting Williams at its next two meetings; on 24 May, it agreed to

support McGrath, but only after Williams had retired from the seat.[49] After

O'Connor's comfortable victory,[50] the VOBU discussed a motion to

withdraw from the PLC while the MTS was also dissatisfied with the PLC's

handling of the affair, arguing that it had exceeded its powers.[51]

The confusion over the respective powers of the THC and the PLC

continued.[52] The railway strike of 1903, however, ensured that the PLC

would control the political affairs of the movement. The official reason for

the Irvine Government's opposition to the affiliation of the Engine Drivers'

Association with the THC was that the Council was a political body. Labour

leaders were now eager to deny any THC connection with politics.[53] Finally,

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[44]*Tocsin*, May 2, 1901, p.5. See also *Tocsin*, May 9, 1901, p.1; *Age*, May 6, 1901, p.7.

[45]*Tocsin*, May 16, 1901, pp. 4-5.

[46]*Age*, May 31, 1901, p.6. See also *Fitzroy City Press*, May 31, 1901.

[47]*Tocsin*, May 9, 1901, pp.4-5; June 13, 1901, p.6.

[48]THC, Minutes, May 10, 1901; *Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directory*, 1901.

[49]THC, Minutes, May 17, 1901; May 24, 1901; *Age*, May 28, 1901, pp. 5-6; *Argus*, May 28, 1901, p.7.

[50]*Fitzroy City Press*, June 21, 1901. For an assessment of John Wren's role in this by-election, see pp.339-40.

[51]VOBU, Minutes, July 8, 1901; October 14, 1901, NBAC, ANU T5/1/5; MTS, Minutes, May 18, 1901, PKIU Archives.

[52]THC, Minutes, June 12, 1903.

[53]Bromley,*VPD*, CIV, May 13, 1903, p.13; THC, Minutes, June 12, 1903.

in February 1904, the THC decided that it could consider political matters referred to it by the societies except those relating to political organisation, platforms and the selection of candidates.[54]  When in August 1904 the THC executive wrote to the SPLP criticising the parliamentarians' failure to consult with the unions, it was informed that "the P.L.C. is the proper body to question the actions of this party or any of its members".[55]  By this time the organisational autonomy of the Labor Party had broad acceptance.

## The Unions and Politics, 1900-1914

The recovery of the union movement from the depression facilitated the emergence of an independent Labor Party in the early years of the century. The wages board system, which was applied to operatives in the boot, clothing, baking and furniture industries from 1896, strengthened the unions who came within the scope of the legislation.  In 1898, VOBU secretary reported that "the Union was in a much sounder position at the present time than for a considerable time past...".[56]  Moreover, with the gradual recovery of the economy in the second half of the 1890s, there was a growing interest in unionism in trades not directly affected by the legislation.  Several unions were formed or revived after 1896, although there is no evidence of substantial growth until 1900.[57]  By this time, there was a shortage of skilled labour in many industries which provided an opportunity for the unions.[58]  In February 1900, the THC appointed an organising committee with the young and energetic clothing unionist

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[54]*People's Daily*, February 20, 1904, p.3; *Argus*, February 20, 1904, p.19.
[55]SPLP, Minutes, August 23, 1904 VSL MS 10914.  See also THC, Minutes, August 12, 1904; *Argus*, August 13, 1904, p.19.
[56]VOBU, Minutes, September 19, 1898, NBAC, ANU T5/1/4.
[57]*Tocsin*, May 12, 1898, p.8; March 23, 1899, p.6; May 18, 1899, pp.1-2; THC, Minutes, January 22, 1897; January 29, 1897; February 12, 1897.
[58]P.G. Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment: An Historical Assessment', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1967, pp.32, 82, 116.

Lemmon as its secretary. It devoted itself to the task of re-building the labour movement.[59]   The amended Factories Act, which came into force in May 1900, also gave a strong fillip to union organisation by extending the wages board system and permitting the creation of a wages board on the resolution of either House.[60]   The THC committee gave its attention to both skilled and unskilled workers and by October 1900, could announce that 6000 workers had been brought within the ranks.[61]   The usually critical *Tocsin* acclaimed the work of the organising committee as "the only valuable constructive Labour work of recent years".[62]

Customary union strategies were not abandoned but the prospect of improvements through the wages board system was the motor-force of union expansion in the early 1900s.[63]   It was the unions who lobbied parliament for the creation of wages boards and organised the election of employee representatives to the boards. Moreover, their efforts were significant in enforcing awards.[64]   The wages board system and compulsory arbitration, which was legislated by the Commonwealth Parliament in 1904, provided the unions with a strong incentive for political involvement. Moreover, within particular industries, a campaign for a wages board could break down the barriers between unionised and non-unionised employees.[65]   Unions saw the wages boards as a solution to their grievances and a way of compensating for their weakened bargaining position. As the *Typographical Journal* declared in 1902, "the humane laws contained in the

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[59]THC, Minutes, February 9, 1900; *Tocsin*, March 1, 1900, p.1. For a complimentary assessment of Lemmon's abilities from a conservative source, see *Punch*, April 25, 1901, p.466; October 24, 1901, p.462. See also Ann G. Smith, 'John Lemmon', *ADB*, Volume 10, pp.72-3.

[60]John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, pp.105-10.

[61]THC, Minutes, October 12, 1900.

[62]*Tocsin*, September 6, 1900, p.1.

[63]*Tocsin*, May 10, 1900, p.8; August 9, 1900, p.5; August 16, 1900, p.7; February 7, 1901, p.5; Painters, Minutes, June 1, 1900, UMA 1/1. See also P.R. Davey, 'Wages Boards in Victoria 1896-1920', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1975, p.232.

[64]*Tocsin*, February 28, 1901, p.7; December 12, 1901, p.6.

[65]AIMU, Minutes, November 14, 1901, UMA 2/1/1/2.

Victorian Factories Act give the masses a chance of equalising the power which at one time was all on the side of the sweater".[66] Members of the Painters' Union predicted that a wages board in the trade would "blot out the cursed Improver system".[67] The campaign for a wages board was linked by members of this union to the necessity of supporting the Labor Party: "as we were endeavouring to secure a Wages Board we had to associate Politically with the Labour Party...".[68] This connection was also evident in the case of the Plumbers' Union. In February 1899 its opinion was that "if the Trades Hall Council gave a little more attention to trade affairs, and a little less to politics, it would be more beneficial to the workers in general, and all that would be required".[69] At this time the plumbers, who had prospered in the 1890s as a result of the sewering of Melbourne, did not want a wages board, having resolved in 1898 that "it would not interest the trade".[70] By July 1900, there was a change in the Society's attitude, for it consulted with the THC organising committee about being brought under the Factories Act. It affiliated with the Labor Party in 1901.[71]

The Stonemasons' Society, which had shown little interest in the direct representation of labour in the 1890s, was convinced by 1901 of the importance of a Labor Party.[72] The Society supported the successful campaign of one of its members, George Elmslie, for the state seat of Albert Park in 1902, and formally affiliated with the Party in 1903.[73] In this year, the Society's secretary, Laughton, wrote to the secretary of the Durban

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[66]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, July 1902, p.4.
[67]Painters, Minutes, June 23, 1909, UMA 1/3.
[68]Painters, Minutes, May 19, 1909, UMA 1/3.
[69]*Tocsin*, February 23, 1899, p.5.
[70]Plumbers, Minutes, December 6, 1898, NBAC, ANU T17/1/1. For the sewering of Melbourne, see Tony Dingle & Carolyn Rasmussen, *Vital Connections: Melbourne and its Board of Works 1891-1991*, McPhee Gribble, Ringwood, 1991, pp.45-91.
[71]Plumbers, Minutes, July 31, 1900; May 21, 1901, NBAC, ANU T 17/1/1. The reason for this change of heart on the question of a wages board is unclear from the union records.
[72]Stonemasons, Minutes, March 13, 1901, NBAC, ANU E117/1/9.
[73]Stonemasons, Minutes, September 24, 1902, NBAC, ANU E117/1/9; *Tocsin*, March 12, 1903, p.3.

Stonemasons expressing the hope that Labor might win majorities in both Houses in the 1903 federal election. He explained:

> It is possible that you may consider these last few remarks as being slightly out of order but it has come to this, that we are of opinion that political action is almost compulsory seeing that Factories Acts and other Labour Bills have the effect on wages, Hours of labour etc. which certainly is of interest to us as Unionists.[74]

The masons had the further incentive of desiring to persuade the Government to use stone rather than brick or cement in public buildings.[75] They supported Elmslie in 1902 because "he would be able from his knowledge of our wants, to minimise the cost of personal interviews with the ministry".[76]

The ASE's interest in labour politics around 1900 was also linked to its desire for a wages board.[77] Alexander Ramsay, a Liberal and member of the ASE, was elected as the Assembly member for Williamstown in 1900.[78] When the Williamstown branch of the ASE suggested that the Society provide him with financial assistance, the Melbourne District Council replied that it was "preferable to assist the Trades Hall Council rather than individuals although they may be members of the A.S.E".[79] Ramsay did not therefore receive the official support of the ASE.[80] Instead, the Society donated nine pounds to the THC's election expenses in 1900.[81] This was a

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[74]Laughton to Cowdon, October 30, 1903, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E117/9/4.

[75]Stonemasons, Minutes, May 7, 1902, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/9.

[76]Stonemasons, Minutes, September 24, 1902, NBAC, ANU E 117/1/9.

[77]ASE (MDC), Minutes, September 11, 1900, UMA.

[78]ASE (MDC), Minutes, November 20, 1900, UMA.

[79]ASE (MDC), Minutes, September 18, 1900; October 30, 1900, UMA.

[80]The ASE's Australasian Council did, however, welcome his victory "as we have never had any one to expound our views based on a mechanic's experience". ASE, Australasian Council, *Monthly Report*, October 1900.

[81]THC, Minutes, November 16, 1900; ASE (MDC), Minutes, November 20, 1900, UMA.

# TWO UNIONISTS AND LEADERS OF THE VICTORIAN LABOR PARTY

Frederick Hadkinson Bromley (1854-1908)
Member for Carlton, 1892-1908
Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, 1900-1904

George Alexander Elmslie (1861-1918)
Member for Albert Park, 1902-1918
Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party, 1913-1918

significant departure for the ASE, although the MDC's attempt to affiliate with the PLC in 1903 was blocked by the Australasian Council.[82]

The campaign for state compulsory arbitration, which the unions preferred to the wages boards, also increased union support for the Labor Party. Trenwith introduced a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill in the Assembly in 1900 with the support of the THC, but it had little chance of success.[83] This campaign prompted the employers to organise politically in opposition to industrial legislation. The VEF was formed in 1901 and, with the support of the *Argus*, it successfully resisted the attempt to legislate for compulsory arbitration in Victoria.[84] Moreover, a meeting of employers in August 1901 carried a motion in favour of the repeal of the wages board clause in the Factories Act and in 1902 and 1903, the VEF agitated against the wages board system and the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Bill.[85] Tom Mann remarked that it was "difficult to exaggerate the intensity of feeling in this discussion; the capitalist portion treats the matter as fundamental and vital; the Employers' Federation is vigilant in its endeavours to organise hostile opinion, and the line of cleavage between the 'classes and masses' is very well marked" while in March 1903, the president of the VOBU referred to "the Important Struggle between Employers and Employees in the state of Victoria for the reinactment [sic] of the Shops and Factories [Act] and also Conciliation and Arbitration".[86] Industrial legislation had been a cause of political conflict between the

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[82]ASE (MDC), Minutes, February 3, 1903; February 24, 1903; March 3, 1903, UMA; ASE, *Monthly Report*, July 1903.

[83]*VPD*, XCIV, July 18, 1900, p.332; August 22, 1900, pp.995-1004; XCVI, December 21, 1900, pp.597-8; XCIX, December 5, 1901, p.3219.

[84]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.168-70; *Argus*, August 7, 1901, p.4; August 19, 1901, p.4; August 26, 1901, p.5

[85]VOBU, Minutes, August 19, 1901, NBAC, ANU T5/1/5; *Argus*, August 20, 1901, p.5; Victorian Employers' Federation (VEF), Minutes, July 7, 1902; August 6, 1902; August 14, 1902; September 11, 1902; October 9, 1902; July 8, 1903; November 4, 1903; January 22, 1904, NBAC, ANU M65/1/3.

[86]T. Mann, 'The Political and Industrial Situation in Australia', *Nineteenth Century*, 56, 1904, pp.483; VOBU, Minutes, March 30, 1903, NBAC, ANU T5/1/5.

Assembly and the Council in 1895-6 and again in 1899-1900, but the industrial and political weakness of the labour movement, and the important role played by liberals, middle-class radicals and nonconformist churchmen in the agitation for the legislative suppression of sweating meant that the issue never had the strong class overtones in the 1890s which it had acquired by 1902. While the Liberals were generally sympathetic to the wages board system, and some Liberal parliamentarians voted with the Labor Party on particular divisions when the Assembly considered the future of the wages board system in 1902 and 1903, the Liberal Party itself was of declining parliamentary significance by this time. In November 1902, only four Liberals voted with the Labor Party against Irvine's amendment that no new wages boards be created under the continuance of the Factories and Shops Act until a Royal Commission had reported on the system.[87]

The Anti-Sweating League (ASL) was also virtually a spent force by the early 1900s, wounded in the cross-fire between capital and labour and increasingly suspect in labour eyes because of the prominence of Liberal politicians such as Mauger, Deakin and Hume Cook in its affairs.[88] Men and women who believed that industrial legislation sprang "out of human hearts which distinguished between right and wrong" were unable to comprehend the political conflict of the early 1900s: the world had changed but the ASL activists' language of industrial reform had remained the same.[89] ASL member and Methodist layman W.H. Judkins's comment in 1904 that "the sweating evil was responsible for a good deal of the social evil...if the Government could keep one girl off the streets by giving her a decent wage they ought to do it" revealed a rather different social

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[87]*VPD*, CI, November 11, 1902, p.514. Irvine introduced the amendment under pressure from the Legislative Council.
[88]*Age*, September 20, 1904, p.8.
[89]*Argus*, October 1, 1901, p.7.

philosophy to that of a majority of labour activists.[90]  As we shall see,

Judkins was soon prominent in campaigns for the suppression of gambling

and the liquor trade which alienated him from the labour movement.  His

interest in industrial reform sprang from a similar impulse: a desire to

uplift suffering humanity and improve the moral well-being of the

community.  The different emphases of the labour movement and ASL

activists in regard to industrial legislation were also evident in the 1903

protests against the Legislative Council's attempts to destroy the wages board

system.  At a Sunday afternoon meeting under the auspices of the THC,

Hannah declared that the labour movement had to "fight the capitalist and

the press" in the campaign for industrial legislation.  Meanwhile, at the

Wesley Church's Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, the Rev. A.R. Edgar and

Mauger, both ASL stalwarts, condemned the Legislative Council in more

traditional terms.  Mauger proclaimed that "it was the duty of the Christian

church, who professed to follow the Carpenter of Nazareth, to be true to the

highest and best interests of the working classes".[91]  While the labour

movement was far from immune from this sort of religiosity, the

differences in the tone of the two meetings pointed to the changing political

significance of industrial legislation in Victoria in the early years of the

century.  The two groups were singing a similar tune, but they were in

different keys, and with occasional disharmonies.  For the labour leadership,

the "Labour Question" was now linked to a political struggle between Labor

and its political enemies.  Legislative progress was no longer merely a

matter of co-operating with men and women of good-will to uplift suffering

humanity and eliminate the sweater.  The old political parties themselves,

which were open or secret friends of the "capitalist" and "sweater", also had

to be overcome.  The unions regarded the Labor Party as "the custodian of

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[90]*Argus*, September 20, 1904, p.7.
[91]*Age*, October 26, 1903, p.4.

the Factory Act...who alone fully understood the requirements of the sweated workers of the State".[92] This role was emphasised in 1903 when Irvine, under pressure from the VEF and the Legislative Council, amended the Factories and Shops Act so that the boards were made virtually inoperative. The power of the boards to limit the proportion of apprentices to journeymen was withdrawn and, on the insistence of the Legislative Council, wages boards could only be created with the approval of both the Houses of Parliament.[93] Irvine also established a Court to hear appeals from the wages boards. The Labor members took no strong objection to this measure in 1903, but it operated against the interests of wage-earners and was later opposed by the unions.[94] It was with good reason that F.T. Derham, the president of the VEF, thought that the Irvine Ministry was "the first Government for many years to recognise that there were two sides to the question".[95] Prendergast's wry suggestion during the 1903 debate that the president of the NCRL have the power to refer wages board determinations to the Court of Industrial Appeals highlighted the way in which the wages board question had become enmeshed in party conflict.[96]

The "Irvine blot", as the unions called the 1903 reforms, was a major labour grievance, but the Party was unable to effect any changes to the legislation.[97] While the Bent Government made the wages board system permanent in 1905 and the range of industries covered by the legislation was extended in 1907, the boards were not permitted to regulate the proportion

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[92]*Age*, October 10, 1903, p.11.
[93] 'An Act to Continue and amend the Factories and Shops Act 1896 and the Acts amending the same', 1903, No.1857, in *The Acts of the Parliament*, Victoria, Robert S. Brain [Government Printer], Melbourne, 1904. The provision that a board could only be created on the resolution of both Houses was included on the insistence of the Legislative Council. See *VPD*, CV, October 29, 1903, p.1027.
[94]Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment', p.40; Davey, 'Wages Boards in Victoria', p.93.
[95]*Age*, October 30, 1903, p.6.
[96]*VPD*, CV, September 29, 1903, p.298.
[97]THC, Minutes, August 30, 1907. See also THC, Minutes, November 11, 1904.

of apprentices to journeymen again until 1910.[98]  Moreover, the unions

complained about the victimisation of the employee representatives on the

boards by their employers.[99]  In general, they were dissatisfied with their

experience of the state wages board system.  P.R. Davey has suggested that by

1905, the system was "operating in the employers' favour...".[100]  After 1908,

the failure of the wages boards and Court of Industrial Appeals to take into

account increases in the cost of living when it fixed minimum wages

intensified union dissatisfaction.[101]  By 1912, Laurie Cohen could "not

advise any union to obtain [a wages board]...when a capitalistic State

Government held the power of appointing the chairman of a Wages

Board".[102]  In 1913, the VOBU

> regretted that a measure [the wages boards] which had been the means
> of securing so great an amount of industrial peace instead of having its
> power increased in that direction was fast becoming a measure that will
> soon be discarded by all organised trades, especially those federated,
> who would take advantage of the Federal Court.[103]

As the dissatisfaction of the unions with the boards intensified, however,

the number of workers covered by wages board determinations increased.

In 1902, there were thirty-seven boards covering 38 000 employees while in

1914, 140 boards covered 150 000 workers.[104]

From 1904, many unions looked to the Commonwealth Arbitration

Court for their salvation, especially after Higgins became President in 1907.

The legal complexity and expense of proceedings was, however, a problem

for the unions.  In 1910, a writer in the ASE *Monthly Report* remarked that

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[98]Davey, 'Wages Boards in Victoria', pp.74, 82, 87.
[99]David Plowman, 'Forced march: The Employers and Arbitration', in Stuart Macintyre & Richard Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration: The Orgins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration 1890-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, p. 140.
[100]Davey, 'Wages Boards in Victoria', p.73.
[101]Davey, 'Wages Boards in Victoria', p.94.
[102]*Labor Call*, July 11, 1912, p.6.
[103]VOBU, Minutes, October 27, 1913, NBAC, ANU T5/1/8.
[104]Davey, 'Wages Boards in Victoria', pp.348-51.

the "Arbitration Court, if shorn of its President Judge Higgins, would be shunned by all and sundry".[105] The Act was also a mixed blessing for the Labor Party. It provided unionism with a boost, but the provision that members of unions which used their funds for political purposes could not be granted "preference to unionists" by the Court led to many disaffiliations from the PLC.[106] The VOBU, for example, ended its affiliation with the PLC in 1907 for this reason, and did not rejoin until 1912.[107] Between June 1904 and December 1907, ten unions retired from the Party.[108] As a result of disaffiliations and a lack of union support, the Party was in serious financial trouble by 1908.[109]

The weakness of union support for the Labor Party tended to enhance the role of the Labor leagues. In the early years of the century, the local Labor branches rather than the unions were the key to the Party's electoral success. While the unions were a critical source of finance (they met most of the expenses of Mann's organising work), it was the Labor branches, scattered throughout the city and suburbs, which selected candidates, provided campaign workers and organised meetings.[110] Between 1901 and 1911, Melbourne's population grew from 496 000 to 589 000 but in most of the older working-class districts, the areas in which the Labor Party had moderate success in the 1890s, there was only a minor increase.[111] It was

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[105]ASE, Australasian Council, *Monthly Report*, August 1910, p.5.

[106]*Labor Call*, April 30, 1908, p.2; July 2, 1908, p.1; August 19, 1909, p.8; *Australasian Typographical Journal*, May 1, 1908, pp.10-11; Australian Labor Party, *Official Report of the Fourth Commonwealth Political Labour Conference*, Worker [Printers], Brisbane, 1908, p.21.

[107]PLC CE, Minutes, June 23, 1906, VSL MS 10389; VOBU, Minutes, February 11, 1907, NBAC, ANU T5/1/6.

[108]PLC CE, Minutes, December 21, 1907, VSL MS 10389.

[109]*Labor Call*, April 30, 1908, pp.6-7.

[110]*Tom Mann Organising Fund*, NBAC, ANU E 97/7/21.

[111]Richmond: 1891 - 38797, 1911 - 40442; Collingwood: 1891 - 35070, 1911 - 34190; Fitzroy: 1891 - 32453, 1911 - 34283; Williamstown: 1891 - 15960, 1911 - 15275; Port Melbourne: 1891 - 13067, 1911 - 13515. The exceptions were Melbourne (including North Melbourne): 1891 - 94358, 1911 - 103593; South Melbourne: 1891 - 41724, 1911 - 46190; and Footscray: 1891 - 19149, 1911 - 23643. *Census of Victoria*, 1901, Table 15; *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1911, Volume 1, Statistician's Report, p.435.

suburbs such as Northcote, Essendon, Brunswick and, on the other side of the city, Camberwell, Malvern, Hawthorn, Prahran and St. Kilda which made the strongest contribution to metropolitan population growth between 1900 and 1914.[112] After 1900, suburbanisation provided fertile soil for Labor branches in Coburg, Preston, Northcote, Brunswick and Essendon.[113] These suburbs were different from the older working-class communities on the fringes of the city. They were less crowded. Moreover, unlike a large proportion of those who lived and worked in the inner suburbs, many residents of the newer suburbs travelled by public transport to workplaces in the central business district or its surrounds. Some, however, such as the brickmakers of Northcote and Brunswick, were employed in local enterprises.[114] The dependence of these suburbs on the brickmaking industry and, therefore, on the building boom resulted in high unemployment and an outflow of workers and their families in the 1890s.[115] Economic recovery after 1900, however, led to the resumption of house-building, brick manufacturing, and population growth.[116] These developments provided opportunities for the Labor Party. Frank Anstey won one of the two East Bourke Boroughs seats (based on Northcote and Brunswick) in 1902 with strong support from the Brickmakers' Union.[117]

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[112]Northcote: 1891 - 7458, 1911 - 17519; Essendon: 1891 - 14411, 1911 - 23749; Brunswick: 1891 - 21961, 1911 - 32215; Malvern: 1891 - 8136, 1911 - 15969; Hawthorn: 1891 - 19585, 1911 - 24450; Prahran: 1891 - 39703, 1911 - 45367; St. Kilda: 1891 - 19838, 1911 - 25334. *Census of Victoria,* 1901, Table 15; *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia,* 1911, Volume 1, Statistician's Report, p.435.

[113]*Tocsin,* January 31, 1901, p.7; November 14, 1901, p.8; November 2, 1905, p.8; PLC (Essendon), Minutes, 1909-1914, Merrifield Collection, VSL; Andrew Lemon, *The Northcote Side of the River,* City of Northcote in conjunction with Hargreen Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1983, pp.156-7. For a more general assessment of the impact of suburban development on political involvement, see Ian Campbell, 'Groups, Parties and Federation', in P. Loveday & I. Campbell, *Groups in Theory and Practice,* F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1962, pp.67-8.

[114]Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne,* Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984, pp. 50-1, 150-1; Lemon, *The Northcote Side of the River,* pp.106-7.

[115]Lemon, *The Northcote Side of the River,* p.113.

[116]Lemon, *The Northcote Side of the River,* pp.140-2.

[117]*Argus,* September 19, 1902, p.6.

He represented Brunswick in the reformed Assembly from 1904 until 1910, when he was elected to the federal parliament as the member for Bourke, which was located in the same district.[118] In 1904, the Labor candidate and bricklayer Beard won Jika Jika (Northcote) although the seat was lost in 1907. Ten years later, it was regained by John Cain, a future Labor premier. In 1914, the radical lawyer, Maurice Blackburn, won the state seat of Essendon in a by-election.[119] By this time, Labor's electoral and organisational strength was no longer confined to the older working-class suburbs, but its support was still concentrated in the ports, and northern and western Melbourne. While there were Labor branches based on working-class communities in Prahran, South Yarra and Hawthorn, the Party enjoyed little electoral success in these more exclusive suburbs south and east of the Yarra.[120]

By 1914, there was broad union support for the Labor Party, but this was a relatively recent phenomenon. Before 1910, many unions remained wary of formal attachments to the Labor Party. In 1903, the masons' delegate to the PLC reported that he and his co-delegate rarely attended PLC meetings "simply because it appeared to be only a means to advertise certain persons, and did not show any material benefit as evenings were wasted in discussing trivial matters".[121] A.F. McLachlan (VOBU) told his Union in 1902 that the PLC was a sham and that the VOBU should watch and wait before affiliating: "...not half the Trades organisations connected with the Hall were affiliated".[122] James Bennett (VOBU) thought that the leaders of the PLC were "men who had been to [sic] shifty in their Politics for the

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[118]Ian Turner, 'Francis George Anstey', *ADB*, Volume 7, p.79.

[119]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1890-1964*, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, pp.93, 104, 133; Lemon, *The Northcote Side of the River*, p.179.

[120]*Tocsin*, January 29, 1903, p.6; May 21, 1903, p.8; September 3, 1903, p.8; *Socialist*, November 17, 1906, p.2; December 8, 1906, p.2; *Age*, October 16, 1903, p.5.

[121]Stonemasons, Minutes, March 25, 1903, NBAC, ANU E117/1/10.

[122]VOBU, Minutes, September 29, 1902, NBAC, ANU T5/1/5.

Workers to have much confidence in [them]" while J.E. Ager, later a PLC president, opined that "the Victorian Labour Party was the worst of the Lot & thought there was a general need of Political Reform".[123] There was also suspicion of the Labor Party among the MTS rank-and-file.[124] Official MTS opinion was committed to political action as a means of halting the spread of boy labour and regulating apprenticeship, but the rank-and-file was ambivalent about a Labor Party. The *Typographical Journal* thought that the Labor branches were dominated by small coteries who sought to exclude unionists from membership and prevent them from voting in preselections while the MTS criticised the inadequate facilities provided for unionists to record their votes on such occasions.[125] Moreover, there was some suspicion of the Labor pledge, which unionists voting in preselection had to sign: "It has given offence to a large number who imagine they see coercion in it...".[126] As late as 1910, the *Journal* could still complain that

> in recent years it seemed as if trade unionists were to be shut out from active participation in the movement, which to a large extent was their making, but which was being exploited by those who had assumed its management for their own aggrandisement.[127]

This might have been craft union pique at a party from which it had little to gain; the MTS was strong enough to enforce most of its demands without political assistence.[128] There was also rank-and-file resistance in the Bricklayers' Society to direct political involvement, and the payment of

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[123]VOBU, Minutes, October 14, 1901, NBAC, ANU T5/1/5.

[124]R.T. Fitzgerald, *The Printers of Melbourne: The History of a Union*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons in Association with the Printing and Kindred Industries Union, Melbourne, 1967, p.108; MTS, Minutes, March 16, 1901; July 26, 1902; August 2, 1902; October 18, 1902; April 5, 1905, PKIU Archives.

[125]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, October 7, 1909, p.12. See also *Australasian Typographical Journal*, December 1, 1906, pp.11-12; September 1, 1907, p.10; April 1, 1908, p.8; November 1909, p.21; January 1911, pp.12-3.

[126]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, March 1, 1906, p.13.

[127]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, July 1910, p.13.

[128]J. Hagan, *Printers and Politics: A History of the Australian Printing Unions 1850-1950*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1966, pp.148-154.

political levies was made optional in 1904.[129]  In August 1909, the Plasterers voted sixty to thirty-seven against affiliation with the Party.[130]  W.M. Strahan (Hotel and Caterers) reported to the PLC in 1912 that his Union could not affiliate because it

> was composed of members of all shades of political opinion from the Conservative of the early English school to the Communist Socialist, many of the members take a decisive stand against being bound to any Political Party whilst many members were of opinion that the Labor Party were only a Liberal party under the name of Labor.[131]

Unions such as the Painters and the Carters and Drivers also had vigorous debates over affiliation in the years before the Great War.  Many painters opposed "being bound politically"; they were able to resist the logic of affiliation until 1911[132] while in the Carters and Drivers Union, it was an alliance of socialists and traditionalists who resolved in 1909 to "absolutely refuse to affiliate with the P.L.C. as we contend that they do not represent true working class interests...".[133]  This Union still had links to the Anti-Sweating League in 1908, and did not affiliate with the Labor Party until 1911.[134]  None of the major maritime unions - the Seamen's Union, the Wharf Labourers' Union and the Port Phillip Stevedores - played a significant role in the affairs of the PLC before 1910.[135]  Information on union affiliations with the Party in the period 1900-14 is incomplete, but the available data indicates that they were very low before 1910.  At the end of

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[129]Bricklayers, Minutes, December 15, 1902; March 16, 1903; November 16, 1903; September 19, 1904, NBAC, ANU T8/2A/6.

[130]Victorian Plasterers Society (Plasterers), Minutes, August 25, 1909, NBAC, ANU T9/1/3.

[131]PLC CE, Minutes, November 30, 1912, NLA MS 131; See also PLC CE, Minutes, June 1, 1907, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, June 6, 1907, p.8.

[132]Painters, Minutes, June 1, 1910, UMA 1/3.

[133]PLC CE, Minutes, May 29, 1909, VSL MS 10389; Carters and Drivers, Minutes, May 15, 1909, NBAC, ANU E103/52; THC, Minutes, May 21, 1909; *Socialist*, May 21, 1909.

[134]Carters and Drivers, Minutes, October 31, 1908; February 11, 1911, NBAC, ANU E103/52. See also Bradley Bowden, *Driving Force: The History of the Transport Workers' Union of Australia 1883-1992*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993, p.37.

[135]PLC, Minutes, August 4, 1906; August 18, 1906; March 27, 1907; June 29, 1907; January 25, 1908; July 3, 1909; March 19, 1910, VSL MS 10389; THC, Minutes, July 2, 1909.

1903, the PLC claimed forty affiliated unions, but this might have been an exaggeration.[136]  In September 1905, only twenty unions were affiliated with the Party; the number had only increased to twenty-four by April 1908 and thirty-one in March 1909.[137]  Rapid growth occurred after the federal victory of the Labor Party in 1910.  In 1915, there were eighty affiliated unions.[138] The number of unions represented at annual conferences understates affiliations, but provides an indication of the trend:

| Year | Unions |
|------|--------|
| 1905 | 21 |
| 1906 | 19 |
| 1907 | 17 |
| 1908 | 21 |
| 1909 | 29 |
| 1910 | 41 |
| 1910 (Special) | 45 |
| 1911 | 51 |
| 1912 | 59 |
| 1913 | No conference |
| 1914 | 69 |

Sources: *Tocsin, Labor Call*, PLC Annual Conference
Minutes, 1905-1914.


One reason for the slight union support for the Party before 1910 was that union membership had received a sharp reverse after the growth of 1900-1. According to Macarthy, union affiliations with the THC dropped from eighty-nine in 1902 to seventy in 1904 while the 1901 total was not exceeded

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[136]*Labour Ticket*, December 15, 1903, p.5.
[137]*Tocsin*, September 14, 1905, p.8; *Labor Call*, April 30, 1908, p.2; March 11, 1909, p.8.
[138]This figure is derived from PLC, Ledger, 1915-1920, F.J. Riley Collection NLA MS 759/2A. An undated list of affiliated unions, which must have been published before August 1914, lists eighty-five unions.  See Political Labor Council of Victoria, *List of Affiliated Unions*, Labor Call [Printer], Melbourne, n.d [c.1914], in AIMU, Minute Book, 1908-10, UMA 2/1/1/3. The unions mentioned on this list are in Appendix Q.

again until 1909.[139]  There were several reasons for this decline.  In the early

1900s, the economy fell back into a recession, mainly as a result of a severe

drought.[140]  Further, the absence of state compulsory arbitration and the

alteration of the Factories and Shops Act in 1902-3, which made the wages

board system less appealing to wage-earners, hindered efforts to expand

unionism.

The PLC was also unable to draw on the resources of the unions of

railway employees as a consequence of their forced political isolation.  As

state servants, railway men had been unable to use either unilateral

regulation or collective bargaining in the manner of other unions and

political lobbying had always been an important part of their armoury.[141]

Permanent railway staff did not suffer as acutely as most other groups of

workers in the early 1890s, regaining lost ground earlier than wage-earners

in private industry.[142]  They came under more serious pressure, however,

when the Kyabram agitation gained momentum and the Irvine

Government came to power in 1902.  Both the NCRL and the Government

regarded the Railway Department as ripe for economies, and the supposed

privileges of the railway employee, whom they portrayed as the epitome of

King Workingman, were an obvious target.  The decline of railway revenue

after 1901 as a consequence of the drought prompted the Irvine Government

to cut costs and relieve the farmers, who were among the Government's

most significant supporters.  This was achieved at the expense of railway

employees.[143]  In July 1902, the Irvine Government suspended increments

for state employees earning over £125 and a revised scheme of railway

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[139]Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment', pp. 210, A27.

[140]Unemployment was thirteen per cent in 1903.  See Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment', p. 32.

[141]W.E. Murphy, 'Victoria', in J.Norton (ed.), *The History of Capital and Labour in All Lands and Ages*, Oceanic Publishing Co., Sydney & Melbourne, 1888, pp.176-7.

[142]J.C. Docherty, 'The Rise of Railway Unionism: A Study of New South Wales and Victoria, c 1880-1905', unpublished MA thesis, Australian National University, 1973, pp.75, 88.

[143]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1902-3, No.19, p.10.

The Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association in the Masonic Hall, 1899

*The Australasian*, October 7, 1899, p.809.

classification negotiated in 1901 was not implemented.[144] Percentage deductions were reintroduced for men earning over £125 and a large proportion of the staff were limited to five days' work. Employees whose services were not required were given extended leave.[145] Irvine also sought to reduce the political power of state employees by introducing the extraordinary measure of separate representation in parliament for state employees. Railway employees were entitled to two Assembly representatives and would vote with other state employees for a Council member.[146] The Government thus sought to end the use of political lobbying by railway employees and public servants. Irvine held that state employees were not entitled to use either industrial or political action in defence of their sectional interests, but should submit to the authority of their employer, the state, which represented the collective will of the people.[147]

The railway strike of 1903 was an outcome of these grievances.[148] Its immediate cause, however, was the refusal of the Engine Drivers Association to sever its connection with the THC, which Irvine declared a political body. When the engine drivers struck, the *Age* and *Argus* accused them of fomenting rebellion against the state. The *Age* regarded their conduct as a "mutiny against constituted authority...an offence against popular rights and popular liberties, and an act of disloyalty to the State".[149]

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[144]Norman De Pomeroy & Richard Gilbert (eds.), *Men of the Footplate: One Hundred and Thirty Years of Railway Trade Unionism 1861-1991*, Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen (Victorian Division), Melbourne, 1992, p.13; Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1900-1, No.41, p.9.

[145]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1902-3, No.19, pp. 5, 10.

[146]Kay Rollison, 'Groups and Attitudes in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 1900-1909', unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1972, p.284.

[147]Rollison, 'Groups', p.480.

[148]This account of the strike depends substantially upon Benham & Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', pp. 1-25. See also Peter Love, 'Frank Anstey: A Political Biography', unpublished PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1990, pp.122-29; Docherty, 'The Rise of Railway Unionism', ch.5.

[149]*Age*, May 7, 1903, p.4. See also *Argus*, May 9, 1903, p.12.

This was the language of Victorian liberalism but, as Benham and Rickard have argued, the strike "only served to emphasise the growing irrelevance of the old liberal party in a political system increasingly orientated on labour versus anti-labour lines".[150]  Most Liberals, including Peacock, voted with the Irvine Government when it introduced a savage Strike Suppression Bill in an effort to terminate the dispute.[151]  This measure, with the effort of the Government to break the strike with non-union labour, encouraged a questioning of the role played by the state in class relations among radicals.[152]  Socialist language became a more prominent ingredient in labour political discourse from the time of the strike, whose course also confirmed an increasingly popular view that capitalist society was based on conflict rather than consensus.  The phrase "civil war" was used by both sympathisers and opponents of the railway employees to describe the situation in 1903 and 1904.[153]

The strike emphasised the political isolation of the Labor Party.[154]  In an extremely bitter parliamentary session called to consider the Strike Suppression Bill, Labor members interpreted the Government's handling of the strike as an attack on the Labor Party and an attempt by Irvine to consolidate his own ranks.[155]  There was considerable radical and working-

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[150]Benham & Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', p.20.

[151]*VPD*, CIV, May 13, 1903, pp. 51-7.  The bill provided that any person employed in the railway service who left the service without the approval of the commissioners or before giving fourteen days notice would be deemed to have joined the strike.  Anyone found guilty of an offence against the Act would be liable to a fine not exceeding £100, or imprisonment for up to twelve months, or both.  Strikers would lose all pension rights, and be ineligible for employment in the railways or the public service in the future.  Meetings of more than six people with the object of encouraging the strike were outlawed.  Similarly, it was an offence against the Act to print, publish or distribute  material aimed at encouraging the strike, or collecting money for that purpose.  Notices containing abusive language against those obtaining employment were also banned.  Finally, offences against the Act would be heard by a police magistrate, not necessarily in the vicinity of the place of the offence.

[152]*Tocsin*, May 21, 1903, p.6; Verity Burgmann,'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905,  George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p.107.

[153]*VPD*, CIV, May 13, 1903, p.50; *Age*, May 16, 1903, p.8; March 23, 1904, p.8.

[154]*Age*, May 14, 1903, p.4.

[155]*VPD*, CIV, May 13, 1903, pp. 56, 81.

class sympathy for the strikers. Successful meetings were held in Melbourne and the provincial towns in support of the railway men, and Labor branches - and unions passed resolutions expressing sympathy with them.[156] The Albert Park Labor branch expelled a member who had "blacklegged" in the strike.[157]

The implications of the defeat of the strike for the Labor Party were complicated. It increased political enthusiasm among Labor supporters who, in the words of Prendergast, "had become saturated with politics".[158] This helped to consolidate and expand the branches, and contributed to an improvement in the Labor vote in the 1903 Commonwealth election.[159] Like the maritime strike and the Findley affair, the railway strike became a part of Victorian Labor folklore. The ruthlessness with which Irvine crushed the railway strike, particularly his Strike Suppression Bill, produced a sense of bitterness among railway men which burned for years. In 1909, after years of rising incomes and dramatically improved conditions, the *Victorian Railway News* declared, "Even to this day, the blood of the ordinary railway man boils when he thinks of the measures that were to have been enacted...".[160] According to Labor propagandists, the strike showed that liberals and conservatives were united in their hostility to Labor. It sealed the fate of the Lib-Lab alliance.[161]

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[156]*Tocsin*, May 14, 1903, p.8; May 21, 1903, p.8; *Argus*, May 14, 1903, p.6; UFTS, Minutes, May 14, 1903, NBAC, ANU T58/1/13; Benham & Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', p.19.
[157]*Tocsin*, July 9, 1903, p.6.
[158]*People's Daily*, January 6, 1904, p.2.
[159]According to Hughes and Graham, the Labor vote for the House of Representatives increased from 8.68 per cent in 1901 to 27.12 per cent in 1903. The very low total for 1901 is partly a consequence of the small number of seats contested by the PLC in 1901 (4) compared with 1903 (10). This increase was indicative of the improvement in the Party's electoral organisation. See Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives 1901-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, pp.287, 292.
[160]*Victorian Railway News*, February 1, 1909, p.3.
[161]Benham & Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', p. 25.

It was evident even before the strike that traditional methods of political action were no longer effective, and that the railway men required new allies. As the Irvine Government sought to curtail their "privileges", there appeared to be fewer reasons for railway men to regard themselves as a class apart from workers outside the service. They sought to bind themselves more securely to the Labor Party, even as wages and conditions in the service improved with the end of the drought and a return to railway surpluses.[162] In February 1904, a ballot of the combined railway societies adopted the PLC platform with the addition of a plank calling for the abolition of separate representation.[163] In May, the railway men selected Solly, a bootmaker, and Hannah, a bricklayer, as their nominees for the railway seats.[164] The Labor candidates won almost ninety per cent of the vote in the election.[165] W.J. Evans, an engine driver who had retired from the service on the eve of the strike, was elected as the state employees' representative in the Legislative Council as a Labor candidate. After 1903, there was never any doubt about the loyalty of most railway workers to Labor, but the conditions of their working life meant that their sense of being "inside the fence" remained. The character of their political and industrial rights remained restricted.[166] The abolition of separate representation by the Bent Government did not remedy this situation, since the ban on political activity was strengthened.[167] The railway unions were still unaffiliated with either the THC or the PLC in 1914 but railway men were convinced that their objectives could only be effectively pursued

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[162]Victorian Railway Commissioners, *Annual Report*, 1903-4, No.32; 1904-5, No.40; 1905-6, No.33; 1906-7, No.37; 1907-8, No.40; 1908-9, No.24; 1909-10, No.48.

[163]*Argus*, February 15, 1904, p.5.

[164]*Age*, May 16, 1904, p.6.

[165]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics, 1890-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1968, p.475.

[166]*Railway Gazette*, April 15, 1909, p.5.

[167]Rollison, 'Groups and Attitudes', pp.293-4

through the Labor Party.[168] The railway unions supported compulsory arbitration and the wages board system.[169] They also campaigned for a seven shilling daily minimum for all adult employees in the service and sought to reduce the proportion of casual workers and juveniles to permanent men. Engine drivers agitated for the restoration of a system of promotion based on seniority rather than merit.[170] The railway men regarded the Labor Party as integral to their efforts to share in the prosperity of the years after 1904, which were characterised by unprecedented growth in railway traffic and steadily increasing revenues. Rising wages and salaries and improving conditions in this period seemed to confirm the soundness of the strategy.[171]

With the recovery of the economy from 1904 and the incentive of a Commonwealth Arbitration Court, the unions were revitalised. Between 1901 and 1911, the number of workers employed in manufacturing increased from 66 529 to 111 948 (twenty-nine per cent of wage and salary earners) while the value of output in 1914 was estimated at £49 439 985 compared with £19 478 780 in 1901.[172] In the period of prosperity between 1909 and 1913, a massive expansion of unionism provided the Labor Party with a broad base of organised working-class support such as it had not previously enjoyed in Victoria. Union membership in Victoria doubled between 1909 and 1914 and by 1913, there were over 120 unions affiliated with the THC.[173] In 1912, there were 116 557 unionists in Victoria: approximately forty-four per cent of male employees and nine per cent of female wage and salary

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[168]PLC CE, Minutes, September 9, 1911; July 13, 1912; November 8, 1913, NLA MS 131; *Labor Call*, July 16, 1914, p.8.

[169]*Victorian Railway News*, January 1, 1908, p.2; *Railway Gazette*, October 15, 1910, p.1.

[170]*Victorian Railway News*, February 1, 1907, p.2; March 1, 1907, p.2; October 1, 1908, p.9; *Railway Gazette*, December 15, 1908, p.5; Alison Churchward, '"Inside the Fence": Unionism in the Victorian Railways 1903-1920', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1983, pp.19-20.

[171]*Railway Gazette*, January 15, 1909, p.5.

[172]*Victorian Year Book*, 1914-15, p.765.

[173]P.G. Macarthy, 'Victorian Trade Union Statistics, 1889-1914, *Labour History*, 18, May 1970, p.73.

earners were members of unions.[174] By the end of 1914, there were almost 139 000 unionists in the state.[175]

With the growth of unionism after 1908, the Party organisation derived a large proportion of its finance from its affiliated unions.[176] From 1912, each union paid an initial affiliation fee[177] and a further one penny per member per quarter for female members and two pence for males.[178] Moreover, the unions often contributed further finance during election campaigns.[179] From 1909, the industrialists increasingly dominated Labor Party conferences. At the 1910 state conference, ninety-three delegates represented affiliated unions and ninety were sent by the branches. Overall, 121 out of 183 delegates were unionists.[180] While the contribution of the unions to the growth of the Party is unclear, between 1911 and 1914, the PLC membership increased by over 22 000.[181]

Between 1909 and 1914, thousands of wage-earners who had not been organised previously - rural labourers, women, clerks and shop assistants - formed unions. The commercial sector accounted for 15.5 per cent of wage and salary earners in 1911, over one-fifth of them women.[182] By 1910, the

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[174]Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Labour & Industrial Branch Report No.2, *Trade Unionism, Unemployment, Wages, Prices, and Cost of Living in Australia 1891 to 1912*, G.H. Knibbs (compiler), McCarron, Bird & Co. [Printer], Melbourne, 1913, pp. 9, 12.

[175]Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Labour and Industrial Branch, Report No.6, *Prices, Purchasing-Power of Money, Wages, Trade Unions, Unemployment, and General Industrial Conditions, 1914-15*, G.H. Knibbs (compiler), McCarron, Bird & Co. [Printer], Melbourne, 1916, p.8.

[176]PLC, Ledger, 1915-1920, F.J. Riley Collection, NLA MS 759/2A. The Ledger reveals that the unions were a much more reliable source of finance for the central executive than the branches. They provided the central executive with over £300 in the quarter ending 31 May, 1915. While the branches were also required to contribute to the central executive's finances, their contributions were more irregular.

[177]This was 30s for unions with 301 to 1000 members and 40s for unions with over 1000 members.

[178]PLC, *Constitution*, 1912-13, Labor Call [Printer], Melbourne, 1913, p.12.

[179]PLC, Minutes, February 12, 1912, VSL MS 10389. It is not possible to calculate how much money was spent by the branches and unions on the Labor Party because both branches and unions raised and expended considerable sums locally without reference to the central executive.

[180]*Labor Call*, December 8, 1910, p.2.

[181]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 5, 1912, NLA MS 131; *Labor Call*, April 25, 1912, p.2; April 30, 1914, p.8.

[182]*Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1911, Vol.3, Part 12, Occupations, Tables 24-5.

Labor Party's affiliates included several unions in this sector. These relatively weak unions desired the advantages of wages boards and compulsory arbitration. The Shop Assistants Union affiliated with the PLC in 1909, but it embraced only a small proportion of employees in this growing sector of the workforce.[183] Industrial relations in the large department stores were characterised by paternalism and a strict discipline to which employees could offer no sustained resistance.[184] One observer remarked that "[w]omen in these large shops are apathetic as regards politics and unionism. The environment makes them so".[185] While "apathy" might have been one reason for shop assistants having shown little interest in unionism, fear of the employers was evidently another.[186] Employers were probably more tolerant of unionism when a large proportion of their clientele was working class. In 1910, however, the secretary of the Union was "struck by the number of employes who wanted to join the union & were afraid to do so...Even in Labour centres men were afraid to join". In one large city firm, almost the whole male staff wanted to join the Union but feared dismissal.[187]

The Union affiliated with the THC and the PLC, and was able to use these relationships to increase its industrial strength.[188] One of its strategies was to approach other unions and Labor branches to ask their members to purchase goods only from shop assistants wearing the Union badge.[189] However, the Union recognised that it was the wages board system and compulsory arbitration which held out the most promise. The secretary

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[183]Shop Assistants, Minutes, June 29, 1909, NBAC, ANU T 21/5/2.
[184]Gail Reekie, 'The Shop Assistants Case of 1907 and Labour Relations in Sydney's Retail Industry', in Macintyre & Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration*, p.272.
[185]*Labor Call*, October 8, 1914, p.6.
[186]Shop Assistants, Minutes, October 18, 1910, NBAC, ANU T21/5/3.
[187]Shop Assistants, Minutes, July 12, 1910, NBAC, ANU T21/5/3.
[188]THC, Minutes, August 21, 1908; July 16, 1909; Shop Assistants, Minutes, July 28, 1908; June 15, 1909; June 29, 1909, NBAC, ANU T21/5/2; December 13, 1910, NBAC, ANU T 21/5/3; *Labor Call*, July 22, 1909, p.5.
[189]Shop Assistants, Minutes, August 9, 1910; September 6, 1910, NBAC, ANU T21/5/3.

explained why the Union should affiliate with the PLC: "We were not strong enough to demand our rights without political support and the only political support we could rely on was the Labour Party".[190] The 1910 state Labor conference carried motions submitted by the Union calling for compulsory early closing throughout the state; the Saturday half-holiday; the abolition of shop work at night; and amendment of the Factories Act to compel employers to pay wages by Tuesday of each week.[191] These measures might have encouraged some shop assistants to vote Labor, since terror was less effective as a weapon in a secret ballot than on the shop floor. In 1914, one observer claimed that "[m]any shop assistants that at one time voted Fusion now vote Labor".[192]

The widening breadth of Labor's urban working-class base by 1914 is also indicated by the adherence of the Clerks' Union to the Labor Party.[193] The Clerks Union, founded in 1900, was more militant in its industrial and political methods than the Shop Assistants.[194] It included many women, who were employed in offices in greater numbers from the 1890s.[195] The Union was inactive for most of the decade but in 1910, *Labor Call* reported that the membership of the Clerks' Union was increasing and that the old antipathies of clerks to labour bodies was disappearing.[196] This was almost certainly an overstatement. Melanie Nolan estimates that in 1911, the Union covered only twelve per cent of clerks.[197] A gulf remained between

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[190]Shop Assistants, Minutes, June 29, 1909, NBAC, ANU T21/5/2.

[191]*Labor Call*, June 16, 1910, p.6.

[192]*Labor Call*, October 8, 1914, p.6.

[193]It affiliated with the Labor Party in 1903. See PLC, Minutes, February 7, 1903, VSL MS 10389.

[194]*Labor Call*, August 25, 1910, p.8.

[195]Raelene Frances & Bruce Scates, *Women at Work in Australia from the Gold Rushes to World War II*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp.89-95.

[196]Melanie Nolan, 'Sex or Class? The Politics of the Earliest Equal Pay Campaign in Victoria', in Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates (eds.), *Women, Work and the Labour Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney, 1991, p.105; *Labor Call*, May 19, 1910, p.5.

[197]Nolan, 'Sex or Class?', p.105.

manual labour and white-collar workers, based on the supposedly greater respectability of white-collar work.[198]

## The Limits of Labourism

The shortcomings of the state industrial tribunals and courts were apparent to many unionists before the Great War, and direct action remained a part of the armoury of every union. Moreover, syndicalism began to influence organised labour from about 1908. An Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Club was founded in Melbourne in 1907 to advocate revolutionary industrial unionism.[199] Its policies gained almost immediate currency among the militants in an industrial labour movement which was growing impatient with the wages board system and compulsory arbitration. In September 1907, the Agricultural Implement Makers' Union (AIMU), which had a socialist leadership, carried a motion in favour of reorganising on IWW lines, and the THC itself soon came under syndicalist pressure.[200] The inadequacy of the wages boards and the High Court's invalidation of Deakin's new protection legislation in 1908 encouraged the unions to look for alternatives. In March 1908, the THC executive reported on the IWW scheme of organisation which had been proposed by the AIMU as an alternative to "Arbitration Courts and Wages Boards [which] have failed to give protection to the workers...".[201] The THC executive did not agree with this assessment, nor with the IWW scheme in its entirety, and it recommended a fighting fund as an alternative. However, the executive's report on the IWW scheme indicated the growing influence of the language of class struggle on the labour movement:

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[198]See pp.398-400.

[199]Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, p.57.

[200]AIMU, Minutes, September, 12, 1907, UMA 2/1/1/3; THC, Minutes, September 20, 1907.

[201]*Socialist*, March 20, 1908, p.4.

The industrial evolution clearly defines that there no longer exists the older forms of industrial relationship, between the Employer and the Employed - Capital and Labor.

The business of Capital (as now controlled) is to exploit Labor; the business of Labor is to kill exploitation, and capture Capital in the interest of, and make it subserve the welfare and well-being of humanity.[202]

The idea that Labor could "kill exploitation" and make capital serve the interests of humanity has close affinities with the attitudes of unionists in the 1880s which were surveyed in chapter one of this thesis. Class struggle ideology was thus reformulated by the THC leadership, and fitted into "other, sometimes older, versions of consensual social relations".[203] It did not necessarily signify a radical departure from traditional union interpretations of the industrial order. Moreover, the theme of continuity is suggested by the claim that modern industrial conditions turned workers into "the recipients of a charity that destroys their manhood, and makes them servile tools of the Capitalist class".[204] Male unionists regarded class subordination as a danger to their masculinity and unionism as a means of breathing into workers "courage and manhood".[205]

Despite considerable pressure from advocates of IWW organisation, their scheme was rejected.[206] The Victorian Socialist Party, however, was powerfully influenced by the IWW's revolutionary industrial unionism from 1908. Socialists believed that arbitration and wages boards were "weakening trade unionism in spirit and action";[207] the future lay with industrial unionism which would ensure "working class control over

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[202]THC, Minutes, March 6, 1908; *Socialist*, March 20, 1908, p.4.
[203]Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.29.
[204]THC, Minutes, March 6, 1908.
[205]THC, Minutes, March 6, 1908.
[206]THC, Minutes, April 3, 1908; April 10, 1908; August 7, 1908; August 21, 1908.
[207]*Socialist*, December 18, 1908, p.5.

necessities".[208]  The Broken Hill lockout in early 1909 intensified socialist

hostility to compulsory arbitration, especially when the High Court

invalidated Higgins's award in favour of the miners, and the NSW

Government prosecuted the strike leaders, including Mann.[209]  The defeat of

the unions seemed to confirm the case for revolutionary industrial

unionism.  Socialist speakers such as Mann, John Curtin, Bob Ross and

Percy Laidler addressed union meetings in advocacy of industrial unionism

and socialists such as T.P. Mottram (Bread Carters), R.G. Blomberg (AIMU),

W.P. Earsman (ASE) and Fred Katz (Carters and Drivers) were able to

advance the cause through positions of influence in the unions.[210]  By late

1909, there were signs that their labour would bear fruit when a conference

of trades at which seventy unions were represented considered closer

organisation.  The conference embraced industrial unionism and class

struggle ideology, adopting a preamble based on that of the IWW.[211]  Many

unions now accepted the need for closer organisation, but it is unclear how

seriously they considered industrial unionism before 1914.  They wanted to

avoid demarcation disputes, which were becoming more frequent with

technological change and the expansion of unionism, but they were also

jealous of their autonomy, and continued to look to the Labor Party, the

wages boards and the Arbitration Court for protection.[212]  The trend of most

union opinion was not in a syndicalist direction away from support for state

regulation of industrial relations and towards revolutionary industrial

unionism; it was a movement from the state wages boards to the

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[208]*Socialist*, October 22, 1909, p.3.

[209]Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, pp.40-2.

[210]*Socialist*, March 13, 1908; October 1, 1909, p.4; November 5, 1909, p.3; Carters and Drivers, Minutes, March 6, 1909, NBAC, ANU E103/52; AIMU, Minutes, May 6, 1909; June 3, 1909, UMA 2/1/1/3; ASE, Australasian Council, *Monthly Report*, November 1913, pp.28-9; December 1913, pp.34-5.

[211]*Labor Call*, November 4, 1909, p.1.

[212]THC, Minutes, September 7, 1911; February 26, 1914; VOBU, Minutes, November 14, 1910, NBAC, ANU T5/1/6; *Australasian Typographical Journal*, January 1913, p.10.

Arbitration Court.[213] Even unions with socialist leaders, such as the AIMU, could not resist the attraction of the Arbitration Court, since it promised them a legitimacy that neither a voluntary system of conciliation nor state wages boards could bestow. The socialist leanings of the AIMU led to its secession from the Labor Party in 1907 (although the legal implications of its involvement in the federal arbitration system might also have been a factor), yet it re-affiliated with the Labor Party in October 1908. E.F. Russell, its socialist secretary, soon transferred from the Socialist Party to the Labor Party.[214]

## Conclusion

By 1914 the Victorian Labor Party was no longer a mere appendage of a craft union-dominated THC. With the help of state intervention in industrial relations, Labor had acquired a large organised working-class core of electoral support through its links with the union movement. There were, however, already indications in the years before the Great War that Labor could not count on unqualified union support. The shortcomings of the wages boards and the Arbitration Court had been exposed, and syndicalist ideas had begun to permeate the labour movement, strengthening the language of class struggle. Proponents of syndicalism and industrial unionism criticised the fragmented, unscientific character of the union movement, and the participation of the unions in the state industrial relations system.[215] The pressures which this critique exploited and

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[213]Frances, *The Politics of Work*, pp.99, 114, 129.

[214]AIMU, Minutes, January 31, 1907; October 22, 1908; November 19, 1908, UMA 2/1/1/3; *Socialist*, July 23, 1909, p.2; *Labor Call*, July 27, 1911, p.4. Russell became Labor Mayor of Port Melbourne in 1912. See *Labor Call*, August 29, 1912, p.1.

[215]Bertha Walker, *Solidarity Forever!: A Part Story of the Life and Times of Percy Laidler - the first quarter of a century*, The National Press, Melbourne, 1972, p.97.

exacerbated moulded Victorian labour politics during the Great War and its aftermath.

# CHAPTER SIX:
# THE VICTORIAN LABOR PARTY
# AND THE COUNTRY, 1885-1914

## Introduction

The Victorian Labor Party's inability to win seats outside Melbourne, the large regional centres and the mining districts was the most significant barrier to its progress in state politics. Labor's problems were accentuated by an electoral system which was heavily biased in favour of country voters. In 1892, one hundred votes in a metropolitan seat were worth about sixty-four votes in the country. The depopulation of Victoria in the early 1890s, which affected Melbourne more adversely than the country districts, increased the value of each metropolitan vote but after 1894, there was a trend towards malapportionment in favour of the country electorates.[1] In 1910, however, changes in the method of enroling electors had the most dramatic impact on the political relationship between Melbourne and the country. Until then, non-ratepayers were able to vote in state elections only if they obtained an elector's right. Thousands of men simply did not bother to enrol and, as a consequence, were excluded from voting at state elections. In 1907, about 73 500 non-ratepayers who qualified to vote in the federal election of 1906 were unable to vote in state elections because their names were absent from the electoral rolls.[2] Moreover, with the introduction of women's suffrage in 1909, the proportion of qualified adults whose names were not on the state rolls increased because most women were non-ratepayers who had to apply for an elector's right if they wished to vote. By 1910, only half the eligible women had enroled to vote but the compilation

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[1]B.D. Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1966, p. 84.
[2]*Statistical Register of Victoria*, 1907, pp.13, 17.

of a general state electoral roll in 1911 led to the enrolment of thousands of non-ratepayers.[3] The number of electors rose from 487 661 to 694 561 in one year without any formal change in the state franchise.[4] This large increase in the size of the electorate, with the growth of Melbourne and the drift of population to the metropolis, further reduced the power of city electors so that between 1908 and 1914, the value of one hundred Melbourne votes declined from about sixty-eight to forty-seven country votes.[5] This was a source of demoralisation to the Labor Party and its supporters, who were concentrated in the most heavily populated electorates, but it does not explain why Labor in Victoria was less successful than its NSW counterpart in winning rural support before the Great War.[6] I shall argue that the nature of rural economic activity, the pattern of class relations in the country, and the social values of the farming population provided few opportunities for the Labor Party to find a secure place in the fabric of Victorian rural life. Moreover, the Labor Party was married to a language of radical agrarianism which excited some urban working-class electors, but had little appeal to Victoria's increasingly prosperous farmers.

## Mining

Before 1900, the Miners' Association was an insignificant factor in Victorian labour politics. One reason for the isolation of the AMA from the Labor Party was the strength of its attachments to Liberal politicians identified with the mining industry. Indeed, one of its own officials, J.B. Burton, represented Stawell in the Assembly (1892-1902) and was Minister of Mines

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[3]*VPD*, CXXVI, December 22, 1910, p.3703.
[4]*Statistical Register of Victoria*, 1909, p.17; *Statistical Register of Victoria*, 1910, p.18.
[5]Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties*, p. 84.
[6]Jim Hagan & Ken Turner, *A History of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1891-1991*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1991, pp.33-56.

in the Peacock Ministry (1900-1902).[7] The AMA, however, had participated in the THC parliamentary committee during the 1880s, and it sent representatives to the conference which formed the PPL in 1891.[8] A breach between the PPL and the AMA soon appeared when the League failed to commit itself formally to the maintenance of the Education Act. Loyal adherence to free, compulsory and secular education had, since the 1870s, been integral to Victorian liberalism, which was the dominant political creed in the mining districts. Moreover, the AMA, which had a Protestant executive, opposed any interference with the Act which might permit the Catholics to agitate for grants.[9] The AMA, instead of embracing the PPL program, formulated a political platform of its own which included a plank calling for the "maintenance of our present Education Act free, secular and compulsory...".[10] A conference of the Miners' Association made Labor Party adoption of this plank a condition of AMA support for the League's efforts.[11] While some AMA officials participated in the affairs of the PPL, the League received no formal support from branches of the Association and Labor failed to win a mining seat in 1892. Popular support for the liberals representing these districts remained firm. Indeed, with the exception of Sandhurst, Labor failed to win seats in the mining districts throughout the 1890s. W.A. Hamilton, a coachmaker and former secretary

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[7]Robert Murray & Kate White, *The Golden Years of Stawell*, Town of Stawell in conjunction with Lothian, Melbourne, 1983, pp.14, 123.

[8]W.E. Murphy to W.G. Spence, July 17, 1884; W.E. Murphy to George Williams, June 9, 1885, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU P 94/20; Bendigo Miners' Association, Minutes, November 12, 1885, NBAC, ANU P 103/4. The AMA delegates at the convention which formed the PPL in 1891 were Lawn and Hunter. See 'Report of the Convention of the Trades and Labor Bodies of Victoria' held at Trades Hall, Melbourne, May 30, 1891 and following days, J.P. Jones Papers, VSL MS 9547/1268/5 .

[9]G.R. Bartlett, 'Political Organisation and Society in Victoria, 1864-1883', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1964, pp.375-8; Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, pp.155-6; W.G. Spence, *Australia's Awakening: Thirty Years in the Life of an Australian Agitator*, Worker Trustees, Sydney, n.d. [first published 1909], p.201.

[10]*Age*, July 25, 1891, p.10. See also D. Bennet to J. Wilson, n.d., in PPL (Ballarat West) Minute Book, Ballarat TLC Collection, NBAC, ANU E 97/37.

[11]*Bendigo Advertiser*, February 25, 1892.

of the Bendigo TLC, held one of the two Sandhurst seats from 1894 until 1900 as the nominee of the People's Party, a Lab-Lib organisation heavily influenced by single tax doctrines.[12] Hamilton joined the PLP but the relationship was never harmonious. A Theosophist, leader of the co-operative movement and Fabian Society member, Hamilton was more closely linked with the middle-class radicalism of the 1890s than with labour.[13] Moreover, unlike the THC leaders who dominated the Labor Party, Hamilton was sceptical about the efficacy of tariff protection and clashed with other members of the Party over tariff reform in 1895.[14] He declared himself "an independent member", but retained membership of the Labor Party.[15]

Apart from the mixture of apathy and antipathy which characterised the AMA's attitude to the Labor Party, there were other reasons for the failure of the Party to win mining seats in the 1890s. Much of the increase in gold production was due to the expansion of tributing and fossicking.[16] The primary concern of most of these workers was keeping body and soul together with the pittance they earned. This reason alone would be enough to explain an indifference to political matters, but we also need to consider the high level of labour mobility in the 1890s, which meant that many workers had difficulty fulfilling the residential requirements necessary to qualify to vote. Moreover, the sixpence demanded of non-ratepayers wanting to enrol and the time and effort involved in registration might

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[12]*Platform of the People's Party*, Bolton Bros. [Printers], n.d. c.1894, Ballarat TLC Collection, NBAC, ANU E 97/41/5 (See Appendix G). See also *Bendigo Advertiser*, October 18, 1893; October 23, 1893; October 25, 1893; November 1, 1893; November 6, 1893; November 14, 1893; November 20, 1893; January 11, 1894; February 21, 1894.

[13]Race Mathews, 'Victoria's First Fabians, 1890-1910', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1989, pp. 43, 46-7, 56.

[14]*VPD*, LXXVII, June 12, 1895, pp.268, 271; *Champion*, June 22, 1895, p.3.

[15]*VPD*, LXXVII, July 16, 1895, p.954.

[16]Sinclair, W.A. *Economic Recovery in Victoria 1894-1899*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1956, pp.72, 77.

have been a significant deterrent to impoverished gold diggers as much as for other labouring people.

After 1900, the political isolation of the AMA gradually ended. The decline of the Liberal Party and the threat which the Irvine Government posed to the labour movement encouraged AMA officials to reconsider their attitude to the Labor Party.[17] AMA officials organised Mann's visits to the various mining centres, and accepted official positions in the Labor branches established by him.[18] The formation of strong Labor branches in mining districts such as Bendigo, Ballarat, Maryborough and Castlemaine was indicative of a political mobilisation of workers in the mining districts in support of the Labor Party.[19] There were also large Labor branches in the coal mining townships of Korumburra, Jumbunna and Outtrim, where there was a long-running and bitter strike in 1903-4.[20] Labor won several mining seats in the 1904 state election; Ballarat West, Bendigo West, Grenville and Maryborough and in the 1903 federal election, the AMA member David Smith polled strongly against John Quick in Bendigo.[21]

By 1904, the AMA was being drawn into the orbit of the Labor Party as the leadership came to regard direct representation of labour as a solution to a growing number of the miners' problems. A depression in the mining

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[17]*Age*, February 25, 1903, p.5; February 28, 1903, p.14; *Bendigo Advertiser*, February 25, 1903; *Official Report of the Eleventh Annual Conference*, W.D. James [Printer], Eaglehawk, 1903, p.72.

[18]Rees [secretary AMA, Maryborough] to William Hurdsfield, May 7, 1903; L.B. Elshaugh [secretary AMA, Creswick] to William Hurdsfield, May 8, 1903, Ballarat TLC Collection NBAC, ANU E 97/7/2, 4; *Tocsin*, July 16, 1903, p.6.

[19]Karen J. Gordon, 'Tom Mann and Country Labor Organization, 1903-1904', unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1977, pp. 45-7; *Tocsin*, March 26, 1903, pp.1, 7; April 2, 1903, p.11; May 28, 1903, p.7; August 13, 1903; September 10, 1903, p.7; November 12, 1903, p.1; *Ballarat Courier*, February 15, 1904, p.5; AMA, *Official Report of the Thirteenth Annual Conference*, W.D. James [Printer], Eaglehawk, 1905, p.20.

[20]*People's Daily*, January 29, 1904, p.3; February 1, 1904, p.2; March 14, 1904, p.1.

[21]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics, 1890-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1968, p.475; Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives 1901-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, p.16. The figures for the 1903 Bendigo contest were David Smith (Labor) 5704; C.F. James (Free Trade) 2650; John Quick (Protectionist) 6020.

industry increased the urgency of the situation.[22]  AMA officials believed

that the Labor Party would secure better ventilation of mines, a Conciliation

and Arbitration Act, and prevent exemptions to labour covenants in mining

leases.[23]  In 1905, the PLC adopted a comprehensive mining policy

formulated by the AMA.[24]  By this time, the Labor Party leadership

recognised that miners should not be treated in political terms as merely a

section of the working class, but rather as a "class" with particular interests,

some of which they shared with their employers.  Labor did not try to

overcome regional and workplace loyalties but attempted to direct them in

the interests of the Party.  As *Labor Call* remarked:

> ...a general policy has no particular attraction for men of a special class.
> Men in one occupation continuously come to regard it as their life
> work, and are likely to overlook the general demands of labor, in favor
> of the immediate needs of their own industries.[25]

There was now a conviction among many of the miners that liberals could

no longer carry out the reforms they desired, "nor did they profess to, as they

were between the two great extremes and formed a middle class".[26]  By 1906,

there was some support within the AMA leadership for affiliation with the

PLC, but the rank-and-file remained firmly opposed.[27]  The miners at

Ballarat in 1906[28] and Bendigo in 1907[29] voted overwhelmingly against

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[22]Gold yields had declined in the years 1900-2, recovered slightly in the years 1903-6, and dropped sharply thereafter.  See *Victorian Year-Books*, 1903, p.434; 1910-11, p.714.

[23]*Age*, February 24, 1904, p.6; May 20, 1904, p.8.

[24]Mining Conference, Minutes, November 3, 1905, in PLC CE, Minutes, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, November 16, 1905, p.2.  See Appendix N.

[25]*Labor Call*, March 21, 1907, p.1.

[26]*Creswick Advertiser*, September 4, 1905.

[27]*Bendigo Advertiser*, March 3, 1906.  A motion from the Chiltern and Indigo branch at the 1906 annual conference that branches be authorised to spend money for political purposes and affirming that the time had arrived to give every possible assistance to the PLC to secure the return of Labor candidates was ruled out of order.  See *Age*, March 3, 1906, p.11.

[28]*Worker*, September 27, 1906, p.4; *Tocsin*, September 27, 1906, p.6; *Bendigo Advertiser*, February 29, 1908, p.7.

[29]*Age*, February 28, 1907, p.10.

affiliation, and a section of the leadership also remained antagonistic.[30]
Indeed, the 1907 AMA conference rejected a motion in favour of political
action, although it agreed to support pledged Labor candidates in the state
elections.[31]  The fusion of the Ministerial and Liberal Parties in early 1907[32]
increased support for political action among the AMA leaders, since the
Liberal Party's compromise with Bent detracted from its reputation as a
miners' party.[33]  In the 1907 state election, Labor won the seats of Bendigo
East, Bendigo West, Eaglehawk, Grenville and Maryborough, although it
lost Ballarat West.[34]  Labor also polled well in the federal electorate of
Bendigo in 1906 and 1910, but it did not win the seat until 1913 when J.A.
Andrew, a solicitor and the son of a miner, defeated Quick.[35]  These results
suggested that miners, with other electors in the mining districts, were
increasingly voting Labor.  The AMA affiliated with the Labor Party in 1909
but by this time, it was too weak to provide the PLC with much support.[36]
There were only about 16 500 gold miners in Victoria in 1910, and most were
not members of the AMA.[37]  The decline of the mining industry and the
depopulation of many districts which had once teemed with diggers meant
that gold miners were destined never to form a significant part of the Labor
Party's base of rural electoral support.  Indeed, Rawson has suggested that
the lack of "large numbers of metal and coal miners and ancillary workers"

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[30]*Age*, February 28, 1907, p.10; February 28, 1907, p.10; *Bendigo Advertiser*, February 28, 1907, p.2.
[31]*Age*, February 28, 1907, p.10; March 2, 1907, p.15.
[32]See p.254.
[33]*Bendigo Advertiser*, February 28, 1907.
[34]Hughes & Graham, *Handbook*, p.476.  Labor regained Ballarat West in 1908.
[35]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives*, pp. 27, 38, 48; John R. Thompson, 'John Andrew Arthur', *ADB*, Volume 7, pp.102-3.
[36]*Age*, February 27, 1909, p.15; *Bendigo Advertiser*, February 11, 1910; February 26, 1910; PLC CE, Minutes, July 3, 1909, VSL MS 10389; Amalgamated Mining Employes Association of Victoria and Tasmania (AMEA), *Official Report of the Eighteenth Annual Conference*, James [Printer], Eaglehawk, 1910, p.15.
[37]AMA, *Official Report of the Seventeenth Annual Conference*, D. James [Printer], Eaglehawk, 1909, p.17.  There were 7477 AMA members in Victoria and Tasmania combined early in 1909.

in Victoria was a significant reason for Labor's electoral weakness outside Melbourne.[38]  The Party had to look in other directions.

## Pastoralism and Agriculture

In the 1880s and 1890s, Shearers' Union (ASU) members shared the liberalism of their urban union counterparts.[39]  Shearers' unionism, as an example of "new unionism", was not a major departure from existing forms of industrial organisation in the relative importance it attached to political action.[40]  The ASU was only converted to political action after the maritime strike.  In the final months of 1890, ASU activists expressed their antagonism to Liberal politicians and to the existing political parties.[41]  By December 1891, however, the *Record*  had retreated from this position, and it envisaged a Labor Party which would strengthen the liberal section of the House rather than act as an independent political entity.[42]  In April 1892, James Slattery, secretary of the Casterton branch of the ASU, issued a circular to ASU members in the Normanby electorate asking them to support the premier, William Shiels: "The labor party should try as much to keep the Conservatives out of Parliament as to return direct labor representatives".[43]

The weakness of the Victorian bush unions in the 1890s prevented them from playing a major role in labour politics.  Moreover, by 1893, there was a growing ideological division between the bush unions and the metropolitan labour movement.  The ASU, unlike the THC, was becoming more heavily influenced by the single tax doctrine in 1893.  The *Worker* published STL propaganda, and its editorial opinion closely coincided with

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[38]D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria, 1910-1966: Out of Step, or Merely Shuffling?', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 49, October 1967, p.69.
[39]*Shearers' Record*, April 15, 1889, p.5.
[40]*Shearers' Record*, March 8, 1889, p.1.
[41]*Shearers' Record*, November 21, 1890, p.9; December 18, 1890, p.2.
[42]*Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, December 15, 1891.
[43]*Age*, April 9, 1892, p.8.

the policy of the STL.[44] In the 1894 general election, the ASU issued its own political program, identical to that of the ULLP except that it omitted mention of either protection or federation [of the colonies]. From the ASU's point of view, protection diverted attention from more important issues such as the land monopoly and unemployment; it also had the potential to divide the workers, as the example of the NSW Labor Party had demonstrated.[45]

There is little evidence of political activity by the Victorian branch of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU)[46] after 1893 although David Temple, the secretary, involved the Union in an unsuccessful attempt to revive Labor Party organisation in Victoria in 1898-9.[47] After 1900, the organisational recovery of the AWU coincided with efforts to increase shearing prices, improve hut accommodation and bring the Union under the wages board system. AWU officials sought the co-operation of the Labor Party in these endeavours.[48] By 1902, the Victoria-Riverina branch had partially recovered from its languor of the 1890s, but Merritt has suggested that it lost members in 1902-3, as a result of the drought.[49] Despite this weakness, the Pastoralists' Union of Victoria was willing to negotiate with the AWU, and an agreement satisfactory to both parties was formulated in 1902.[50] As the industry returned to prosperity after 1904, peaceful industrial relations continued in Victoria until 1906. The conciliatory relations

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[44]*Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, August 15, 1893; *Worker* (Melbourne), October-November, 1893.

[45]*Worker* (Melbourne), September 15, 1894, p.1.

[46]The AWU was formed when the Amalgamated Shearers' Union and the General Labourers' Union were merged in 1894.

[47]This was the Workers' Political League scheme. See *Tocsin*, December 29, 1898, p.1; January 19, 1899, p.1; January 26, 1899, p.7; February 23, 1899, p.3; THC, Minutes, December 2, 1898. For the platform, see Appendix J.

[48]AWU, *Official Report of the Fifteenth Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1901, p.11; SPLP, Minutes, February 21, 1901, VSL MS 10914.

[49]John Merritt, *The Making of the AWU*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1986, p.328.

[50]The drought might have encouraged a conciliatory attitude on the part of the Victorian pastoralists. See Merritt, *The Making*, p. 323; AWU, *Official Report of the Seventeenth Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1903, pp. 8-11.

between the AWU and the pastoralists in the early years of the century provided the AWU with a stability and an authority among shearers and labourers which it had not previously enjoyed. In 1906, the AWU had just over 4000 members in Victoria alone.[51]

The AWU's relationship to the metropolitan labour movement was also being transformed. The 1902 conference debated the question of locating the Victoria-Riverina branch in Melbourne, which, as one official suggested, "might possibly result in some liberalising influence being brought to bear on the Trades Hall people".[52]  In June 1902, the AWU sent representatives to the political Labor conference in Melbourne. The conference decided that until Labor branches were formed in the country districts, PLC work should be delegated to the AWU, provided it defray expenses. The PLC would support candidates chosen by the AWU.[53] In April 1903, the AWU decided to employ six organisers for the federal election whose duties included forming "political leagues in Country districts".[54] In July, the AWU sponsored Mann's successful tour of the Western District.[55]  AWU officials and members were gradually entering Labor Party politics: Grayndler was secretary of the St. Arnaud branch of the PLC[56] while Thomas White, an AWU organiser in NSW, was the unsuccessful Labor candidate for the Western district seat of Wannon in 1903.[57]

In 1905, the AWU affiliated with the PLC.[58]  The precise terms of affiliation are unclear, but it appears that the Victorian Party granted AWU

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[51]PLC CE, Minutes, March 17, 1906, VSL MS 10389.

[52]AWU, *Official Report of the Sixteenth Annual Conference*, Worker [Printer], Sydney, 1902, p.26.

[53]*Tocsin*, July 3, 1902, p.6.

[54]PLC, Minutes, April 18, 1903, VSL MS 10389. See also *Tocsin*, April 23, 1903, p. 10.

[55]*Worker* (Sydney), July 4, 1903, p.6. (Hereafter, the *Worker* ).

[56]*Tocsin*, July 16, 1903, p.6. The Victorian head office of the AWU was located at St. Arnaud at this time.

[57]*Hamilton Spectator*, November 12, 1903.

[58]PLC CE, Minutes, March 18, 1905; March 31, 1905, VSL MS 10389.

members fewer privileges than had the Political Labor League (PLL) in NSW.[59] The PLC, unlike the PLL, did not permit unionists to become full members of the Party at half-rates,[60] while it was not until August 1907 that AWU members could use ballot papers printed in the *Worker* to vote in preselections.[61] This concession had already been made in New South Wales, facilitating greater AWU involvement in the Labor Party.[62]

From 1906, the AWU virtually controlled preselections outside Melbourne, with the concurrence of the PLC executive. John McNeil, an active AWU member, was selected as the Labor candidate in the Glenelg by-election in 1906[63] and Grayndler unsuccessfully contested Grampians in the federal election later in the year.[64] The Victoria-Riverina branch of the AWU, based in Ballarat from 1904, was the driving force behind J.H. Scullin's candidature for Ballarat in the 1906 federal election. Indeed, the AWU increasingly dominated the industrial and political wings of the labour movement in Ballarat, wresting control from the liberal craft unionists who had long ruled the TLC. Archibald Stewart, an AWU official, was also secretary of the Ballarat branch of the PLC while the AWU office was "really the nerve-centre of the Labor movement there...".[65]

The unifying theme in these activities, however, was electoral failure and the question of whether the AWU's efforts would yield any tangible results depended mainly on the farmers. Since the early 1890s, the Labor

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[59]The terms of affiliation were not finalised until early 1906. See PLC CE, Minutes, March 7, 1906, VSL MS 10389.

[60]PLC CE, Minutes, March 2, 1907, VSL MS 10389. The PLL also had an arrangement whereby affiliated unions might arrange with local Electorate Councils or Leagues for their members to obtain full Labor Party membership upon payment of 6d. per head per year for all members of the Union resident in the electorate. This concession, which the PLC did not grant, was a great advantage to the AWU in NSW country areas. See New South Wales Political Labor League, *Platforms & Rules*, Worker Trades Union Printery, Sydney, 1907, p.10.

[61]*Labor Call*, August 15, 1907, p.8.

[62]*Tocsin*, September 13, 1906, p.6.

[63]PLC CE, Minutes, March 7, 1906, VSL MS 10389.

[64]H.W.H. Irvine: 7598 (55.82%) E. Grayndler: 6013 (44.18%). See Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives*, p.28.

[65]*Worker*, December 6, 1906, p.5.

Party had appealed unsuccessfully to farmers for electoral support. In 1892, John Hancock told a meeting of Camperdown electors that "the interests of the Progressive Political League and of the farming and agricultural districts were identical".[66] The League even modified its platform to accommodate rural interests, omitting its proposal for equal electoral districts "as the country party were so 'touchy' at anything emanating from the Trades Hall".[67] Moreover, in 1892, Labor candidates denied that the PPL's policy of the legislative enactment of the eight hour day would be applied to "the farmer or others whose occupations rendered it impracticable".[68] After the 1892 election, in which the PPL won only one seat in the country (Dundas, secured by the solicitor Samuel Samuel, whose links with the League were tenuous), the *Commonweal* remained enthusiastic about the possibilities of an alliance between farmers and workers:

> Farmers and workers are running hand in hand in America, and why should they not do so here...we hope that the friendly feeling may go on increasing in force until the two *necessary* sections of the community are brought into indivisible contact... [69]

In the 1890s, however, the Labor Party was in no position to forge such an alliance. Very few workers outside the metropolis were unionised, and working-class political organisation was confined to Melbourne and the major provincial towns.[70]

After 1902, in a state political environment increasingly dominated by developmental issues, the Labor Party emphasised its support for closer

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[66]*Age*, March 4, 1892, p.6; *Commonweal*, March 5, 1892, p.2.
[67]*Age*, October 10, 1891, p.9.
[68]*Age*, April 5, 1892, p.5.
See also Warde, *Age*, March 29, 1892, p.5.
[69]*Commonweal*, March 11, 1893, p.2.
[70]*Tocsin*, August 25, 1898, p.6; September 28, 1899, p.3; November 30, 1899, p.2.

settlement and state assistance to farmers.[71]  In the debates over the Bent

Ministry's Closer Settlement Bill in 1904, the Labor members argued that the

state had no moral right to alienate the land, which properly belonged to the

whole people.[72]  The Party advocated a system of perpetual leasehold with

periodic revaluation of allotments and the readjustment of rent to accord

with changes in the unimproved value of the land.  The avoidance of

private ownership would prevent both the aggregation of holdings and the

appropriation of the unearned increment by a private land-owner.

Meanwhile, the state would protect the rights of the community through

leasehold, and any benefits from a rise in the unimproved value of land

would be reaped by the community responsible for the increase.  The actual

land-holder would receive only the value created by his own efforts.[73]

These policies indicated the influence of Henry George's theories, but

Labor's desire to create a "solid yeomanry" was also part of a language of

radical agrarianism which had been prominent in Victorian politics since

the Land Convention of the late 1850s.[74]  By the early 1900s, this radical

agrarianism had only limited appeal, especially outside the cities, towns and

closely settled rural districts.  There was no major controversy over forms of

land tenure, and most radical farmers remained outside a State Labor Party

which was firmly identified with leasehold.  Where there was support for

leasehold, such as in parts of the Western District, there were Liberals such

as D.S. Oman and R.F. Toutcher prepared to support the principle.[75]  The

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[71]Rollison, 'Groups', pp.359-424; E.H. Sugden & F.W. Eggleston, *George Swinburne: A Biography*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1931, pp.112-4, 123-77, 223-252; *Age*, May 9, 1904, p.6; *Tocsin*, June 9, 1904, p.3.

[72]*VPD*, CVII, August 3, 1904, p.633; CVIII, September 6, 1904, p.1396.

[73]*VPD*, CVII, July 27, 1904, p.488-98; CVIII, August 30, 1904, p.1286; September 6, 1904, p.1376-8, 1404, 1409; *Port Fairy Gazette*, December 15, 1908; December 24, 1908.

[74]*VPD*, CVII, July 27, 1904, p.498.  See David Goodman, 'Gold Fields /Golden Fields: The Language of Agrarianism and the Victorian Gold Rush', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 90, April 1988, pp.19-41; Coral Lansbury, *Arcady in Australia: The Evocation of Australia in Nineteenth Century English Literature*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1970, pp.33-6, 160-3; Geoffrey Serle, *The Golden Age: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1851-1861*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1977, pp.266-82.

[75]*VPD*, CVIII, September 6, 1904, p.1404.

situation in Victoria in the early 1900s might be contrasted with that in New South Wales, where there was antagonism between the small farmers, who upheld the principle of leasehold and often supported the Labor Party, and the larger agriculturalists, who favoured freehold and the Liberal Party.[76]

In 1905, the Victorian Labor Party modified its taxation policy in an effort to increase its popularity among smallholders. A sub-committee appointed by the 1905 state conference recommended a graduated tax on the unimproved value of land, subject to an exemption of £500.[77] This policy, which was obviously intended to lure small farmers into the orbit of the Labor Party, was embraced by the conference despite the criticisms of some agrarian radicals such as J.K. McDougall, a prosperous farmer from Maroona near Ararat and a member of the AWU,[78] who argued that the principle of exempting unimproved land values from taxation was unjust.[79] McDougall's involvement in the Labor Party was contemporaneous with his prominent role in the Wickliffe Road Land Resumption Association, an organisation formed by small farmers in the Ararat district to agitate for compulsory resumption of large estates for closer settlement.[80] William Plain, later the Labor member for Geelong, was also a member of this organisation, which enjoyed a close relationship with the local Labor branch.[81]

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[76]Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties*, pp. 60-1, 75.

[77]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 23, 1905, VSL MS 10389.

[78]Margaret Luers, *Laureate of Labor: A Biography of J.K. McDougall, Socialist and Poet*, Banyan Press, Sandy Bay (Tas.), 1987, p. 38.

[79]There had been a debate in the pages of the *Tocsin* between the editor and McDougall earlier in the year. The *Tocsin* 's land policy was even more conservative than that eventually adopted by the PLC. It rejected the use of a land tax to break up the large estates entirely, arguing that a graduated land tax should be levied only for revenue purposes. It favoured compulsory resumption of land with compensation for closer settlement as a means of creating a class of smallholders. See *Tocsin*, February 23, 1905, p.2; March 16, 1905, p.6; March 23, 1905, p.2; March 30, 1905, p.4.

[80]Luers, *Laureate*, p.29.

[81]*Age*, March 19, 1910, p.13; *People's Daily*, May 12, 1904, p.2; Luers, *Laureate*, p.29.

# A TORCHBEARER OF TRUTH ?



If in life my feet have been on the dunghill, I have tried to keep my brow among the stars.

John Keith McDougall, Farmer, Labor-Socialist and Poet

The Labor Party's parliamentary leadership realised that if it were to augment the Party's strength in an electoral system biased towards country electorates, it had to offer policies which appealed to smallholders.[82] Its efforts soon yielded some electoral benefits. In 1906, McDougall won the federal seat of Wannon in Victoria's Western District with strong AWU support.[83] It was in this region that the large pastoralists were most firmly entrenched and the potential for a populist alliance of wage-earners and smallholders against the "land monopolist" greatest. By 1900, there was no area outside the western district where such conditions still prevailed: elsewhere the agriculturalists had supplanted the old squattocracy.[84] The Labor Party, in both state and federal elections, received some support from Victorian farmers after 1900, but it never built a rural following to rival that of the Labor Party in NSW.[85] As B.D. Graham has suggested, Victorian farmers "bore little animosity towards pastoralists but profoundly disliked those bankers, grain merchants and land speculators who had exploited them during the pioneering period".[86] Farmers were prepared to co-operate politically with the graziers. The Labor Party's agricultural policy attempted to exploit hostility to the "middleman", and it developed policies to assist farmers in obtaining credit, transporting their goods more cheaply and efficiently, and marketing their produce. Land reform, however, remained the centrepiece of Labor's rural policy.[87] In 1909, Labor's land policy included compulsory resumption of land for closer settlement; no further alienation of Crown land; restriction of the aggregation of large estates; the

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[82]*Tocsin*, April 27, 1905, pp. 1, 4.

[83]The AWU contributed £30 to McDougall's candidature, £5 to Scullin (Ballarat), £30 to Grayndler (Grampians), £20 to T.C. Carey (Corangamite) and £10 to the general fund. See PLC CE, October 27, 1906, VSL MS 10389.

[84]Charles Fahey, '"Abusing the Horses and Exploiting the Labourer": The Victorian Agricultural and Pastoral Labourer, 1871-1911', *Labour History*, 65, November 1993, pp.97-8.

[85]*Tocsin*, May 25, 1905, p.8; April 9, 1906, p.5; May 31, 1906, p.1.

[86]Graham, *The Formation of the Australian Country Parties*, p.67.

[87]PLC, Annual Conference, April 11, 1909, VSL MS 10389. See also F. Anstey, *Monopoly and Democracy: The Land Question of Victoria*, Labor Call [Printer], Melbourne, 1906.

establishment of a State Forestry Department; Fair Rent Boards; and the "sustaining of village settlements, and the creation of small landholders under a system of perpetual lease, with periodical valuations".[88]  Most of these policies had little appeal for the increasingly successful and prosperous farmers of Victoria.[89]  Some, such as no further alienation of Crown land and restriction of aggregation of large estates, were a potential source of grievance.

Many selectors were wealthy by the 1880s.  Fahey has shown that the farmers of Bendigo, Rodney and Gunbower became increasingly prosperous after 1870, and that by 1880, "the gulf between farmers and the working class of northern Victoria was enormous".[90]  It is unclear whether the growing prosperity which Fahey found in the Bendigo district occurred throughout Victoria but the average size of farm holdings was increasing between 1900 and 1914 as successful farmers acquired the properties of their neighbours.[91]  Contrary to the intention of the original Selection Acts and the 1904 Closer Settlement Act, more land-extensive methods of farming developed as farmers diversified their activities.[92]  Dairying and the raising of cattle for meat became more significant, and many selectors raised sheep for wool. Selective breeding increased the amount of wool obtained from each sheep, enhancing the profitability of wool production on farms.[93]

The rapid growth of the Victorian economy between 1900 and 1914 was led by the primary sector, which utilised new technologies and methods in

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[88]PLC, *Constitution*, 1909, Labor Call [Printer], Melbourne, 1909, pp. 17-19.

[89]Eggleston commented: "...land reform in the scientific sense, with land taxes and general compulsory purchase was the last thing that the farmer wanted". Sugden & Eggleston, *George Swinburne*, p.231.

[90]Charles Fahey, 'The Wealth of Farmers: A Victorian Regional Study, 1879-1901', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 82, April 1984, p. 39.

[91]Tony Dingle, *The Victorians: Settling*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1984, p. 73.

[92]Dingle, *The Victorians: Settling*, ch. 6; Bruce R. Davidson, *European Farming in Australia: An Economic History of Australian Farming*, Elsevier Scientific Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1981, ch. 10.

[93]Davidson, *European Farming*, p. 202.

improving the quantity and quality of produce, and in facilitating its export.[94] In the wheat industry, the end of the long drought in 1903, the use of superphosphates, new methods of fallowing and new varieties of wheat improved yields. Meanwhile, increasing mechanisation and the development of the railways reduced costs.[95] Improvements to railway transport and the development of cool stores made dairying a more profitable enterprise. New technology, such as the cream separator, the development of co-operative butter factories, and government subsidies transformed dairying from a primitive and unprofitable pursuit into a major export industry. The development of refrigeration opened the markets of Great Britain to Victorian producers of meat and butter.[96] The yeoman ideal of Labor Party propaganda had little appeal for these capitalists, who were more concerned about reducing labour and transport costs, and developing an efficient system of marketing than with breaking up the large estates or ending the alienation of Crown land. Labor's land policies belonged to a radical tradition which harked back to the Land Convention, the Selection Acts, Francis Longmore and Henry George. They were of declining appeal in the age of the Sunshine Harvester, Federation wheat and butter exports. One reason for the Labor Party's failure to win the support of large numbers of farmers was its inability to develop policies which were responsive to the transformation of Victorian farming between 1890 and 1914. The Labor Party nurtured the romantic vision of a nation of smallholders in an age of capitalist farming.

Farmers identified "Trades Hall" as the enemy, a metonym rich with anti-metropolitan and anti-Labor significance. When Stephen Barker visited Seymour in 1903, he learned from Mr. Jolley, a local publican and old

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[94]W.A Sinclair, *The Process of Economic Development in Australia*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 165-8.
[95]Davidson, *European Farming*, pp. 185-99.
[96]Dingle, *The Victorians: Settling*, pp. 114-9; Davidson, *European Farming*, pp. 206-16.

AMA man, that "the Trades Hall stank in the nostrils of the people there who were mostly Cockies, in fact many free fights took place in his Bar over labour representation in the House".[97] Many farmers regarded the unions, more than bankers, grain merchants and speculators, as parasites who battened on to the wealth created by the honest producer. Moreover, the labour movement's tradition of collectivism and emphasis on solidarity and organisation did not appeal to farmers who often regarded labour values as antagonistic to the ideal of independence.[98]

The hostility of many smallholders to the pastoralists in NSW propelled them into the arms of the Labor Party. One reason the Labor Party was less successful in Victoria was that such conflict was confined to relatively few areas, notably the Western District. Labor did not win a state western district seat other than Port Fairy until 1917 (Dundas).[99] In the north and north east, it had only the 1910 and 1914 victories in the federal seat of Indi to its credit, and no success in state politics. In Port Fairy, where there was a heavy concentration of (mainly Catholic) tenant farmers, Labor won considerable support.[100] They grew potatoes and kept pigs on tiny allotments, usually smaller than twelve acres.[101] In 1908, they elected Jeremiah Wall, a Catholic farmer and the Labor candidate, to the Legislative Assembly.[102] Wall's political rhetoric often harked back to an earlier period of Victorian politics - "Get the people on the land, and sweep the upper house away" - but his policies were those of the Labor Party.[103]

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[97]PLC, Minutes, March 7, 1903, VSL MS 10389.

[98]Susan Priestly, *Warracknabeal: A Wimmera Centenary*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1967, p. 116.

[99]Hughes and Graham,*Handbook*, p.480.

[100]The population of the County of Villiers in which the electorate was situated was thirty-nine per cent Catholic. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1911, Vol. 2, Part 6, Religions, Table 40. Around Port Fairy and Koroit, however, over fifty per cent of the population was Roman Catholic. *Census of Victoria*, 1901, Religions of the People, Table 7.

[101]Margaret Kiddle, *Men of Yesterday: A Social History of the Western District of Victoria, 1834-1890*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1962, pp. 412-4.

[102]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, p.116.

[103]*Port Fairy Gazette*, December 31, 1908.

# A REVOLUTIONARY VANGUARD ?
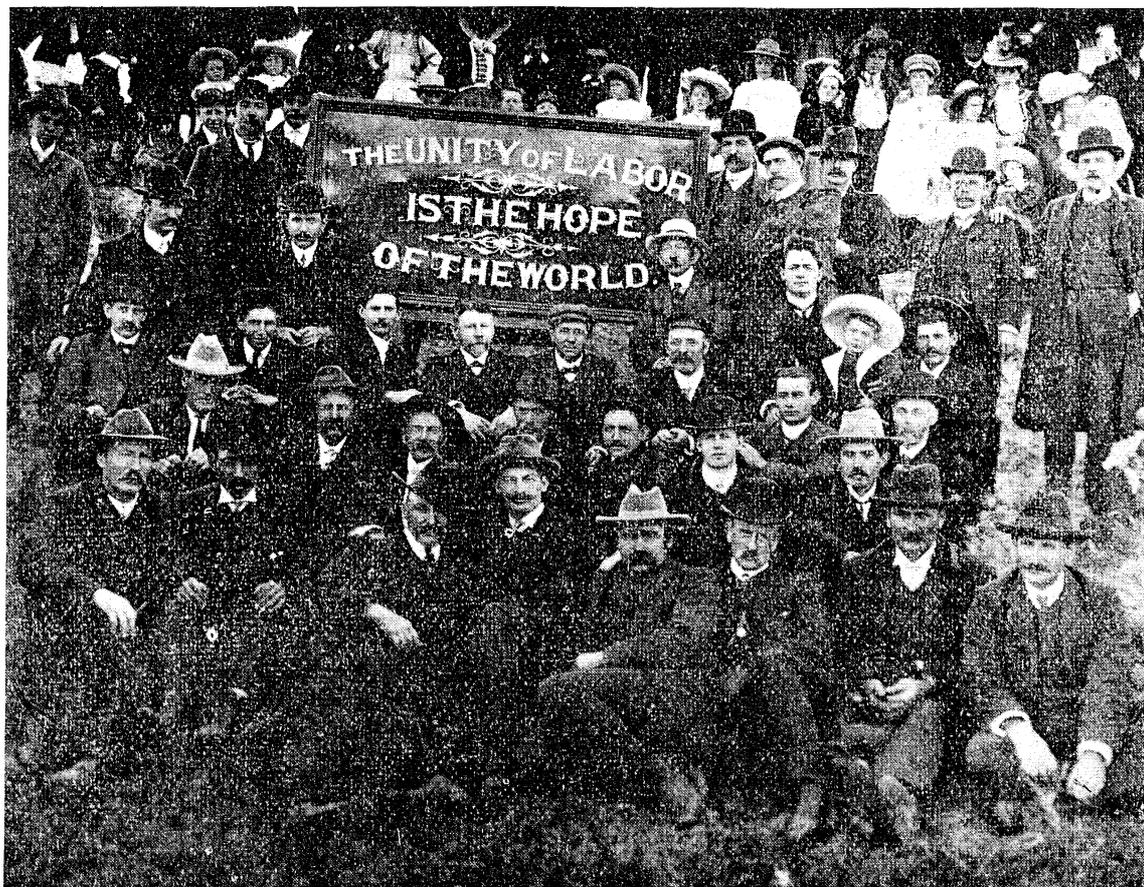


Labor Party Pleasant Sunday Afternoon at Killarney (Western District), 1908

*Labor Call*, January 9, 1908, p.1 (Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University S95: Negative No. 5451)

In the Gippsland district, where dairying predominated, there was little support for the Labor Party. The only exception was Gippsland North, which included the towns of Sale, Bairnsdale, Briagolong and Maffra, where most of Labor's support was concentrated. Sale had over 3000 inhabitants and was "the distributing centre of a very large and an eminently productive district"[104] while Maffra was an important centre for the cattle trade.[105] The larger towns in the electorate contained tradesmen, transport workers and manufacturing employees,[106] such as milk factory operatives and flour millers,[107] while there were also tenant farmers and timber workers in the district, to whom the Labor Party might have appealed with success. The successful Labor candidate in 1911 was J.W. McLachlan, a saddler turned journalist from Sale. He was popular locally, and soon established a reputation as an assiduous local member.[108] An unsympathetic *Gippsland Mercury*, referring disparagingly to his dutiful defence of the district's interests, called him "a departmental trotter".[109] He was reputed to tour his electorate on foot, even barefoot; others claimed that he took off his shoes when he approached a settlement.[110] In any event, he concerned himself primarily with local issues such as roads, the provision of schools, railways and closer settlement.[111] It seems likely that his base of support was very broad, including many of the struggling dairy farmers of the district by 1911. He left the Labor Party over conscription in 1916, but remained the local

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[104]James Smith (ed.), *The Cyclopedia of Victoria, Volume III,* The Cyclopedia Company, Melbourne, 1904, p. 512.

[105]*Cyclopedia of Victoria, III,* p. 525.

[106]*Statistical Register of Victoria,* 1909, p.795.

[107]*Cyclopedia of Victoria, III,* p. 525.

[108]*Gippsland Mercury,* January 5, 1909.

[109]*Gippsland Mercury,* November 7, 1911.

[110]F.W. Eggleston, 'Confidential Notes: The Victorian Parliament as I Knew It', unpublished typescript, Menzies Library, Australian National University, ch. 3, p.55.

[111]*Gippsland Mercury,* November 10, 1911; *Argus,* November 15, 1911, p.4.

member until 1938, emphasising the personal character of much of his support.[112]

Farmers often depended heavily on family labour, but during the harvest or the shearing season, employed outside labour to supplement their own and their family's efforts.[113] They opposed interference by the state which might raise the cost of labour, or introduce an inflexible eight hour day for rural workers. The attempt by the Rural Workers' Union (RWU) in 1912 to standardise the wages and conditions of rural labourers by submitting a log of claims to the Arbitration Court provoked great hostility from the farmers, and was a reason for the Labor Party's loss of four non-metropolitan seats in the 1913 federal election.[114] Farmers opposed wage increases, the substitution of day labour for piece work, and an eight hour day.[115] Even dairy farmers, who often relied entirely on family labour, faced the prospect of increased costs, since the RWU sought an award for workers in butter and cheese factories. Farmers argued that unlike other employers who could pass wage increases on to consumers, they were producing for the world market.[116] According to the *Argus*, the RWU log of claims had "brought Federal politics on to the farm".[117] The hostility of many farmers to the arbitration system was a major barrier to the Party securing rural support.

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[112]Geoffrey Browne, *Biographical Register of the Victorian Parliament 1900-84*, Victorian Government Printing Office, Melbourne, 1985, p.144.

[113]*Census of Victoria*, 1891, Occupations of the People, Table 8. In the 1891 census, 38,288 people gave their occupation as farmer or market gardener, and 20,162 as wife, son daughter or relative assisting. There were 18,839 farm servants, labourers and ploughmen.

[114]J.K. McDougall, the sitting Labor member for Wannon, defended the right of the Rural Labourers' Union to submit its claims to the Arbitration Court. This was one of the reasons for his subsequent defeat, although he was not helped by a redistribution of seats. See *Argus*, May 27, 1913, p. 10; May 30, 1913, p.10. See also *Labor Call*, June 5, 1913, p.5; June 19, 1913, p.6; June 26, 1913, p.1; *Argus*, June 6, 1913, p.8; June 11, 1913, p.13; June 13, 1913, p. 14; Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 86.

[115]*Argus*, May 20, 1913, p.14; May 27, 1913, p.15; July 4, 1912, p. 14.

[116]*Argus*, May 22, 1913, p.14.

[117]*Argus*, May 20, 1913, p.14.

The increasing influence of the AWU after 1906, however, provided the Labor Party with some opportunities for progress outside Melbourne. The Union's 1907 federal award resulted in substantial gains for Western Victorian shearers and shedhands.[118] The AWU's fortunes were now tied more closely than ever to the Labor Party. In 1908, it appointed Scullin as its Victorian political organiser.[119] Between February 1908 and February 1909, the number of affiliated country branches increased from forty-three to ninety-six and the country members from 1880 to 5710.[120] In the twelve months before June 1910, the overall number of PLC branches rose from 118 to 186.[121] This achievement was primarily that of Scullin and the AWU. The growing importance of the AWU was recognised in 1910 when Archibald Stewart, an AWU member and its delegate on the Ballarat TLC, was elected secretary of the PLC.[122]

In the 1910 federal election, Labor won four non-metropolitan seats: Corio, which had Geelong as its centre but included outlying country areas; Wannon and Corangamite, both in the Western district; and Indi in northern Victoria, a mixed electorate of farmers, miners, tradesmen, railway men, shopkeepers and public servants. The disillusionment of many liberals with the Fusion was an important reason for these successes, but they would not have been possible without the vast resources of the AWU. Many of those who voted Labor in the 1910 federal election were farmers. McDougall, for instance, carried all but a handful of subdivisions in Wannon in 1910. In Indi, the Labor candidate Moloney won majorities in

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[118]Merritt, *The Making*, pp. 354-64.

[119]PLC CE, Minutes, April 4, 1908, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, April 9, 1908, p.8; April 30, 1908, p.5.

[120]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 8, 1909, VSL MS 10389.

[121]PLC, Central Executive's Report, June 4, 1910 in PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, VSL MS 10389.

[122]Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1975, p. 315.

Beechworth, Benalla and Rutherglen, but also in the less populated areas.[123] While it is likely that many farmers who voted Labor in 1910 turned away from the Party over the RWU log in 1913, there was also a decline in the Labor vote in many large towns. Colac, which voted strongly in favour of Scullin in 1910, cast a majority in favour of his opponent James Manifold in 1913. McDougall's defeat in Wannon was due mainly to a redistribution which saw a large section of the conservative Wimmera district included in Wannon, but his support in the large centres such as Casterton and Hamilton also declined sharply.[124] Wage-earners were certainly the mainstay of Labor's non-metropolitan electoral base - Labor's majorities in mining towns and railway centres were invariably large - but many farmers identified with the Party by 1910. In elections for the state parliament, however, rural voters were less likely to vote for Labor candidates. As McLachlan's success in Gippsland North suggests, personal loyalties and local issues remained integral to state politics. Electors were concerned with receiving a fair share of the "spoils of... state sponsored development" in the form of roads, railways, bridges and schools.[125] The Labor Party emphasised its commitment to such development, but with few tangible results. In his 1911 election speech, Prendergast announced a policy of railway extension and road construction designed to improve communications in underdeveloped regions.[126] The electoral effectiveness of such appeals were reduced, however, by the Labor's image as a "city party".[127] An astute anti-Labor politician such as Thomas Bent (Premier of Victoria, 1904-9) cultivated electoral popularity and parliamentary support by implementing

[123]Statistical Returns, 1910 Commonwealth Election, *CPP*, Session 1910, Vol.2, No.1, pp. 355. 362.
[124]Statistical Returns, 1913 Commonwealth Election, *CPP*, Session 1913, Vol.2, No.23, pp. 282-3, 290, 295.
[125]Stuart Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, p.38.
[126]G.M. Prendergast, *General Elections, 1911, Leader State Labor Party at North Melbourne Town Hall on Thursday, 2nd November*, J. Winter [Printer], Melbourne, 1911, pp.10-16.
[127]*Bulletin*, January 26, 1905, p.9.

progressive developmental policies such as closer settlement and, more significantly, through the distribution of the proceeds of large budget surpluses among the electorates.[128] It is unlikely that Labor politicians remained impervious to the influence which Bent wielded through this patronage, since their electorates were the potential beneficiaries of the distribution of largesse. As a consequence, the SPLP sometimes seemed less than fully committed to the defeat of its avowed enemies in state politics.[129]

## Conclusion

In the 1890s, the Victorian Labor Party made virtually no progress in the electorates outside Melbourne. By 1910, it had some modest electoral achievements to its credit. In state politics, it held seats in the Bendigo, Maryborough and Geelong regions, and in Port Fairy, Gippsland North and Warrenheip which, like Port Fairy-Koroit, was an area with a very high proportion of Catholic farmers. In 1913, E.J. Hogan, a Catholic and future Labor premier, won the seat narrowly in a by-election with strong Irish Catholic support.[130] Hogan declared that Labor's policy of compulsory resumption of land would solve the problem of centralisation and, in a powerful populist appeal, he claimed to represent "all workers" in the struggle against "the idlers who produced nothing".[131]

In federal politics, Labor held four non-metropolitan seats. In some cases, these successes were temporary. In the 1913 federal election, the Party

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[128]Rollison, 'Groups', p.340.

[129]Margaret Glass, *Tommy Bent: 'Bent by name, bent by nature'*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1993, pp,168-77; Don Garden, *Victoria: A History*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1984, p.281-2.

[130]According to F.W. Eggleston, Hogan was a Ballan farmer and "a special type, representative of the Irish peasant", elected by the "predominately [sic] Irish vote of the people in that district". See 'Confidential Notes', ch. 3, pp.13-4. For strength of the Catholic vote in Warrenheip, see *Labor Call*, December 24, 1914, cover (2). Warrenheip comprised the shires of Ballan, Bungaree, Meredith and part of Buninyong. The percentage of Catholics in these areas in 1901 was Ballan, 31, Bungaree, 39.5, Meredith, 28 and Buninyong, 37. See *Census of Victoria*, 1901, Religions of the People, Table 7.

[131]*Ballan Times*, February 20, 1913.

was defeated in all four of its non-metropolitan seats, but it gained Ballarat and Bendigo. Labor realised that its future progress in both state and federal politics depended heavily on its performance in these marginal non-metropolitan electorates. Moreover, it was evident that only the AWU had the financial resources, personnel and organisation to deliver country votes to the Labor Party. It did not dominate the Victorian Labor Party as it did the Labor Parties of NSW and Queensland, but it was a powerful influence from 1906.

# USE OF THESES

# LABOUR AND POLITICS IN VICTORIA, 1885-1914

Francis Robert Bongiorno

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of the Australian National University

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# CHAPTER SEVEN:

# THE EMERGENCE OF LABOURISM I:

# THE LABOR PARTY AND LIBERALISM, 1903-14

Socialism attacks capital, Liberalism attacks monopoly.
('Liberalism and the Social Problem', Winston Churchill)[1]

## Labourism: Political Continuity and Change

The importance of the period after federation in Victorian labour politics -
the emergence of an independent Labor Party, the growing popularity of
socialist ideas, the railway strike, and the increase in the Labor vote - has led
historians to neglect some of the continuities between colonial liberalism
and the ideology of the labour movement in the 1900s.[2] By 1909, a two-party
system had emerged in the Commonwealth, but Labor's debt to Victorian
liberalism remained profound. In the following account, the fusion of the
non-Labor parties in 1909 is less significant as a landmark in Australian
political history than Rickard has suggested in the standard interpretation of
the period.[3] He treats the Labor Party as an expression of the political
interests of the working class and argues that between 1890 and 1910, "class
emerges as the major determinant of political loyalties in Australia".[4]
Rickard assumes that it was mainly a consciousness of class which was
channelled into the Labor Party and thus underestimates the complexity of

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[1] Winston Churchill, 'Liberalism and the Social Problem', in *The First Collected Works of Sir Winston Churchill Centenary Limited Edition, Volume VII*, Library of Imperial History, London, 1974 , p.196 (first published 1909). Churchill made the statement in 1908.
[2] John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, pp.167-95; Lorraine Benham & John Rickard, 'Masters and Servants', in J. Iremonger, J. Merritt & G. Osborne (eds.), *Strikes: Studies in Twentieth Century Australian Social History*, Angus and Robertson in association with the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney, 1973, pp.1-25; Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900-1921*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, ch.2.
[3] Rickard, *Class and Politics*, ch.8.
[4] Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p.307.

labour political discourse which, even by 1910, was never merely about wage labour.[5] I shall argue that labour political language was a reformulation of Victorian liberalism in a political environment transformed by the rise of labour. One dimension of this process of recomposition was the emergence of a language of economic class, but labour discourse also retained non-class elements which it inherited from colonial liberalism.

Labourism, as I have treated the concept here, was an outcome of a political process involving a particular balance of forces and political languages rather than a settled ideology or program. It is possible, however, to detect a broad coherence in the Labor Party's policies and political strategies by 1910. An attachment to constitutional methods and a belief that the labour movement, by gaining access to the state through an independent Labor party, could modify market outcomes to alleviate the burdens of those on the lower rungs of society have been considered characteristic of labourism while its major tenets in Australia were tariff protection, a white Australia and compulsory arbitration.[6] The emergence of labourism, however, cannot be understood merely in abstract terms as "the industrial and political practice of the trade unions" (Macintyre), or as a consequence of the impossibility of introducing socialism through the parliamentary process and the inevitable betrayal of the working class by its parliamentary leaders (Burgmann).[7] Labourism must be located more precisely in its political context because it was an ideological outcome of a series of struggles in which the labour movement was engaged from the 1880s, the product of

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[5]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.288-9.

[6]Stuart Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1989; Stuart Macintyre, 'Early Socialism and Labor', *Intervention*, 8, March 1977, pp.81-2; John Saville, 'The Ideology of Labourism', in Robert Benewick, R.N. Berki & Bhikhu Parekh (eds.), *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1973, pp.213-226; Jim Hagan, *The History of the A.C.T.U.*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1981, p.14; Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, p.197.

[7]Stuart Macintyre, 'Early Socialism and Labor', *Intervention* , 8, March 1977, pp.81-2; Verity Burgmann, *'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905,* George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.193-8.

a set of dialogues between labour, liberalism and socialism as well as some less influential political currents. Moreover, any account of the emergence of labourism must consider the Party's relationship with the electorate to which it appealed, not only the politically committed Party activists and socialists who dominate Burgmann's account, but the voters who turned out at each election and had to choose between Liberal, Labor, Protectionist, Free-trade, Anti-Socialist, Protestant and Temperance candidates. It is only by undertaking this analysis that we can understand the choices made by Labor leaders in particular circumstances, and thereby explain the evolving relations between labour, socialism and liberalism. In this chapter, I shall trace the emergence of labourism by examining the Labor Party's relationship with liberalism in the years between 1903 and the Great War. In the following chapter, a discussion of the labour movement's relations with socialism will provide a further opportunity for an investigation of the development of labourism.

## Labor and Liberalism, 1903-4

The strong continuities between liberalism and labourism are evident when we consider political developments in Richmond, the first electorate to return a direct labour candidate. Richmond was also the centre of the Yarra federal electorate, one of two seats won by the Labor Party in 1901. This solidly working-class district was loyal to its parliamentary representatives, whether Liberal or Labor. As a "double electorate", it returned Trenwith and the Liberal G.H. Bennett in 1889. Bennett was a Catholic cordial manufacturer whose reputation as a "fair" employer was of very recent origin - he had reorganised his business in accordance with union principles

as part of a bid to enter the Assembly.[8] Despite his support for the Irvine

Government's actions in the railway strike (1903), he defeated the Labor

candidate, George Roberts, when Richmond became a single seat for the 1904

election.[9] In 1907, another Labor candidate, Solly, could muster less than

twenty-seven per cent of the vote in a three way contest; Bennett won over

forty-five per cent.[10] Solly's lamentations after the election provide an

insight into the complex relationship between social conditions and political

allegiance. Working-class poverty did not necessarily yield Labor seats,

however confusing this might have been for Labor politicians convinced of

the righteousness of their cause:

> When one got off the main streets [of Richmond] he found himself in
> many places among hovels unfit for human habitation, and the
> tenants were in a state of destitution...Yet men went from these hovels,
> leaving their wives in poverty and their children hungry, and voted
> against Labor, the only party that considered the needy and oppressed.[11]

Bennett died in 1908. In the subsequent by-election, E.J. Cotter (Labor) won

with over sixty-three per cent of the vote.[12] A large section of Bennett's base

of support transferred directly to the Labor Party.

Trenwith's experience illustrates a similar point. In 1903, he ran for

the Senate as an Independent Protectionist with the support of neither the

Labor Party nor the *Age* . Despite this lack of institutional support,

Trenwith topped the Senate poll for Victoria. He was at the head of the poll

in the metropolitan working-class electorates of Bourke, Northern

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[8]Alleyn Best, *A History of the Liquor Trades Union in Victoria*, The Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Employees Union of Australia, Melbourne, 1990, p.46; *Trades Hall Gazette*, December 1, 1888, p.9. For biographical details of Bennett, see Chris McConville, 'George Henry Bennett', *ADB*, Volume 7, p.268.

[9]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1890-1964*, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, p.94.

[10]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, p.106.

[11]*Labor Call*, March 21, 1907, p.2.

[12]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, p.109.

Melbourne, Southern Melbourne and Yarra as well as in non-metropolitan but protectionist Corio and Indi. The absence of Labor endorsement was no barrier to the support of a large section of the working class.[13]

In the 1903 election, the PLC decided to oppose virtually every candidate for the House who refused to bind himself to the organisation by signing its pledge and platform. This meant that Liberals such as Hume Cook, Quick and Mauger were opposed by Labor candidates. The tailor James Mathews, who stood against Mauger, expressed Labor's objections to his opponent:

> A man who did not belong to a party could be bought or sold at any time...It was for this reason that the Labour party fought so strenuously for organisation to carry their ideas into effect.[14]

There were as few policy differences between Mauger and the Labor Party in 1903 as there had been in the 1890s; the problem was that Mauger refused to sign the Labor platform and pledge. Moreover, the PLC would not endorse former members of the Party who would not bind themselves to the organisation. When the PLC informed Trenwith that he had been nominated as a Labor Senate candidate in 1903, he replied that if he decided to stand "any Pledge he may have to make will be made from the Public Platform to all the Electors".[15] Barrett also refused to sign the pledge, and was therefore repudiated by the Party.[16] When the *Age* also abandoned him, his political fate was sealed for he lacked Trenwith's popular appeal, and the gentlest of radicals ended his political career as a defeated Senate candidate, shunned by his former friends and allies.[17]

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[13]Statistical Returns, 1903 Commonwealth Election, *CPP*, Session 1904, Vol. 2, No.1, p.403.
[14]*Argus*, November 6, 1903, p.6.
[15]PLC, Minutes, May 2, 1903, VSL MS 10389.
[16]PLC, Minutes, May 2, 1903; May 16, 1903, VSL MS 10389; *Age*, September 17, 1903, p.6; *Argus*, September 17, 1903, p.5.
[17]*Age*, November 26, 1903, p.4.

The Labor Party embraced a theory of political representation which Liberal Protectionists, who remained individualists as far as political representation was concerned, could not accept. According to the Labor theory, the parliamentarian "was simply a tool selected to act with others in accelerating the enactment of the party platform", a delegate rather than a representative.[18] This attitude aroused the antagonism of Liberals who, in the early 1900s, articulated a Burkean view of political representation which they contrasted with Labor rule by caucus and Party machine. They believed that parliamentarians ought to be regarded as representatives, not delegates, and were disturbed by the development of a Party machine which "was now participating in activities that had previously been the preserve of numerous, independent pressure groups...".[19] Parliamentarians such as Hume Cook and Mauger prided themselves on their direct involvement in the community they represented in parliament. Hume Cook made much of his ANA connections while the breadth of Mauger's participation in civic affairs was impressive, encompassing the Anti-Sweating League, Protectionist Association, Australian Church, Rechabites, Total Abstinence Society, Victorian Alliance and Fire Brigade.[20] These Liberals believed that the Labor machine cut across such community involvement, replacing it with rule by a corrupt clique. This criticism was prompted by the emergence of a party machine which provided an alternative focus of loyalty, reducing the political significance of some interest groups (although increasing the power of others, such as trade unions). At the same time, the critique exaggerated both the power and exclusiveness of the central executive and ignored the important role played by Labor branches, which had strong

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[18]Stephen Barker, *Age*, November 24, 1903, p.6.
[19]Ian Campbell, 'Groups, Parties and Federation', in P. Loveday & I. Campbell, *Groups in Theory and Practice*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1962, p.69.
[20]Ian Hancock, 'James Newton Haxton Hume Cook', *ADB*, Volume 8, p.95; John Lack, 'Samuel Mauger', *ADB*, Volume 10, pp.451-3.

claims to be considered community organisations.[21] Moreover, the
emergence of a party machine did not supersede other forms of community
involvement.  Every Labor parliamentarian understood the value of
connections with local bodies such as sporting clubs, brass bands, progress
associations, churches and friendly societies.  The PLC, however, claimed a
monopoly over the preselection of parliamentary candidates and thus
demanded that other community associations accept a politically
subordinate position.[22]  Liberals accustomed to a more informal politics
based on cross-class associational networks were unable to accept Labor's
claims to exercise such a monopoly.  Mauger asserted that if he were
returned to parliament, "it would be as a representative of the whole of the
community, and not as a machine to be worked at the dictation of a small
portion".[23]  Similarly, Cook declared that "the man who signed the Political
Labor Council's platform signed away his franchise rights, and had to accept
the man chosen by a little clique at the Trades Hall...".[24] He observed that
the PLC had not opposed Higgins, who persistently refused to sign its pledge
and platform.[25]  There was some justice in this criticism, but the Labor Party
supported Higgins because of his record as an opponent of the undemocratic
Federal Bill, his opposition to the Boer War, and his identification with the
principles of the Labor Party.[26]  As Anstey remarked, "The case of Higgins
was exceptional - so much so that there can be no analogy drawn between
him and any other man".[27]  Labor supporters and members admired
Higgins's political courage, and at a Labor meeting in July 1901, J.C.
Fitzgerald described him as the man "upon whom the mantle of the great

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[21]*Age*, September 18, 1903, p.5; November 25, 1903, p.6.
[22]Campbell, 'Groups, Parties and Federation', pp.67-70.
[23]*Age*, November 18, 1903, p.7.
[24]*Age*, November 12, 1903, p.6.
[25]*Age*, November 14, 1903, p.11.
[26]PLC, Minutes, September 22, 1902, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, September 22, 1904, p.4.
[27]*Tocsin*, September 22, 1904, p.4.

Higinbotham had fallen".[28]  Labor's attachment to Higgins had both a practical and emotional basis: he was in agreement with Labor's policy and would be impossible to dislodge anyway, but he was also a part of the Victorian radical liberal tradition which had been bequeathed to the Labor Party.[29]  Labor regarded Higgins as an unpledged Labor member,[30] but it continued to regret his refusal to formally bind himself to the party.[31]

The results of the 1903 election highlighted the strength of popular liberalism.  Cook and Mauger comfortably retained their seats; Higgins continued to hold Northern Melbourne with broad working-class support; and Quick fought off a strong Labor challenge in Bendigo.  Tudor improved his position considerably; he won over sixty-eight per cent of the vote in a two-way contest against a candidate supported by the *Age* .  Ronald also increased his share of the vote in Southern Melbourne while Maloney, who probably benefited from the introduction of women's suffrage for the 1903 election, nearly defeated McEacharn, a shipowner and opponent of the extension of the franchise to women.[32]  McEacharn's growing unpopularity among working-class electors was also related to his support for the use of Melanesian labour in Queensland, which was interpreted as want of sympathy with the ideal of a white Australia.[33]  When the election was declared void on a technicality, the "Little Doctor" won a special election in March 1904, prompting wild celebrations by Labor supporters in the city.[34] The Labor vote, however, remained weak where there was a strong Liberal

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[28]*Argus*, July 13, 1901, pp. 13-14.

[29]Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 3.

[30]*Age*, October 5, 1903, p.5; *Tocsin*, September 22, 1904, p.4; John Rickard, *H.B. Higgins: The Rebel as Judge*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, ch. 6.

[31]*Tocsin*, September 22, 1904, p.4; PLC (Fitzroy Branch), Minutes, July 9, 1906, in Merrifield Collection, VSL.

[32]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives 1901-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, pp.16-18; David Dunstan, 'Sir Malcolm Donald McEacharn', *ADB*, Volume 10, pp.263-4.

[33]*People's Daily*, March 14, 1904, p.3; March 21, 1904, p.1.

[34]*People's Daily*, March 31, 1904, p.3.

Protectionist alternative. It was because there were doubts about Quick's radical liberal credentials that he was almost defeated in Bendigo.[35] Radical inner-city voters had reached similar conclusions about McEacharn, despite his endorsement by the PAV in 1903.[36] By the time of the 1904 special election, his increasingly conservative reputation had earned him the backing of the NCRL, although the VEF had misgivings about his candidature because he had supported the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill.[37] In Corio, where the Liberal Protectionist R.A. Crouch gained over forty-five per cent of the vote, Labor's John Reed could attract less than eighteen per cent in a three way contest.[38]

In state politics, the decline of the Liberal Party meant that the trend towards political polarisation was more advanced. The Liberals, under Donald Mackinnon's leadership from 1904, were increasingly irrelevant to the broader party conflict between Labor and the Ministry's followers. In the reformed parliament elected in June 1904, their numbers were further reduced; they earned the title "The Victorian XI".[39] The Labor Party, with Prendergast at the helm, became the official Opposition. Labor, however, presented itself as the natural heir to the Victorian liberal tradition. As its leader Bromley asserted, "The Liberals to-day were the members of the Labor party, and in future the only two parties would be the Labor party and the capitalists".[40] In 1903, some bodies affiliated with the PLC nominated the Liberals Alexander Peacock and James Styles as Labor candidates for the Senate while in 1904, many Labor branches approached Liberals asking them

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[35]*Age*, October 16, 1903, p.5; October 27, 1903, p.5.

[36]*Age*, December 5, 1903, p.11.

[37]*People's Daily*, March 25, 1904, p.2; VEF, Minutes, March 24, 1904, NBAC, ANU M 65/1/3.

[38]Colin A. Hughes and B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives 1901-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1974, pp.16-18.

[39]Geoffrey Serle, 'Donald Mackinnon', *ADB*, Volume 10, p. 313.

[40]*Age*, May 31, 1904, p.6.

to bind themselves to the PLC in return for Labor support.[41]  The

Camperdown branch asked D.S. Oman to sign the pledge, but he refused to

bind himself to any organisation.[42]  Deputations from the Bendigo branch to

A.S. Bailes[43] and the Allendale branch to W.B. Grose[44] met with a similar

response.  The Beechworth branch of the PLC, in the absence of a Labor

candidate, decided to support the candidature of the liberal A.A. Billson[45]

while the Maryborough Labor Party branch selected A.R. Outtrim, the

Minister of Mines in the McLean Government (1899-1900).[46]  Outtrim had

left the Liberal Party, but the selection of a wealthy director of mining

companies and a former Liberal by the mining community of Maryborough

highlights the resilience of liberalism.[47]   Outtrim won the Maryborough

seat in 1904, and Labor raised its tally of Assembly seats from eleven to

eighteen.  There was an increase in the Labor vote in many urban areas: the

Party won Jika Jika,[48] Williamstown and Bendigo West but the significance

of Labor's gain of seven seats in the 1904 state election should not be

exaggerated.  Two of these seats were those of the railway employees, and in

Ballarat West, Bendigo East and Geelong, divisions among non-Labor

candidates allowed Labor to triumph on a minority vote.  Labor polled just

over twenty-eight per cent of the vote in 1904 (excluding the election for the

parliamentary representatives of the railway employees and civil servants),

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[41]PLC, Minutes, April 4, 1903, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, April 9, 1903, p.3. They were struck off the list of nominees by the PLC because they were not qualified under the constitution of the Labor Party.

[42]*Tocsin*, January 21, 1904, p.3; *Age*, February 3, 1904, p.7.

[43]*People's Daily*, February 25, 1904, p.2; *Age*, February 24, 1904, p.6.

[44]*Argus*, April 4, 1904, p.5; *Ballarat Courier*, March 30, 1904, p.6; April 4, 1904, p.3.

[45]*Ballarat Courier*, May 10, 1904, p.4; *Age*, May 10, 1904, p.6.

[46]R.C. Duplain, 'Alfred Richard Outtrim', *ADB*, Volume 11, pp. 110-11; *Age*, February 22, 1904, p.5; *People's Daily*, April 11, 1904, p.1; *Ballarat Courier*, February 22, 1904, p.4.

[47]Outtrim was almost certainly one of the three ex-Ministers of the Crown who met in Maryborough in late 1903 and decided to support the Labor Party in the future. See *Age*, November 23, 1903, p.5.

[48]This was a northern Melbourne seat centred on Northcote.

but its support was still largely confined to the working-class suburbs of the metropolis and a few mining centres.[49]

## Liberalism and the Independence of the Labor Party, 1904-1909

1904 was a year of turmoil in federal politics. The Deakin Ministry fell in April when the FPLP moved an amendment to the Government's Conciliation and Arbitration Bill in an effort to include state employees within its scope. Deakin was defeated on the vote, which he treated as a matter of confidence, and resigned. Subsequently, J.C. Watson, the leader of the Labor Party, formed a Labor Ministry, with the addition of Higgins, whom he appointed Attorney-General.[50] Labor, in a precarious position in the House as a minority government, negotiated unsuccessfully with Deakin for a coalition.[51]

Victorian Laborites followed these developments with interest. As Victoria was a protectionist stronghold, any agreement between the FPLP and the Protectionists would have significant consequences for the PLC. In May, the central executive of the PLC tried to help Watson in his negotiations with Deakin by declaring that no opposition would be offered at the next election to members of the late Ministerial Party who supported the Watson Government.[52] The central council, however, which

[49]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, pp.88-97.

[50]H.S. Broadhead, 'The Australian Federal Labour Party 1900-1905', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1959, pp.105, 118; Geoffrey Sawer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1956, p.37.

[51]Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901-1949, Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, Volume 1, 1901-1917*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1975, pp. 128-131 (May 25-6; June 1, 1904); P. Loveday, 'The Federal Parties', in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin & R.S. Parker, *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1977, pp. 405-9; L.F. Crisp, *The Australian Federal Labour Party 1901-1951*, Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1955, pp. 156-8; Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, pp.48-51; H.S. Broadhead, 'J.C. Watson and the Caucus Crisis of 1905', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 8, No. 1, May 1962, pp. 93-7; Broadhead, 'The Australian Federal Labour Party 1900-1905', pp.130-2.

[52]Memorandum from Stephen Barker, May 13, 1904, in Hume Cook Papers, NLA MS 601/3/57.

represented the opinions of the branches and unions, overturned this decision.[53]  When negotiations for a coalition Government collapsed in June the *Tocsin* was gratified; it saw such alliances as a threat to Labor's identity.[54]

The defeat of the minority Labor Government in August resulted in the formation of a ministry by George Reid, in coalition with a conservative section of the Protectionist Party led by McLean.[55]  The advent of this coalition split the Protectionists.  A radical pro-Labor section, led by Isaacs, commenced negotiations with Watson.  The result was an alliance with the object of turning the Reid-McLean Ministry out of office.[56]  It was projected for the life of the current Parliament and the next, and embraced a program acceptable to most members of the Labor Party and the Isaacs group.[57]  Each party would retain its identity, but would use its influence with local organisations to "secure support for, and immunity from opposition to, members of either party".  A joint election committee would consider contested seats, and make recommendations to the parties.[58]

The Alliance raised a storm in Victorian Labor circles.  Five out of the twelve Liberal members of the House of Representatives and two of the three Senators who joined the Alliance were Victorians.  The PLC executive refused to endorse the Alliance or to withhold opposition from any

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[53]Weller, *Caucus Minutes*, p.131 (June 8, 1904); UFTS, Minutes, June 9, 1904, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/14.

[54]*Tocsin*, June 2, 1904, p.4.  See also *Tocsin*, September 24, 1903, p.4.

[55]Like its predecessor, the Ministry fell victim to the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill.  See Broadhead, 'The Australian Federal Labor Party', p.143; Sawer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law*, pp.38-9.

[56]Loveday, 'Federal Parties', pp. 410-11; Crisp, *Australian Federal Labour Party*, pp. 157-60; Broadhead, 'J.C. Watson', pp. 93-7; Broadhead, 'The Australian Federal Labour Party, 1900-1905', ch.7.

[57]The program was sufficiently vague on the matter of tariff protection not to antagonise Labor Party free-traders.  Other policies such as a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill; White Australia legislation; a Navigation Bill; Anti-Trust legislation and Old Age pensions had broad support among Labor Party members and radical liberals.

[58]*Age* , September 8, 1904, in Scrap Book, Hume Cook Papers, NLA MS 601/3/23.  See also Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes* , pp. 466-70; *Articles of Alliance Between the Liberal Protectionists and the Labour Parties*, in Watson Papers NLA MS 451/7/28.

candidate not pledged to PLC, and it deplored the failure of the FPLP to consult the state parties before joining.[59]  Other state Labor parties also condemned the Alliance, but the PLC led the clamour.[60]  After all, it had the most to lose, and having recently emerged from an alliance with the Liberals in state politics which it now regretted, it was hardly likely to countenance the  formation of a new alliance in the Commonwealth Parliament.  The protracted nature of Labor's emergence as an independent force in Victoria during the 1890s and early 1900s sensitised the Victorians to such compromising entanglements.[61]  As the *Tocsin*  remarked:

> ...however expedient combination in the presence of a common enemy may appear to be, the purely temporary advantages thus gained do not furnish sufficient consideration to induce an abandonment of any party principle, or to risk the merger of Labour in Liberalism.[62]

While Labor spokesmen interpreted the radical liberals' desire for an alliance as a sign of the growing power of Labor, it is evident that opposition to the Alliance was not related to any disagreement with the Liberals over policy.[63]  As the *Tocsin*  explained, the Party was not opposed to common action opposing Reid.  It argued, however, that such an arrangement should be limited to the life of the present Parliament, and therefore not involve any promise of electoral immunity.  The executive's action did not, according to the *Tocsin*, indicate hostility to any individual member of "the Isaacs party" and it hoped that the executive's decision would "lead to the

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[59]PLC CE, Minutes, September 9, 1904; *Tocsin*, September 15, 1904, p.5;  Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes*, p.142 (September 14, 1904).

[60]Crisp, *Australian Federal Labour Party*, p. 157.

[61]*Tocsin*, May 31, 1906, p.4.

[62]*Tocsin*, September 15, 1904, p.4.

[63]*Tocsin*, October 13, 1904, p.3.  There were, in fact, no significant policy disagreements between the Isaacs group and the Labor Party.  However, differences did exist between Deakin (who was not involved in the Alliance) and the FPLP over the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill.  The conservative wing of Deakin's Protectionist Party, led by the Western Australian Sir John Forrest, was hostile to the Labor Party and favoured an alliance between the followers of Deakin and Reid.

absorption of the Liberals by the Labour party...".[64] It was left to a Social

Democratic Party speaker to assert "that working men should be on their

guard against alliances that overlooked the essential features of the class

struggle".[65] For the mainstream labour movement, it was the integrity of

Labor Party organisation and the democratic principles on which it was

based which were endangered by the Alliance. There was a division of

opinion within the Labor branches on the question, however, and several

dissented from the executive's position.[66]

On 13 September, Watson attended the meeting of the state executive

in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade it to reverse its decision.[67] The Reid

Ministry fell in June 1905 but this did not affect the attitude of the PLC to the

Lab-Lib Alliance.[68] The state Labor conference in April 1905 unanimously

resolved that an addition be made to the state pledge providing that no

member of the Party join an alliance, coalition or combination without the

sanction of the Party organisation at a conference.[69] Pat Heagney, as a

Victorian delegate to the Commonwealth Labor Conference in July, moved

a virtually identical amendment to the Federal pledge. The conference

accepted a moderate solution, preventing the FPLP from entering into any

alliance "that would extend beyond the then existing Parliament nor grant

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[64]*Tocsin*, September 15, 1904, p.4.

[65]*Tocsin*, September 15, 1904, p.8.

[66]Richmond, Northcote, Brunswick, Albert Park, Abbotsford, Port Melbourne, Fitzroy, Williamstown, Berringa, Ballarat East, Ararat, Wickliffe Road, Colac and a conference of branches in the Bourke electorate all opposed the Alliance. Branches supporting the Alliance were Melbourne, North Melbourne, East Melbourne, Collingwood, Carlton, Preston, Creswick, Stawell, Garfield and Beechworth. See *Tocsin*, September 22, 1904, p.8; September 29, 1904, pp.5, 8; October 6, 1904, p.8; October 13, 1904, p.8; October 27, 1904, p.8; November 17, 1904, p.8; April 20, 1905, p.8; PLC CE, Minutes, September 20, 1904; September 27, 1904; October 8, 1904, VSL MS 10389; PLC (Creswick), Minutes, September 26, 1904, UMA; Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes*, pp. 142-7 (September 14, 1904; September 21, 1904; September 28, 1904; October 5, 1904; October 12, 1904).

[67]PLC CE, Minutes, September 13, 1904, VSL MS 10389.

[68]Sawer, *Australian Federal Politics and Law*, p.39.

[69]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 23, 1905, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, April 27, 1905, p.4.

nor promise immunity from opposition at election time".[70] This removed

the possibility of the FPLP attempting to bind outside organisations in the

future.

As the 1906 federal election approached, the PLC had to define its

attitude to organised protectionism and liberalism, particularly once the

tariff issue was revived in 1905 and 1906.[71] In March 1906, Charles Atkins,

president of the Chamber of Manufacturers, wrote to the PAV and the PLC,

proposing a united protectionist front against the Free-traders in the

elections. He suggested a conference between the three bodies for the

purposes of united propaganda and to prevent, if possible, two protectionists

fighting for any seat against one free-trader.[72] The PLC executive agreed to a

conference.[73] When representatives of the three bodies met on 8 March, the

PLC refused to consider joint protectionist propaganda until after the

formulation of an agreement about the running of candidates.[74]

Meanwhile, the *Tocsin* poured cold water on the proposed alliance, and

explained the eagerness of the Chamber of Manufacturers and the PAV as

an attempt to defeat the Labor land tax by raising the fiscal issue.[75] Still, the

PLC executive agreed to discuss with the PAV the possibility of avoiding

vote-splitting by protectionists.[76] Proposals were considered by the Easter

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[70]Australian Labor Party, Third Commonwealth Political Labour Conference, *Official Report*, Worker [Printer], Brisbane, 1905, pp. 18-20. See also, Crisp, *Australian Federal Labour Party*, pp. 161-2.

[71]J.A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: A Biography, Volume 2*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1965, pp.387-93.

[72]*Age*, March 5, 1906, p.6; March 15, 1906, p.5; *Argus*, March 5, 1906, p.5; March 15, 1906, p.7.

[73]PLC CE, Minutes, March 7, 1906; March 17, 1906, VSL MS 10389; PAV, Minutes, March 5, 1906, Samuel Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13; *Tocsin*, March 8, 1906, p.8; *Worker*, March 15, 1906, p.1.

[74]*Tocsin*, March 22, 1906, p.8; *Argus*, March 19, 1906, p.9.

[75]*Tocsin*, March 29, 1906, p.4.

[76]The PAV proposed to refrain from contesting the federal seats held by Labor members if the PLC would not contest Ballarat (Deakin), Corio (Crouch) or Bourke (Hume Cook). Arrangements would be made for only one protectionist to contest Balaclava, Corangamite, Flinders, Kooyong, Grampians and Wannon. See PLC CE, Minutes, March 31, 1906, VSL MS 10389; PAV, Minutes, March 29, 1906 (clipping), in Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13; *Age*, April 2, 1906, p.5; *Argus*, April 2, 1906, p.6.

Conference of the PLC,[77] and rejected on an amendment moved by Prendergast deeming it "inadvisable to enter into any arrangement with any other party for political purposes".[78] The proposal of the Chamber of Manufacturers for joint protectionist propaganda met with a similar response:

> ...propaganda in the interests of the new protectionist policy, which is a plank of the Labor Platform, is continually being carried on by members of the Labor Party throughout the State, and the Party purposes continuing to do so as an independent political party.[79]

The rebuff derived primarily from a concern to assert the Party's organisational independence. Objections to the Alliance, however, were also based more explicitly on class considerations. Many Laborites suspected that the Manufacturers and the PAV were far more enthusiastic about tariff protection for manufacturers than the extension of protection to the workers through industrial legislation. As the *Tocsin* asserted, the Chamber of Manufacturers

> represents Capital, and Capital is always prepared to pat Labour on the back. His division of the world's work would be to let Capital go on capitalising, while Labour went on labouring...[80]

Atkins, having made little progress with the PLC in 1906, sought the assistance of the THC. He had some grounds for optimism. In 1904, the THC had co-operated with the Chamber of Manufacturers and PAV on the question of Joseph Chamberlain's proposals for a system of preferential trade within the Empire.[81] By 1906, with the tariff question still unresolved

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[77]*Age*, April 9, 1906, p.6; *Argus*, April 9, 1906, p.5.

[78]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 14, 1906, VSL MS 10389; PAV, Minutes, May 2, 1906, in Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13.

[79]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 14, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.3.

[80]*Tocsin*, May 3, 1906, p.5.

[81]THC, Minutes, October 28, 1904; *Tocsin*, November 3, 1904, p.1.

and a growing moderation evident among the labour leaders, the climate

for co-operation seemed even more promising. There was some support in

the Council for Atkins's proposals, including from the secretary, Barker, a

Labor Senate candidate, and the vice-president James Munn (Bookbinders).

He asserted: "It would be all the better if they could work hand in hand with

their employers. Protection had been won by the united action of employers

and employees".[82]  A section led by Cohen, Sutch and Billson, all active

members of the Labor Party, defeated the proposal. In their arguments, they

gave as much emphasis to the threat which the alliance posed to the Labor

Party's organisational cohesion as to the political differences between the

manufacturers and the labour movement.[83]  The THC's acceptance of the

offer would cancel out its achievement in having created "an independent

party...Were they now going to reverse that policy and merge with the men

they had had to fight?".[84]  At the same time, many THC members perceived

correctly that the Chamber of Manufacturers had little sympathy with

industrial legislation and courted the Labor Party merely for the purposes of

effecting a higher tariff.[85]

Despite the Labor Party's rejection of co-operation with the Chamber of

Manufacturers and the Protectionists, W.M. Hughes negotiated with

Mauger and the PAV behind the back of the PLC.[86]  It is unclear whether

anything came of these negotiations, but the possibility cannot be ruled out

that the free run allowed to the PLC's McDougall in Wannon against the

anti-Socialist candidate was an outcome.[87]  The absence of serious conflict

between Labor and the Liberal Protectionists in Wannon, however, was also

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[82]*Tocsin*, May 31, 1906, p.7.
[83]THC, Minutes, May 25, 1906.
[84]*Tocsin*, May 31, 1906, p.7.
[85]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp. 232-3; *Tocsin*, May 31, 1906, p.7.
[86]PAV, Minutes, August 6, 1906, in Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13. See also Loveday, 'The Federal Parties', p.433.
[87]McDougall's name was marked on the list of selected candidates in PAV, Minutes, 1906, Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13.

a consequence of local co-operation between the two parties in the presence

of a common enemy, the Anti-Socialist sitting member, Arthur Robinson.[88]

Moreover, relations between Liberal Protectionists and Labor had long been

close in Wannon.[89] In 1906, McDougall appealed across class barriers and

while Deakin would not commit his Party to a land tax, the desire of many

local smallholders and labourers for land reform swung radical liberal

opinion behind the Labor Party.[90]

The same conference which rejected the overtures of the Chamber of

Manufacturers and the PAV in 1906 heard Watson urge it to grant electoral

immunity to the Liberal Protectionists who had supported his Ministry.[91]

Instead, the conference affirmed the principle of contesting all seats where

there was any chance of success.[92] In the following month, Watson

enquired about the attitude of the PLC branches to the five Victorian

members of the Alliance in a letter to the state executive, which informed

him that this could not be determined until the redistribution of electorates

had been completed.[93] It was clear, however, that official PLC opinion was

opposed to any arrangement with the Protectionists. In early June, the FPLP

requested electoral immunity for those Liberals who had combined with

Labor "to defeat the avowed enemy of Labor, Mr. G.H. Reid".[94] The PLC

executive forwarded the resolutions of the FPLP, along with those of the

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[88]*Age*, June 7, 1906, p.5.

[89]*Hamilton Spectator*, September 26, 1903; September 29, 1903; October 15, 1903; *Coleraine Albion*, October 9, 1903.

[90]*Hamilton Spectator*, August 21, 1906; October 2, 1906; October 11, 1906.

[91]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 13-14, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Age*, April 14, 1906, p.10; *Argus*, April 14, 1906, p.11.

[92]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 13-14, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.3; *Worker*, April 19, 1906, p.1. This decision was condemned by the *Bulletin* (May 3, 1906, p.6), which declared that the Conference had decided to "repudiate the Labor leader's action, to repudiate all the endorsements which were given, and to turn perfidious arms on the men who have come into the Labor camp as friends and allies". Similarly, the radical Catholic newspaper, the *Tribune*, condemned the PLC's policy (April 21, 1906, pp.5-6; June 23, 1906, p.4).

[93]PLC CE, Minutes, May 26, 1906, VSL MS 10389.

[94]Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes*, p.172 (June 6-7, 1906); *Argus*, June 8, 1906, p.5.

recent PLC Conference, to the branches affected.[95] The FPLP's attempted

interference in the selection of candidates caused considerable anger in some

Labor branches. They regarded the suggestion that the leagues should act to

redeem promises made by the FPLP to non-Labor parliamentarians as an

inversion of the principle that parliamentarians should be responsible to

the Party organisation.[96] It was soon apparent, however, that Watson's

position also had some support in the rank-and-file. While the PLC

leadership maintained that there was little distinction, as far as Labor was

concerned, between Reid and Deakin, many Labor leagues and voters

rejected this fiction.[97] They saw the difference between an Anti-Socialist

follower of Reid and a Deakinite Liberal as self-evident. The aggression of

Reid's anti-Socialist campaign, which was buttressed in Victoria by the

activities of the VEF and the Australian Women's National League

(AWNL), emphasised these differences.[98] As a result, the Labor branches in

the Indi electorate decided to support Isaacs, the sitting member, one of the

radicals to whom the FPLP had promised electoral immunity.[99] It was only

when Deakin appointed Isaacs to the High Court before the election that the

Labor Party nominated Daniel Turnbull, a farmer, for the seat.[100] In

Flinders, W.T.C. Kelly, a Labor barrister and a prominent member of the

PAV was the Labor candidate.[101] The Party almost certainly selected Kelly

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[95]PLC CE, Minutes, June 9, 1906, VSL MS 10389; Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes*, p.174 (June 13, 1906); *Tocsin*, June 14, 1906, p.8; *Argus*, June 21, 1906, p.5.

[96]*Argus*, July 3, 1906, p.5; *Tocsin*, July 5, 1906, p.8.

[97]*Argus*, June 20, 1906, p.7.

[98]*Liberty and Progress*, November 15, 1906, pp.176-7; November 22, 1906, pp.185-7; November 29, 1906, pp.203-4, 214; December 6, 1906, p.221.

[99]PLC CE, Minutes, June 23, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Argus*, June 25, 1906, p.8; *Tocsin*, June 28, 1906, p.8; *Age*, June 25, 1906, p.7. The PLC executive endorsed this decision. See *Age*, August 20, 1906, p.8. The widening of the ideological rift between the organised socialists and the Labor Party was demonstrated by the *Socialist* 's condemnation of this decision (August 25, 1906, p.1.)

[100]*Labor Call*, November 1, 1906, p.5; *Argus*, October 29, 1906, p.8.

[101]In May 1906, the militant Ballarat branch of the PLC drew attention to the prominence of W.T.C. Kelly, a PLC member, in Protectionist Association propaganda (This was after the PLC's decision not to co-operate with the PAV or the Chamber of Manufacturers). The PLC resolved, on the motion of Grayndler (AWU), to "urge all members of the P.L.C. to refrain

with the object of attracting PAV and possibly Government support.[102]

When a Liberal Protectionist candidate, A.G. Nichols, nominated in

opposition to Kelly and Irvine, the former premier, the Labor Party

reconsidered its position. Kelly reported to the executive that his chances of

winning the seat were remote owing to the strong antipathy of railway men

and Labor supporters in Flinders to Irvine, which led them to support

Nichols, whom they gave a better chance of winning the seat. The executive

asked Kelly "to withhold his nomination for Flinders in order to avoid a

split vote and the consequent return of Mr. Irvine".[103]   In explaining its

decision, the executive declared publicly:

> Although seeing little, if anything, to choose between Mr. Nichols and
> Mr. Irvine, the Executive did not think it fair to Mr. Kelly to let him
> proceed without the united support of the Laborites in Flinders.[104]

This was quite a different explanation to that which was communicated

privately to Kelly. The incident demonstrated that where Labor's entry into

a contest was likely to result in the election of an Anti-Socialist, the

executive was capable of a pragmatic decision in favour of a Liberal. In the

Corangamite electorate, the PLC faced a similar dilemma. There were three

candidates in the field: Desmond Dunne, the Ministerial candidate; J.G.

Wilson, the Anti-Socialist; and T.C. Carey (Labor). When the PLC central

executive received a resolution from the Kirkstall branch in Wannon that it

would be unwise to contest Corangamite and recommended that Dunne be

supported, it ordered that the resolution be expunged declaring, probably

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from taking part or speaking at meetings controlled by any other political organisation" (PLC
CE, Minutes, May 26, 1906, VSL MS 10389).
[102]*Argus*, July 6, 1906, p.5; July 12, 1906, p.5.
[103]PLC CE, Minutes, November 14, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Worker*, November 22, 1906, p.5. On
September 15, the PLC secretary, Heagney, reported to the executive a disposition on the part
of many railway men to support Nichols rather than Kelly in order to ensure the defeat of
Irvine (PLC CE, Minutes, September 15, 1906, VSL MS 10389).
[104]*Labor Call*, November 29, 1906, p.7.

unfairly, that it had been inspired by the Liberal Protectionists.[105] The executive laid down its policy in regard to three-way contests:

> 1. Not to consider any proposals to withdraw Labor candidates, no matter what other candidates are put forward.
> 2. To state that it has no preference for Mr. Nicholls as against Mr. Irvine, and would just as soon see Mr. Wilson returned as Mr. Dunne.
> 3. What we want is the realisation of the Labor Platform. That is opposed by both the old parties. By the Liberals insidiously, and by the Conservatives openly. Since both are implacable enemies, it would be idle to regard one as less hostile than the other.[106]

The uncompromising attitude of the executive towards the Liberal Protectionists expressed in public statements such as this was not echoed in the electorates. Even committed Labor voters and Party members were unable to equate Deakin's followers with the Anti-Socialists. In Corio, where the Labor branches had become defunct by 1906, the central executive decided not to run a candidate against Crouch, a Liberal Protectionist who had joined the Lab-Lib Alliance.[107] The Labor forces in the district were disorganised.[108] The state executive declared that it had no preference for either Crouch or J.W. McCay, a conservative Protectionist who had joined the Reid Ministry, and "would be very sorry to see a Labour man working for either of them".[109] When the Geelong branch of the PLC was revived in September 1906, it asked J.B. Ronald (who had been discarded by the Labor leagues in South Melbourne) to contest the seat on behalf of the Labor Party (an invitation which he declined) but there was no popular movement for a

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[105]PLC CE, Minutes, September 29, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Argus*, October 10, 1906, p.8.

[106]*Worker* , October 4, 1906, p.6.

[107]*Worker*, November 1, 1906, p.5.

[108]It is significant, however, for the question of Labor attitudes to Deakinite Liberalism that James McCann, a Geelong Laborite who was advising the central executive about local developments at this time, recommended that no Labor opposition be offered to R.A. Crouch since this would result in the return of McCay (PLC CE, Minutes, September 1, 1906, VSL MS 10389).

[109]*Labor Call*, November 1, 1906, p.5

Labor candidate in Geelong.[110] Local energies were devoted mainly to one

or the other of the protectionist associations supporting Crouch and

McCay.[111] It is not clear how active working-class people were in these

organisations but a local Laborite, James McCann, who was also a member of

the Association supporting Crouch,[112] attributed the collapse of PLC

organisation in Geelong to the keenness of the rivalry between the

protectionist bodies.[113]   Radical liberalism continued to enjoy loyal

working-class support in Geelong.[114]

In Ballarat, the Labor Party departed from its previous tactics, and ran a

candidate against Deakin.  This was indicative of a hardening of PLC

opinion against Liberals outside its own ranks.  However, as in the 1904 state

election, the labour movement in Ballarat was divided.  The TLC was

dominated by liberal craft unionists who looked to the Protectionist

Association for political leadership and had little sympathy for the Labor

Party.[115]  Scullin's campaign was conducted by the AWU and the radical

Laborites in the local leagues.[116]  Many of the craft union leaders in the TLC,

committed to tariff protection above all else and hostile to the "fiscal

atheists" who, they asserted, dominated the Labor Party, supported

Deakin.[117]  The Prime Minister won the seat by over 6000 votes in a two-way

contest.[118]

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[110]*Geelong Advertiser*, September 24, 1906, p.2

[111]*Geelong Advertiser*, September-November, 1906. It appears that sectarian issues were significant in shaping political alignments in Corio. Crouch supported Home Rule. See *Truth*, August 4, 1906, p.4. Ironically, McCay, who was supported by several of the Orange Lodges, was married to a Catholic.

[112]*Age*, July 5, 1906, p.5.

[113]*Worker*, September 6, 1906, p.2; *Argus*, September 3, 1906, p.9.

[114]*Geelong Advertiser*, November 1, 1906, p.4. In June, R.A. Crouch spoke at a Geelong Wharf Laborers' Union social in support of protection. See *Age*, June 12, 1906, p.5.

[115]TLC (Ballarat), Minutes, August 10, 1906, NBAC, ANU E 97/1/6; *Ballarat Courier*, August 11, 1906, pp. 2, 10; *Socialist*, September 22, 1906, p.3; *Age*, August 6, 1906, p.5.

[116]*Worker*, December 6, 1906, p.5.

[117]TLC (Ballarat), Minutes, August 24, 1906, NBAC, ANU E 97/1/6; *Ballarat Courier*, August 25, 1906, p.4.

[118]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives*, p.26.

In the metropolis Labor ran a candidate, the *Bulletin* journalist
Randolph Bedford, against Cook in Bourke.[119] A Labor candidate opposed
Mauger in Maribyrnong, yet it is significant that in late 1904 the Labor
branches in Melbourne Ports gave serious consideration to the possibility of
approving Mauger's candidature for the next election, and would certainly
have done so if he had joined the Party.[120] The PLC's choice of Clement
Davidson, an employer in the agricultural implement making trade, as
Mauger's opponent for the seat of Maribyrnong was an attempt to divert the
votes of middle-class electors and liberal protectionist workers to the PLC.[121]
The selection of Thomas Smith as the Labor candidate for Fawkner revealed
similar priorities: he was a manufacturer, and a prominent PAV activist.[122]
Indeed, if the selection of parliamentary candidates is any indication, the
class character of the Victorian Labor Party remained ambiguous in 1906 as
the *ouvrieriste* ideal was diluted in favour of a more traditional theme: a
progressive alliance of workers and manufacturers. A significant difference,
however, between the situation in 1906 and the colonial period was that this
"alliance" was now controlled by a Party machine in which the working
class was preponderant. In earlier electoral organisations, such as the NRPL,
working men had been subordinate to middle class activists. In 1906,
working-class political leaders regarded a democratically-controlled and
disciplined Party machine as a guarantee that the interests of the working
class would be protected regardless of the social origins of candidates.

Meanwhile, the Labor branches in northern Melbourne considered
opposing the radical Higgins, who still refused to join the Party. A

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[119]*Age*, August 13, 1906, p.6.
[120]PLC CE, Minutes, October 8, 1904, VSL MS 10389. The Port Melbourne branch did not
participate in these negotiations, although the reason is not apparent.
[121]Davidson's candidature even gained the formal support of the socialistic AIMU. See
Francis Lyons (Secretary) to Clement Davidson, November 23, 1906, in AIMU, Minutes,
December 6, 1906, UMA. See also AIMU, Minutes, November 22, 1906, UMA 2/1/1/3.
[122]*Age*, July 6, 1906, p.6. Smith had been a journeyman and treasurer of the Silk Hatters'
Union before he became a manufacturer. See *Worker*, September 6, 1906, p.5.

conference of Fitzroy and Collingwood delegates met in June 1906 and decided to run a Labor candidate, but the decision was not unanimous. The East Melbourne branch was opposed to selecting a Labor candidate and refused to participate in the conference at all.[123] It soon became evident that most of the Fitzroy Laborites were also against running a Labor man. At a meeting of the branch, one member moved that the matter stand over until after the election, and that meanwhile, the Labor Party "eulogise Mr Higgins for his many services to the party". The chairman, W.H. Murray, who nominated for the seat himself,[124] refused to accept the motion but the branch voted not to oppose Higgins.[125] The Collingwood branch, which had initiated the move against Higgins, was now isolated. While the state executive was silent during these proceedings, it intervened in late July to recommend a ballot to ascertain whether or not the Party should run a candidate.[126] When it became clear to the executive that only the Collingwood branch and a few Fitzroy branch members[127] favoured this course, it declared the selection conference unconstitutional and refused to sanction a ballot,[128] precipitating a mass of resignations from the Collingwood branch and the withdrawal of Murray from Fitzroy.[129] Higgins's elevation to the High Court ended the controversy, and resulted in the selection of Solly as Labor candidate for the new seat of Batman.[130] Rickard has suggested that this controversy indicated that a section of the Labor Party was growing impatient with Labor sympathisers who refused to

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[123]*Age*, June 20, 1906, p.8; *Argus*, June 22, 1906, p.6; *Tocsin*, June 28, 1906, pp.5, 8.

[124]*Argus*, July 10, 1906, p.6.

[125]PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, July 9, 1906, Merrifield Collection, VSL; *Argus*, July 11, 1906, p.9; *Age*, July 11, 1906, p.8.

[126]*Argus*, July 23, 1906, p.5.

[127]Murray, the president of the Fitzroy branch, and Hatton, both delegates to the Clifton (Batman) Labor Conference (Fitzroy and Collingwood branches), supported the selection of a Labor candidate.

[128]*Tocsin*, July 26, 1906, p.8; *Argus*, July 31, 1906, p.6; *Age*, July 31, 1906, p.5.

[129]*Argus*, August 1, 1906, p.8; August 8, 1906, p.9; February 13, 1907, p.8.

[130]*Argus*, October 15, 1906, p.6.

bind themselves to the Party organisation.[131]  However, it also demonstrated
the high regard in which Higgins was held by many Labor Party members.
The opposition to Higgins was largely confined to the Collingwood branch,
and had as much to do with the political ambitions of Jabez Coon
(Collingwood), a boot merchant, and Murray[132] as with any actual working-
class hostility to Higgins.  There was also a sectarian undercurrent to the
whole affair which has been overlooked by Rickard.[133]  Higgins was a
prominent supporter of Home Rule and popular among Catholic voters.[134]
Several Party members who resigned from the Collingwood branch in
protest against the central executive's interference approached the Protestant
electoral body requesting that a public meeting be convened.[135]  Meanwhile,
Coon nominated as a Liberal Protectionist and received Protestant Electors'
Committee (PEC) endorsement.  At a Protestant Alliance function held after
the election, Coon, now a Member of Parliament, "thanked the society for
that aid which had enabled him to poll such a splendid Protestant vote...".[136]
While the affair was probably more than a sectarian squabble, there is no
doubt that the religious issue was a strong influence on the course of events.

The threat posed by the PLC to the Deakinites also affected relations
between Watson and Deakin during 1906.  Watson used the threat of Labor
opposition to Liberal Protectionists in Victoria as a means of persuading
Deakin to embrace a more radical programme.  A land tax was high on the
list of Labor priorities.[137]  Watson told Deakin:

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[131]Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp.148-9.
[132]Coon announced that he would be a candidate for the seat of Clifton (Batman) in June
(*Argus*, June 18, 1906, p.5).  See also *Argus*, July 10, 1906, p.6.
[133]Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp. 148-50.
[134]Rickard, *H.B. Higgins*, pp. 112-14, 134-35.  It is significant that a resolution protesting
against the attempt to raise Labor opposition to Higgins came from Killarney branch in the
Western District, an area with a very strong concentration of Catholics.  See *Argus*, June 27,
1906, p.8.
[135]*Argus*, February 13, 1907, p.8.
[136]*Argus*, January 2, 1907, p.4.
[137]Watson to Deakin, March 8, 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/15/503.

> I noted your references to land taxation in Sydney, which seem to indicate that the Govt. will come out for it, but a definite declaration in favor would I think put some of our Victorian extremists in a quandary & should minimise any chance of clashing at the election.[138]

Deakin replied a few days later:

> ...glad to have your suggestions - But what will they be worth if in Victoria the P.L.C. goes in beating up opposition to us in the seats we now have & running for others so as to make the Reidites safe...

How, asked Deakin, could he expect his followers to adopt more radical planks "when by so doing they lose support without any compensating gain?"[139]  Watson responded, regretting the "unreasonableness of some of our Leagues in Vic.", but disagreed with Deakin's view of the attitude the Victorian liberals should adopt:

> If your men were advocating land taxation, & as a consequence old age pensions, it would, I think, make our Leagues hesitate before running forlorn hopes just for the pleasure of a fight.  If they have nothing to hope for from your supporters, they might just as well wade in & test the electors on our platform...[140]

Deakin was unimpressed with Watson's assurances, especially when the prospect of Labor opposition to Higgins and a PLC candidate in Kooyong[141] became apparent.[142]  When Deakin was successful in his own constituency of Ballarat against the Labor candidate Scullin, Watson made clear his opinions of the tactics of the PLC: "I need hardly say that I am glad you were returned, as I thought it was a great mistake to run a man against you at all".[143]

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138Watson to Deakin, May 25, 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/15/533.
139Deakin to Watson, May 28, 1906, Watson Papers, NLA MS 451/1/6.
140Watson to Deakin, May 30, 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/15/536.
141*Age*, March 21, 1906, p.8.
142Deakin to Watson, May 31, 1906, Watson Papers, NLA MS 451/1/7.
143Watson to Deakin, December 17, 1906 (unsigned), Watson Papers, NLA MS 451/1/9.

Labor gained only Wannon in the 1906 election. In the city, Mauger and Hume Cook retained their seats in solidly working-class electorates, and we have seen that Coon, a Liberal Protectionist, won Batman. James Mathews, a tailor, was the new Labor member for Melbourne Ports, which included much of the old Southern Melbourne electorate, formerly represented by Ronald. Any analysis of these results must take into account the sectarian question; this influence will be considered in a subsequent chapter. What is clear from the 1906 results is that working-class votes did not automatically yield Labor seats in the metropolis. Indeed, the weakness of the Labor vote in several urban working-class electorates is evident. In northern suburban Bourke, Simon Fraser, J.H. McColl (*Age, Argus*, Anti-Socialists, Protestant Electors Committee) and Alexander Ramsay (PEC) led the Senate poll. The heavy vote for the Protestant candidate Ramsay was indicative of the strength of sectarianism in an area which had long been the site of bitter religious conflict.[144] In Batman, Fraser and McColl were followed on the Senate poll by Tunnecliffe and Russell, the Labor and "Catholic" candidates. In Maribyrnong, Fraser topped the poll, followed by Tunnecliffe, Russell and McColl. In Wannon, where Labor won the House of Representatives seat in a two-way contest with the Anti-Socialists, Anti-Socialist Senate candidates occupied the first three places in the poll.[145]

Labor's performance in Melbourne was disappointing for Party activists. At the same time, the principle of Labor's organisational independence had been established beyond doubt. This was driven by the PLC leadership. The electorate, including many committed Labor supporters and branch members, remained sceptical about claims that there was no difference between Liberal Protectionists and Anti-Socialists. In this

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[144]In 1896, there had been a riot in which several Orangemen and Catholics had been injured. See John Sadleir, *Recollections of a Victorian Police Officer*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1973 (first published 1913), pp.258-9; J.P. Jones, Diary, July 19, 1896, VSL MS 9547/1260.
[145]Statistical Returns, 1906 Commonwealth Election, *CPP*, Session 1907, *Votes and Proceedings* , No.7, p.473.

respect, a comparison with the situation in state politics is instructive.

While the Liberal Party maintained a separate existence until early 1907, the

Glenelg and Barwon by-elections in 1906 were contests between the

Ministerial Party and the Labor Party.[146] As the *Age* commented, the

Barwon election "resolved itself simply into a contest between the

Government and the Labor party, the actual candidates for political honors

being minor figures in the fight".[147]   Parliamentarians from both sides,

including the premier and the leader of the Opposition, swooped on the

electorates in these contests to advance the cause of their parties.[148] This was

a new development in Victorian politics which reflected the consolidation

of the party system and, as the *Tocsin* declared, "the disappearance of the

discredited third party from State politics".[149] In early 1907, the Ministerial

and Liberal Parties formed an anti-Labor Fusion which anticipated events in

the federal sphere by two years.[150] When Labor propagandists told electors

that there was no real difference between the Ministerialists and the

Liberals, their story was convincing.[151]  As Eggleston commented, after 1904

"[t]here was little...to justify the segregation of the Liberals".[152] This was

quite different to the situation in federal politics, where the fiscal issue was

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[146]*Argus*, May 3, 1906, p.5.

[147]*Age*, June 15, 1906, p.5.

[148]Kay Rollison, 'Groups and Attitudes in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 1900-1909', unpublished PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 1972, pp. 189-90; *Worker*, May 3, 1906, p.1; *Age*, May 3, 1906, p.5; May 4, 1906, p.5; May 8, 1906, p.5; May 9, 1906, p.8; May 10, 1906, p.5; *Argus*, May 1, 1906, p.4; May 2, 1906, p.8; May 7, 1906, p.5; May 8, 1906, p.4; May 9, 1906, p.7; May 10, 1906, p.5; June 8, 1906, p.5; June 9, 1906, p.15; June 11, 1906, p.5; June 13, 1906, p.7; June 14, 1906, p.5; June 15, 1906, p.5; *VPD*, CXIII, July 17, 1906, p. 304.

[149]*Tocsin*, May 17, 1906, p.4.

[150]E.H. Sugden & F.W. Eggleston, *George Swinburne: A Biography*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1931, p. 224; Rollison, 'Groups', pp. 193-208; *Age*, January 23, 1907, p.7; January 24, 1907, p.5; February 20, 1907, p.6; *Argus*, January 23, 1907, p.6; February 18, 1907, p.6.

[151]The response of the Prahran branch of the PLC was revealing (Prahran was represented in the Assembly by the Liberal Party leader, Mackinnon):
> The amalgamation of the Government and Corner parties will not be a fatal blow to this branch, in fact we have always had a deep suspicion that the line of demarcation which separated Bent from Mackinnon was purely imaginary. (*Labor Call*, January 31, 1907, p.8.)

[152]Sugden & Eggleston, *George Swinburne*, p. 130.

still unsettled in 1906. Moreover, the Liberals were committed to some radical policies but, as Deakin himself observed, the PLC's official attitude to the Protectionist Party was little affected by the extent to which the Protectionists were prepared to adopt Labor's program. The explanation for this paradox is that the PLC's strategy was driven by a conviction that Labor's organisational autonomy had to be maintained, regardless of policy. At the 1908 Commonwealth Labor Conference, it was again the Victorian delegates who instigated the successful attempt to extend this policy. On the motion of Findley, the conference decided that "the Party should not enter into any alliance, nor grant, nor promise to any person immunity from opposition at any time".[153] One reason for the acceptance of this policy was that the advance of the Labor Party, discernible in Victoria as in every state, meant that the possibility of achieving a parliamentary majority now had to be taken seriously. In the 1908 state elections, Labor gained six seats.[154] The Party now controlled one-third of the Assembly and *Labor Call* attributed this success to Labor's "splendid isolation".[155] The central executive made its position on alliances clear to George Elmslie in 1909 when it blocked his proposal for an arrangement with John Murray's Liberals in the State Parliament.[156]

**New Protection and New Liberalism**

The policy of New Protection was a formalisation of a set of assumptions which had underpinned Victoria's protectionist policy since the 1860s. Victorian protectionism had always been understood as a compact between manufacturers, who would be protected from foreign competition, and

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[153]Australian Labor Party, Fourth Commonwealth Political Labour Conference, *Official Report*, Worker [Printers], Brisbane, 1908, pp. 26-8. See also Crisp, *Australian Federal Labour Party*, pp. 163-4.
[154]Hughes & Graham, *Handbook*, pp.476-7.
[155]*Labor Call*, December 31, 1908, p.4.
[156]PLC CE, Minutes, August 15, 1909, VSL MS 10389.

workers, who would support the tariff in return for a fair wage.[157] From 1895, working-class support for protection in return for a minimum wage was at the heart of Lib-Lab co-operation in Victoria, although the phrase "New Protection" was not used until the end of the decade.[158] As J.A. La Nauze has explained, the policy "sought to impose upon employers who were aided by tariffs a legal obligation to provide 'fair and reasonable' wages and working conditions for their employees".[159] New Protection expressed the more positive sense of human freedom gradually accepted by Victorian liberals from the 1880s. As Macintyre has suggested, there was a shift in liberalism from an optimistic belief in "the liberation of human capacities" to "a new liberalism in which the social impulses become far more problematic".[160] Liberals were becoming more aware of the potential for social disharmony in strong identification with a religious or ethnic group, a gender or a class.[161] This awareness guided their attitudes to a broad range of problems, and produced institutions which sought to regulate relations between capital and labour such as wages boards and arbitration courts, and measures intended to provide greater personal security for the citizenry, such as old age and invalid pensions.[162] While Victorian liberals had long accepted that the state should play a role in economic development and in the protection of the most vulnerable members of the workforce from exploitation, from the 1880s they extended the proposed scope of state

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[157]C.J. Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance, 1855-1889', unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1973, p.155.

[158]La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin,Volume 2*, pp.410-11.

[159]La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin,Volume 2*, p. 410. See also Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp. 212-22; *New Protection - Explanatory Memorandum in Regard to, CPP*, 1907-8, Volume 2, Second Session, No. 147, pp.1887-9.

[160]Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, p.187.

[161]Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, p.193.

[162]Stuart Macintyre, 'Neither Capital nor Labour: The Politics of the Establishment of Arbitration', in Stuart Macintyre & Richard Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration: The Origins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration 1890-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, pp.178-200; Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1989.

intervention.[163]  This was, in part, an attempt to contain labour within a set

of social arrangements based on social harmony and consensus and, more

narrowly, to maintain working-class support for protectionist liberalism in

the context of the emergence of the Labor Party.  The development of a

concept of social citizenship, however, was also part of a broader shift in

liberal social thought in Britain and the antipodes.[164]  The assumptions

which radical liberals such as Kingston, Higgins, Mauger and even Deakin

shared with the Labor Party about the role of the state in advancing popular

sovereignty and restraining harmful human impulses blurred the line

between labourism and liberalism.  In 1903, a PLC election sheet, *The Labour

Ticket*, registered the shift in liberal political thought and expressed a radical

interpretation of the relationship between liberalism and class when it

explained that

> Old Liberalism having failed, a new Liberalism...has been slowly,
> surely, inevitably ripening these latter years, namely, the organised
> body of all workers, whether by hand or brain...the Labour Party must
> step into the political vanguard and do the people's work.[165]

The *Labour Ticket*  thus linked the extension of liberalism to the rise of

labour and the appropriation of liberalism by the working class.  In this

sense, labourism differed from nineteenth-century Victorian liberalism in

its greater emphasis on working-class agency, yet Laborites also invoked the

"people" in such a way as to uphold the ideal of popular sovereignty,

suggesting its location in the liberal lineage.

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[163]S.M. Ingham, 'Some Aspects of Victorian Liberalism 1880-1900', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, p.63; Stuart Macintyre, *Winners and Losers: The Pursuit of Social Justice in Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.40-50; H.V. Evatt, *Liberalism in Australia: An Historical Sketch of Australian Politics down to the year 1915*, Law Book Co. of Australia, Sydney, 1918, pp.54, 73.

[164]John Docker, 'Can the Centre Hold?: Conceptions of the State 1890-1925', in Sydney Labour History Group (ed.), *What Rough Beast?: The State and Social Order in Australian History*, George Allen & Unwin & The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney, 1982, pp.57-88.

[165]*Labour Ticket*, December 2, 1903, p.4.

The proponents of the New Protection in the labour movement argued that an independent Labor Party and a strong union movement was necessary to secure fair and reasonable wages and advance other working-class demands. While the FPLP allowed its members a free hand on protection from 1901,[166] Victorian members of the Federal Parliament were pledged to protection from this time and to New Protection from June 1903.[167] The leaders of the Victorian Party, while committed to a protective tariff, emphasised the importance of industrial legislation as the corollary of Labor support for the manufacturers' demands for a high tariff. As the *Tocsin* explained in 1906, the "Victorian party is distinctly, but not merely, Protectionist, and it refuses to coalesce with any organisation with which it is at one only on the fiscal question".[168] The depression played an important role in diminishing labour's faith in a tariff as the foundation of the working man's paradise. As Stephen Barker told the Royal Commission into the Factories Act in 1901:

> I must say that the most highly protected manufacturers in this State have been the biggest sinners with regard to sweating and I have pointed out to the employer that he could not fairly claim protection for his industry, while he expected free competition among those whom he employed.[169]

Similarly, James Bennett, a bootmaker, told the Commission that it did not matter much "to the workers whether they have protection or free-trade, unless they have the same protection as the employers in the shape of a Factories Act or an Arbitration Act...". According to Bennett, protection had produced overcompetition, and it only benefited the workers "as long as

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[166]See p.131
[167]PLC, *Constitution*, 1901, in PLC File, Merrifield Collection, VSL; *Labor Call*, January 3, 1907, cover. See Appendix L.
[168]*Tocsin*, May 31, 1906, p.4.
[169]RCFS, Minutes of Evidence, 8240.

they had the power to resist the inroads on their wages".[170]  Labor

representatives emphasised that their Party's support for protection was part

of a political bargain which depended on the delivery of the legislative

goods to wage-earners.  They believed that state intervention was necessary

to compel employers to adhere to their side of the "bargain".  As Lemmon

warned the PAV in 1901:

> Our attitude towards the question of protection is not one of
> contending that industrial protection begins and ends at the Custom-
> house...the necessary corollary to protection to the manufacturer is the
> establishment of some tribunal whereby the employes of the fostered
> industries may share the fruits of the policy by securing a fair rate of
> wage for a reasonable number of hours of work.[171]

The different priorities of the Labor Party and the PAV are suggested in the

PAV's response that protection at the Customs House was a first essential:

> ...in the interests of wage earners, effective protection should first be
> given to Australian producers and manufacturers, with a view to
> secure the 'New Protection' in the form of Wages Boards and
> Arbitration Acts.[172]

The Labor Party was at a disadvantage in its attempt to present its support

for the tariff as part of a bargain because the labour movement's support for

high tariff protection was never in doubt.  Moreover, once a tariff had been

set, as in 1902, there was nothing to stop an employer offensive against

organised labour.  This problem was evident in September 1903, when the

Barton Government dropped its Conciliation and Arbitration Bill,

prompting a bitter response from the THC.  Lemmon declared:

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[170]RCFS, Minutes of Evidence, 7055, 7057.

[171]Letter from John Lemmon, clipping in PAV, Minutes, November 15, 1901, in Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13.

[172]Conference of the PAV & THC Tariff Committee, November 26, 1901, in PAV, Minutes, in Mauger Papers, NLA MS 403/13.

...the working men must absolutely refuse to grant protection to the manufacturers unless they went hand in hand with the workers in securing such protection for the latter as was afforded by the Arbitration Bill...[173]

The THC's "threat" to the tariff, however, could hardly be taken seriously when Labor candidates were pledged to New Protection. In October 1904, for instance, the THC called on Labor and protectionist members to defeat the Reid Ministry and bring about an appeal to the people "with the view of securing a speedy revision of the tariff, thereby reviving the languishing industries & providing the employment so urgently needed by the large number of willing workers now unemployed".[174] The "fiscal atheist" remained an oddity in the Victorian labour movement, to be found mainly in the ranks of the organised socialists.[175] The PLC attempted unsuccessfully to have the Commonwealth Labor Conference include New Protection in the Party's fighting platform in 1905.[176] In 1908, the Commonwealth Labor Conference accepted New Protection, influenced particularly by Higgins's Harvester Judgment of the previous year which promised to extend the benefits of a fair and reasonable wage to many wage-earners.[177] Labor advocates of New Protection believed that the policy provided the basis for a national settlement between capital, labour and consumers, who would be protected by the tariff, the Arbitration Court and anti-trust legislation.[178]

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[173]*Age*, September 12, 1903, p.11. See also THC, Minutes, September 11, 1903.

[174]THC, Minutes, October 7, 1904.

[175]See, for example, Harry Scott Bennett's comments on tariff protection, in ALP, Third Commonwealth Political Labour Conference, *Official Report*, 1905, pp.14-18.

[176]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 24, 1905, VSL MS 10389; ALP, Third Commonwealth Political Labour Conference, *Official Report*, 1905, pp.14-18.

[177]*Labor Call*, July 30, 1908, p.8.

[178]PLC, Manifesto, *Federal Elections*, Labor Call [Printer], Melbourne, 1910, in Hume Cook Papers, NLA MS 601/3/42.

## Labor and the Political Role of Women

The Labor Party's appeal to consumers was, in part, an attempt to increase Labor's attractiveness to women voters who had been granted the suffrage in 1902.[179]  Most women's political allegiances could not readily be defined by their role in the productive process because in labour political discourse, the concept of production was not extended to include the unpaid work of women in the home.   Among those actually involved in paid labour, most were young women who saw as their true destiny marriage and motherhood rather than continued participation in the workforce.[180]  The Labor Party thus appealed to women as wives and mothers and, in economic terms, as consumers, who would be protected from monopolies, trusts and combines by the Party's proposed anti-trust laws.[181]

It was impossible for Labor men to ignore that the sphere of women had been enlarged by the suffrage.  The most prominent woman in the Labor Party at this time was Lilian Locke.[182]  She had been a colleague of the non-party feminist Vida Goldstein in the Victorian women's suffrage movement, but left Goldstein's Women's Federal Political League (WFPA) in 1903 when its relations with the PLC soured over the question of whether women should form separate political organisations.[183]  The WFPA was

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[179]This only applies to federal elections.  Victorian women did not receive the state suffrage until 1908.  For the Victorian campaign for women's suffrage, see Audrey Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: A Gift or a Struggle?*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1992, ch.8; Farley Kelly, 'The "Woman Question" in Melbourne 1880-1914', unpublished PhD thesis, Monash University, 1982; H. Besemeres, 'Some Aspects of the Movement for Woman's Suffrage in Victoria 1889-1908', unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1958.

[180]Raelene Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria 1880-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993, p.23.

[181]Political Labour Council of Victoria and the Women's Organisation, *Why the Women Should Vote for Labour*, n.d. [1903], in Lilian Locke-Burns Papers, ML MSS Q 329.3/B; *Tocsin*, October 8, 1903, p.2; *Labor Call*, September 8, 1910, p.7.

[182]Betty Searle, *Silk and Calico: Class, Gender & the Vote*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1988, pp.39-58.

[183]*Australian Woman's Sphere*, May 10, 1903, p.300; July 10, 1903, p.320.

radical liberal rather than distinctly labour, and it was supported by
prominent Liberals such as Mauger, Hume Cook, Deakin, Kingston and
Turner.[184] Goldstein, while sympathetic to the labour movement, was a
middle-class radical whose sense of independence, like that of Higgins,
would not permit her to submit to pledge and caucus.[185] In her campaign
for the Senate, she railed against "machine politics" and, at a time when the
PLC was increasing the discipline within its ranks by insisting that its
candidates sign a pledge, many Labor Party members concluded that the
activities of the WFPA were an attempt "to dish the Labour Party".[186] The
projected alliance between the WFPA and the PLC, which had originally
been suggested by Mann, foundered on the rocks of Labor's quest for party
discipline and class loyalty.[187] In this respect, the split between Labor and the
WFPA was as much a part of the Party's breach with liberalism as an
outcome of Labor's attitude to gender and the political role of women.

Lilian Locke, acting as a PLC organiser in 1903, attempted the difficult
task of negotiating a balance between public and private spheres which
would permit women to take an interest in politics and, moreover, to vote
for Labor. She declared in 1903:

> the women who had taken an interest in political and social questions
> were the best cooks and housewives, and if woman recognised that
> politics was only state housekeeping she would, while keeping to her
> home, also take an intelligent interest in public affairs...[188]

Locke appealed to women as wives, mothers, and citizens. Her presence on
a public platform challenged traditional conceptions of the role of women in

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[184]*Australian Woman's Sphere*, June 10, 1903, pp.312-3; September 10, 1903, p.343; January 15, 1904, p.396.

[185]Janice N. Brownfoot, 'Vida Jane Mary Goldstein', *ADB*, Volume 9, pp.43-5; Searle, *Silk and Calico*, pp.61-76.

[186]PLC, Minutes, May 30, 1903, VSL MS 10389. See also *Australian Woman's Sphere*, July 10, 1903, p.322; August 10, 1903, p.334; October 10, 1903, p.360.

[187]PLC, Minutes, April 18, 1903, VSL MS 10389.

[188]*Hamilton Spectator*, December 12, 1903.

# A UNIONIST



Sarah Muir

The idea that the natural sphere of woman was private and centred on the home and family ensured that even the most able and articulate Labor women were often uncomfortable in the public arena. Sarah Muir, a tailoress and union activist, was apologetic when mounting a platform in defence of the wages board system in 1901: "she could not make a speech, but she could tell her experiences of what the Factories Acts had done for women". (*Argus*, October 1, 1901, p.7)

society. This re-negotiation of the division between public and private spheres, however, did not powerfully challenge a more general acceptance of the home as the woman's natural domain. The difficulties of creating a public space for the political activity of women remained.

After Lilian Locke married Tasmanian Labor parliamentarian George Burns in 1906,[189] the Party relied on the efforts of female Labor activists such as Amy Whitham, a nursing sister who ran a private hospital in Swan Hill,[190] and H.F. Powell, the able and articulate Ballarat Laborite. Like her party colleague and fellow political organiser, James Scullin, Powell came to labour politics from a Ballarat debating society.[191] She believed that socialism would lead "to truer matrimonial selection and home life".[192]

The PLC placed several women organisers in the field for the 1910 general election,[193] while a Women's Organising Committee (WOC), under the energetic leadership of the former schoolteacher Ellen Mulcahy,[194] was active in Melbourne.[195] Mulcahy was a prolific contributor to the *Labor Call*, the founder and secretary of the Parkville branch of the Labor Party;[196] and a member of the PLC state executive in 1911-12.[197] Like Locke, she accepted the notion that men and women should occupy separate spheres: "women could interest themselves in the affairs of their country and nation without detriment to their womanhood, domesticity or women's natural sphere".[198] This "natural sphere", for Mulcahy, was the home.[199] She also

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[189]B.G. Andrews, 'Helena Sumner Locke & Lilian Sophia Locke', *ADB* , Volume 10, pp.127-8.
[190]Muriel Heagney, 'Labor Women's Contribution to Human Welfare', unpublished typescript, n.d., p.39, in Muriel Heagney papers, VSL MS 9106/1162/6(a).
[191]*Labor Call*, June 8, 1911, p.3.
[192]*Labor Call*, April 29, 1909, p.8.
[193]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, June 4, 1910, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, March 24, 1910, p.8.
[194]*Labor Call*, September 8, 1910, p.3.
[195]*Labor Call*, February 24, 1910, p.8; March 17, 1910, p.2; May 5, 1910, p.1.
[196]PLC CE, Minutes, February 24, 1912, NLA MS 131.
[197]PLC CE, Minutes, 1911-12, NLA MS 131.
[198]*Labor Call*, October 13, 1910, p.8.
[199]*Labor Call*, December 22, 1910, p.14.

organised women workers into unions, arguing that women in industry ought to receive equal pay with men for equal work, in order to prevent men's wages from being lowered, and to end the exploitation of women themselves.[200] These activities created a power base for Mulcahy within the labour movement, and clearly caused some concern among male Labor members.[201] Labor women such as Mulcahy had to work within a male-dominated movement, in which a gender hierarchy was regarded by most men and many women as natural. As Mulcahy commented in 1910, the men

> had not broadened their minds to any greater extent in regard to women than to view her as useful for voting purposes, but wholly unworthy of such representation as her franchise demands...[202]

It finally became too much for Ellen Mulcahy. In 1913, she resigned from the PLC and nominated as an independent in opposition to Maloney for the federal seat of Melbourne. The reasons for her action were complicated. There were local disagreements about the manner in which Maloney had been preselected, but she claimed that the main reason for her decision was that Labor had been inactive in the matter of tariff protection, and that she objected to the pledge, echoing the complaints of Goldstein in 1903.[203] It was, however, primarily the male domination of the Party structure which made acceptance of the pledge an impossibility for Mulcahy.[204] As Melanie Raymond has shown, there was little sympathy among Labor men (and some women) to the claims of Labor women for a limited autonomy within

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[200]*Labor Call*, July 21, 1910, p.8; September 8, 1910, p.8; January 19, 1911, p.4; January 26, 1911, pp.3, 5; April 13, 1911, p.5; June 1, 1911, p.1; August 10, 1911, p.1. See also *Labor Call*, April 4, 1912, p.1, for a general summary of Mulcahy's role in the labour movement.

[201]*Labor Call*, July 7, 1910, p.3; July 28, 1910, pp.8-9.

[202]*Labor Call*, June 23, 1910, p.8.

[203]*Argus*, May 3, 1913, cutting in PLC CE, Minutes, 1913, NLA MS 131.

[204]*Age*, May 3, 1913, cutting in PLC CE, Minutes, 1913, NLA MS 131.

the Party.[205] At the 1914 state conference, influential Labor men such as E.F.
Russell, T.C. Carey, D.L. McNamara and John Barnes argued against
constitutional recognition of the WOC on the grounds that there were no
"sex distinctions in the Labor movement".[206] The proposal for such
recognition failed to gain the required absolute majority at the conference
and, as a consequence, the WOC was disbanded. Labor women remained
the Party's "hewers of wood and carriers of water".[207] In the branches, they
were usually regarded as political housekeepers who should have
responsibility for the domestic side of branch affairs.[208] Fundraising,
organising social events, and the provision of refreshments at conferences
were typical of the activities performed by women in the Labor Party.[209]
Indeed, the fundraising activities of Labor women were crucial in
maintaining the solvency of the PLC in 1907-8 when it lacked an alternative
source of finance.[210] The autonomy granted to the WOC at the 1910
conference (It had the status of any Labor branch, except in regard to
selecting candidates) was a reward for this work, and for the strenuous
efforts of Labor women in the 1910 election.[211] After 1910, however, in the
context of growing union support for the PLC, the executive was no longer
so financially dependent on the women, and Labor men were less

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[205]Melanie Raymond, 'Labour Pains: Working-Class Women in Employment, Unions and the Labor Party in Victoria 1888-1914', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1987, p.214.

[206]*Labor Call*, April 30, 1914, cover (3); PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 12, 1914, NLA MS 131.

[207]*Labor Call*, April 25, 1912, p.6.

[208]Jocelyn Clarke & Kate White, *Women in Australian Politics*, Fontana/Collins, Sydney, 1983, p.33; Robin Joyce, 'Labor Women: Political Housekeepers or Politicians?', in Marian Simms (ed.), *Australian Women and the Political System*, Longmans Cheshire, Melbourne, 1984, p.66.

[209]PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, August 9, 1905; July 11, 1910, Merrifield Collection, VSL; PLC (North Melbourne), Minutes, November 10, 1913, in Ian Turner Collection, NBAC, ANU P 2/7; PLC (MDC), Minutes, January 26, 1907, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, July 14, 1904, p.8; *Labor Call*, June 6, 1907, p.8; August 31, 1911, p.8; March 21, 1912, p.8.

[210]PLC CE, Minutes, October 5, 1907, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, April 30, 1908, p.3.

[211]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, June 6, 1910, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, June 16, 1910, p.3; September 22, 1910, p.8; October 6, 1910, p.8.

# POLITICAL HOUSEKEEPERS ?



MELBOURNE PORTS WEST STALL COMMITTEE.

Labor Women, 1908

*The Sunrise: Souvenir of Labour Fair*, E. Findley, Melbourne, 1908 (National Library of Australia)

sympathetic to the claims of women activists for autonomy.[212]  Many Labor

women accepted their subordinate role.  As a female correspondent to the

*Labor Call*  remarked, women

> have now the power to help their 'menkind' to get much that they
> have been struggling for.  Ours is a subsidiary part, but don't let us
> disappoint them in our use of the vote.  They have gained for us this
> privilege and all others that we have.[213]

By 1914, male domination of the Labor Party was secure.  Labor's claims to

inclusiveness, its self-proclaimed status as the "people's party", and its role

as the political arm of a male-dominated union movement, precluded a

recognition of the political significance of gender difference.

## The Fusion and the 1910 Federal Election

The events of the federal Fusion have received considerable attention from

historians.  Ian Hancock has argued that Labor and the Fusion each

contained a coalition of interests; they did not represent opposing classes.[214]

Rickard has rejected this notion, arguing that by 1909, there were two

alternatives in Australian politics, Labor and anti-Labor.  A class-based

political system had thus emerged.[215]  Both arguments provide part of the

explanation of the significance of 1909-10, but they also ignore much that

was important about these events.  There was, as Rickard has suggested, a

class significance in the events of 1909-10 to the extent that Labor had

"found" its constituency: the working class.  Indeed by 1910, the influence of

class position on voting patterns was evident.  Metropolitan electorates with

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[212]For a male reaction against women activists in the Labor Party, see *Labor Call*, July 7, 1910, p.3.
[213]*Labor Call*, December 2, 1909, p.7.
[214]Ian Hancock, 'The 1910 Federal Election in Victoria', unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1961, pp.4-15.
[215]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, ch.8, esp. pp.252-4.

a strong working-class presence became safe Labor seats - Maribyrnong,

Batman and Bourke joined Yarra, Melbourne Ports and Melbourne -

although it is evident that many workers continued to vote for non-Labor

candidates. This observation, however, reveals little of the subjective

meanings of party allegiance for the working-class people involved, an

important omission from Rickard's account because his argument is, in a

large measure, about political consciousness.[216] Moreover, his model

cannot explain Labor's support outside the working class. Labor's slim

majorities in rural electorates such as Corangamite, Indi, Corio and

Wannon were based on broad populist alliances which included urban

wage-earners, miners, railway men and rural labourers, but also

encompassed farmers, business people and other electors who did not

identify themselves as working class. Moreover, how women voters fit into

Rickard's class categories in not entirely clear.

Benjamin Hoare, a Catholic and *Age* journalist, was one of those who

voted Labor in 1910. The events of the fusion, he declared, "made tens of

thousands of us Liberals vote Labor for the next ten years". In 1910, Labor

was "put into power by the voice of the 'Unattached' Liberal vote, which

was indignant at the treatment meted out to Labor".[217] Hoare's comment

suggests a more complicated situation than either Rickard or Hancock allow.

The 1910 election might be seen as the successful culmination of Victorian

Labor's efforts to portray itself as the heir to the Victorian liberal tradition, to

successfully appropriate the language of liberal democracy in the cause of the

Party machine. Harry Beard, who contested Batman, claimed

> there were only two parties - the Conservative and the Liberal party.
> The so-called Liberals of the past had gone over and allied themselves

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[216]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, pp.1-3, ch.11.

[217]Benjamin Hoare, *Looking Back Gaily*, E.W. Cole Book Arcade, Melbourne, 1927, p.204.

with the Conservatives...the Labor party was left as the only true Liberal party.[218]

McDougall also identified Labor as part of the Victorian liberal tradition: "If the Liberals had been true to the people in the past, there never would have been a secession; but the Labor party had risen from the ashes of dead Liberalism...".[219] According to Ozanne, the successful Labor candidate for Corio, the issue was "protection versus Free-trade, and Liberalism versus Toryism".[220] It might be objected that these sorts of appeals were part of a strategy of luring "cross-class floating voters" rather than indicative of a genuine Labor commitment to Victorian liberalism.[221] There is evidence, however, that even when addressing the Party faithful, Labor activists appealed to non-class collectivities which owed much to the Victorian liberal tradition.[222] In 1911, Laborite P.J. Mullaney, writing in *Labor Call*, declared that the "transference of the sceptre from a single class to the masses can never be effected by a class party". The Labor Party, according to Mullaney,

> WORKS ACCORDING TO ITS LIGHT AND ITS STRENGTH TO OVERTHROW ONE CLASS FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL OTHER CLASSES; that class being the Monopolists of Wealth and of Privilege. Indeed, if ever a political party in Australia deserved the title of the People's Party it is the Labor party.[223]

The Labor Party's appeal to the "people" to end the tyranny of the monopolies, rings and trusts should not be seen as the natural direction of radical and working-class politics in the age of monopoly capitalism. It was

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[218]*Age*, March 3, 1910, p.8.
[219]*Age*, March 24, 1910, p.8.
[220]*Geelong Advertiser*, April 13, 1910, p.3.
[221]Giovanni Sartori, 'From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology', in Seymour Martin Lipset (ed.), *Politics and the Social Sciences*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1969, p.72.
[222]*Labor Vanguard* (Ballarat), April 1, 1910; April 8, 1910.
[223]*Labor Call*, June 29, 1911, p.6.

rather the modification of an older liberal discourse which constituted the "masses" or the "people" as a progressive force in opposition to a conspiracy of wealth and privilege. This idea of a union of classes against class privilege was as much a part of the politics of radical liberalism in its more aggressive phases - in the 1865 and 1878 struggles against the Legislative Council, for instance - as of modern labourism.[224]  The discourse, however, had now been appropriated by labour, and there was a stronger emphasis on working-class agency than in earlier forms of radicalism. Still, Moloney declared that Labor represented "98 per cent." of the people of Indi who "put forth some effort to secure their livings"[225] while Ellen Mulcahy claimed more conservatively that "[n]inety-seven and a half per cent. of the people of the State were workers, and should be on the side of Labor".[226] This was a populist formulation which posited the common political interests of all productive sections of the community rather than the kind of appeal to working-class consciousness characteristic of much socialist propaganda of the time. Labor propaganda, however, often had a more explicit class content. According to a PLC Manifesto, the election was "the greatest struggle that has ever taken place in the world wide war between Labor and Capital".[227] At the same time, *Labor Call* interpreted the choice between Labor and the Fusion in populist terms as "the rule of a class, or the rule of the Mass, the rule of the Trust and Combine, or of the whole people". The Fusion was

> a compact of Land Sharks, Sweaters, Monopolists, Coal Barons, Sugar Kings, Greedy Middlemen and Idle Rich. It is the Associated Banks, the Squatters, the Money Lords, the Federation of Employers...[228]

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[224]It is significant that during the 1910 campaign, the *Age* recalled an earlier Liberal struggle against the Council: "Never before had such a trick been played upon the people, and only once before - in 1878 - have the people risen in such resentment" (April 15, 1910, p.6)

[225]*Age*, March 30, 1910, p.8.

[226]*Age*, April 12, 1910, p.7.

[227]PLC, *Manifesto*, Federal Election, 1910, in Hume Cook Papers, NLA MS 601/3/42.

[228]*Labor Call*, April 14, 1910, p.4.

After the election the *Victorian Railway News* announced that "...the 'Class' party has been obliterated".[229]

One of the main issues in the 1910 election was tariff protection. In 1909, Deakin's Liberal Protectionists had joined with Joseph Cook's Anti-Socialist party which incorporated free-traders, revenue tariff advocates and "moderate protectionists". Labor, assisted by the *Age*, successfully raised the cry that protection was in danger if the Fusion were allowed to prevail.[230] The Protectionists, they asserted, had been swallowed by the free-traders. D.G. Carter, secretary of the North Melbourne Labor branch, claimed that "the Labor party was now the only protectionist party".[231] Labor candidates emphasised the importance of protection, casting doubt over the protectionist credentials of the fusion.[232] Some Party members went further. Hannah convened a meeting of protectionists which resolved to establish a Commonwealth Protectionist Association (CPA). Its objective was to advance new protection: "protection to the manufacturer, protection to the worker and protection to the consumer": Labor's policy. The chairman of the meeting was W.T.C. Kelly; Ted Warde MLA, Adam McLellan (MLC, Labor) William Campbell, the secretary of the Iron Trades Council and Labor Senate candidate A.E.H. Blakey were present.[233] Hoare was elected president of the new body.[234] The avowed reason for the formation of the new organisation was the threat posed to tariff protection by the Fusion Party, which had nominated "some 48 to 50 free-traders and fiscal trucers" for the election.[235] This was certainly the principal reason for the CPA's emergence,

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[229]*Victorian Railway News*, May 2, 1910, p.2.
[230]*Age*, April 13, 1910, p.8.
[231]*Age*, March 16, 1910, p.10.
[232]*Age*, March 1, 1910, p.8; March 4, 1910, p.8; March 9, 1910, p.10; March 11, 1910, p.8; April 9, 1910, p.11; *Geelong Advertiser*, February 24, 1910, p.3; March 14, 1910, p.3.
[233]*Age*, April 7, 1910, p.5.
[234]*Age*, April 19, 1910, p.11.
[235]*Age*, April 7, 1910, p.5.

but it might also have been an attempt to attract Liberal Protectionist voters to the Labor Party by reassuring them that the Victorian members of the Party were committed to tariff protection.[236]

The CPA did not have official PLC sanction. At the PLC meeting on 2 April, president Bob Solly protested against Hannah's actions which, he thought, gave the impression that Labor was not sufficiently protectionist.[237] The PLC executive refrained from acting against the CPA, which would have raised the possibility of a Labor split during an election campaign. In Corio, for example, the struggle between Ozanne and Crouch was a conflict between rival protectionist associations as well as between Labor and the Fusion, with the old Protectionist Association supporting Crouch, and the CPA behind Ozanne.[238] Political conflict thus took a traditional form, suggesting strong continuities between pre-Fusion and post-Fusion politics.

Solly and Heagney attempted unavailingly to persuade Hannah not to identify with the CPA.[239] Once the election was over, and Labor had secured a comfortable victory, the PLC executive issued a statement disapproving Hannah's action in calling the initial meeting and "warning PLC members not to ally themselves with it as all the Protection they require is in our movement".[240] There was a mixed reaction to this resolution in the branches and affiliated unions.[241] Hannah's actions were supported by a large section of the membership, and some members thought

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[236]*Argus*, April 7, 1910, p.6; April 19, 1910, p.5.

[237]PLC CE, Minutes, April 2, 1910, VSL MS 10389.

[238]*Argus*, March 12, 1910, p.20; *Geelong Advertiser*, March 1, 1910, p.2; April 5, 1910, p.4; April 8, 1910, p.4; April 9, 1910, p.3; April 11, 1910, p.3; April 13, 1910, p.3.

[239]PLC, *Central Executive's Report*, June 4, 1910, in PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, June 1910, VSL MS 10389.

[240]PLC, Minutes, April 30, 1910, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, May 5, 1910, p.8; *Age*, May 5, 1910, p.7.

[241]*Labor Call*, May 19, 1910, p.1; June 2, 1910, p.8; June 9, 1910, p.7; *Age*, May 21, 1910, p.10; May 24, 1910, p.7; May 25, 1910, p.8; May 27, 1910, p.7; Bricklayers, Minutes, July 4, 1910, NBAC, ANU T 8/2A/7.

that his actions in raising the tariff issue had attracted votes to the Labor Party.[242]

The activities of the CPA after the election indicate that opposing the free-trade element in the Fusion was not its only objective; the Association was soon lobbying the Commonwealth Labor Government in an effort to influence its tariff policy.[243] Hannah did not regard the decision of the 1908 Federal Labor Conference in favour of new protection as a guarantee that the FPLP was fully committed to a high tariff. Indeed, he claimed that some successful Labor candidates in the recent election were avowed free-traders.[244] In any event, the CPA made no real progress until *after* the election, when the membership selected its officers and made definite decisions about methods; the Labor Government was evidently the object of its attention.[245] The decision that the CPA would refrain from nominating candidates for parliament was certainly an outcome of the strength of the Labor element within the Association. This strategy set the CPA apart from the old Protectionist Association, which had nominated candidates in sympathy with its platform in parliamentary elections.[246]

Despite the decision to confine the CPA to propaganda, the PLC annual conference in June decided by sixty-five votes to forty-five not to admit a deputation from the CPA. Moreover, Solly ruled that PLC members could not join the CPA, and those who already belonged to it should resign.[247] At the same time, the conference declared that Hannah had associated with the CPA "believing that it was in the best interests of the Labor movement".[248]

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[242]*Age*, May 24, 1910, p.7.
[243]*Age*, June 6, 1910, p.7.
[244]*Age*, August 16, 1910, p.8.
[245]*Age*, May 11, 1910, p.8.
[246]*Age*, May 11, 1910, p.8.
[247]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, July 1910, p. 22.
[248]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, June 4-6, 1910, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, June 16, 1910, p.2.

In June, the CPA began a propaganda campaign to persuade the Commonwealth Labor Government to re-open the tariff question. In the following month, a CPA deputation led by Hoare and Hannah waited on Tudor, the Minister of Customs, to persuade him that readjustment of the tariff should be a Government priority. This clashed with the Government's view that the question should not be dealt with until a referendum had been held to extend the industrial powers of the Commonwealth to allow the implementation of new protection,[249] a position which the Melbourne THC supported.[250]

The CPA's attempt to influence the direction of the Labor Government's tariff policy was, as far as the PLC executive was concerned, an attempt by an irresponsible body to usurp the rights of the Party organisation. The state executive demanded that Hannah withdraw from the CPA, and that members of the PLC and affiliated unions be requested to sever their connection with it.[251] In the following month, the executive expelled Hannah.[252] This prompted calls from Labor branches and unions for a special conference.[253] Even within the executive itself, opinion was divided; a motion that "the unconstitutional resolution purporting to expel Mr Martin Hannah M.L.A. and others from the Labor movement be expunged from the Records" was unsuccessful.[254] The THC split straight down the middle (33-33) when the executive recommended that the Council request its members not to ally themselves with the CPA. The president

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[249]*Age*, July 12, 1910, p.10.

[250]THC, Minutes, August 11, 1910; *Age*, August 12, 1910, p.7.

[251]PLC CE, Minutes, July 16, 1910, VSL MS 10389.

[252]PLC CE, Minutes, July 30, 1910, VSL MS 10389; SPLP, Minutes, August 17, 1910, VSL MS 10914.

[253]PLC CE, Minutes, August 13, 1910; August 27, 1910; September 3, 1910, VSL MS 10389; Bricklayers, Minutes, August 15, 1910, NBAC, ANU T 8/2A/7; PLC (Fitzroy), August 22, 1910; *Age*, August 24, 1910, p.11.

[254]A.J. Hampson MLA moved the motion. See PLC CE, Minutes, September 3, 1910, VSL MS 10389.

aroused bitter controversy when he cast his vote in favour of the recommendation.[255]

Critics of the executive's treatment of Hannah and the CPA pointed to Labor MLA Beazley's presidency of the PAV, which had run candidates. No attempt was ever made to bring Beazley into line. Supporters of the CPA also wondered why Labor Party members were permitted to remain members of other organisations, such as the ANA, the Victorian Alliance and the Loyal Orange Lodge, which involved themselves in politics. When to these arguments were added doubts about the constitutionality of the central executive's recent actions, the necessity of holding a special conference came to be accepted by many PLC members.[256] The conference met in late October, endorsed the actions of the executive, and demanded that PLC members who belonged to the CPA sever their connection with the latter body.[257] It was fortunate for the PLC that Hannah agreed to accept the conference decision, but his willingness to do so reflected the authority of the PLC organisation in 1910. The PLC now had sanctions which it could use to enforce its authority over parliamentarians. Failure to gain Labor endorsement could mean loss of a parliamentary seat. Moreover, Labor's culture of organisation prompted an acceptance of Party discipline by members, especially by those who had emerged from the trade union milieu.

The CPA episode also reveals the strong continuities between Victorian liberalism and labourism. Labor embraced the New Protection as its own, but not only had Deakin and the Liberal Protectionists played a

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[255]THC, Minutes, July 21, 1910; August 4, 1910; *Age*, July 22, 1910, p.8; August 5, 1910, p.7; *Labor Call*, July 28, 1910, p.3; August 11, 1910, p.3.

[256]*Age*, August 9, 1910, p.8; August 10, 1910, p.10; August 11, 1910, p.10; August 15, 1910, p.6; August 17, 1910, p.10; August 18, 1910, p.8; August 20, 1910, p.12; August 22, 1910, p.8; August 23, 1910, p.8; *Labor Call*, August 18, 1910, pp.2, 8; August 25, 1910, p.8; September 1, 1910, p.2; PLC CE, Minutes, September 24, 1910, VSL MS 10389.

[257]PLC, Special Conference, Minutes, October 29-30, 1910, NLA MS 131; *Age*, October 31, 1910, p.8; *Labor Call*, November 3, 1910, pp. 5, 8.

major role in forming the policy, it was a reformulation of the "old" protectionism which had been integral to nineteenth century Victorian liberalism.  Labor's claims to the Victorian liberal tradition were further enhanced in 1913 when, on Deakin's retirement, D.C. McGrath (Labor) won the Ballarat seat narrowly against H.V. McKay, despite a national swing away from Labor.[258]  As McGrath declared during his campaign for this bastion of liberalism,

> In the past, liberalism had stood for all that was good in the community.  That Party, 25 years ago, had put up the same fight against the Press as the Labor Party was putting up to-day.  Sir Graham Berry demonstrated then that the power of the Press was not omnipotent.[259]

Berry, whose coalition with Service provided the initial impetus for the advocates of the direct representation of labour in the 1880s, was still a symbol of Labor's claim to be a people's party which would continue the eternal struggle of the masses against wealth, privilege and class domination.[260]

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[258]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Australian House of Representatives*, p.47.
[259]*Ballarat Courier*, May 29, 1913, p.6.
[260]*Evening Echo* (Ballarat), July 29, 1913.

# CHAPTER EIGHT:
# THE EMERGENCE OF LABOURISM II:
# THE LABOR PARTY AND SOCIALISM

## Introduction: Victorian Socialism and the Historians

Before 1897, Victoria lacked a strong socialist movement. Many unionists supported state action to alleviate the burdens of those on the lower rungs of colonial society but, in their adherence to liberalism, they were little influenced by radical socialist doctrines. The socialists were more prominent in Victorian politics from the late 1890s.[1] Ian Turner has discussed the reasons for the close relationship between the socialists and the Labor Party in Victoria from this time. He argues that the SPLP did not act as a powerful conservative influence because the Labor Party had little prospect of forming a government in Victoria. He also points to the absence of strong organisations of unskilled workers in Victoria. The AWU was an anti-socialist influence in the NSW Labor Party but in Victoria it was politically weak before 1906, and never attained the power that it enjoyed north of the border. Finally, Turner argues that the historical links between Victorian craft unions and middle-class radicalism "meant that the

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[1]This situation might be contrasted with that in NSW, where the Socialist League's attempt to take over the Labor Party failed in 1898, commencing a long period of isolation of the organised socialists from the Labor Party. See Bede Nairn, *Civilising Capitalism: The Beginnings of the Australian Labor Party*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1989, pp. 187-94; Verity Burgmann, *'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor 1885-1905*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1985, ch. 5; Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, pp. 239-256; Patrick Ford, *Cardinal Moran and the A.L.P.: A Study in the Encounter between Moran and Socialism, 1890-1907*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1966; B.C. Scates, 'Faddists and Extremists: Radicalism and the Labour Movement, South-eastern Australia 1886-1898', unpublished PhD Thesis, Monash University, 1987, pp. 405-17.

suspicion of intellectuals and of socialist theorising, strong elsewhere, was not so evident...".[2]

The socialist critique of the capitalist system worked with the grain of social and political changes in the early years of the century to undermine working-class liberalism. Socialist ideology helped to translate "the labour interest" into a broader political movement with the aspiration to transform society in the image of unionism, to create a Co-operative Commonwealth. It is no coincidence that the emergence of labour as an independent political force occurred at the same time as the peak of socialist influence on the labour movement, the years between 1902 and 1905. The socialists articulated a vision of an independent working-class political party as an alternative to the conception of "labour" as an interest group in a liberal alliance. Moreover, the appeal to working-class consciousness in socialist political language received a more favourable reception in the early 1900s than in the early 1890s, when socialist activity was confined mainly to the fringes of a labour movement married to liberalism and protectionism.

Historians of the relations between Labor and socialism in Victoria have assumed that while the attitude of the Socialists to the Labor Party was constantly evolving, the Labor Party itself was a relatively stable entity with a settled identity. In their accounts, Labor is a fixed point in the political landscape, and other political forces on the left were compelled to define their political ideas and strategies in relation to the mass working-class political party. These historians have generally ignored the "changing balance of forces and their discursive self-definitions" within the Labor Party which conditioned the responses of the Socialists.[3] They isolate the Socialists and the Labor Party from the political struggle in which they were engaged, and thus fail to locate the evolving relations between the Labor

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[2]Ian Turner, 'Socialist Political Tactics 1900-1920', *Labour History*, 2, May 1962, p. 7.
[3]Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.22.

Party and the Socialists in their broader context. Instead, Ian Turner, Geoff

Hewitt and Race Mathews have explained the departure of the organised

socialists from the Labor Party mainly in terms of the tactical confusion in

the Socialist Party itself. For Turner and Hewitt, this was a result of the

dilemma of what attitude to adopt to the mass labour movement faced by

any socialist party attempting to work in a parliamentary democracy for the

overthrow of capitalism; for Mathews, it was due to the tactical errors and

poor leadership of Tom Mann.[4] In this chapter, I shall argue that an

important reason for the alienation of the organised socialists from Labor

was changes in the Labor Party itself, particularly the emergence of a

moderate labourism which had deep roots in Victorian liberalism. While

the Labor leadership and sections of the rank-and-file continued to profess

an evolutionary state socialism after 1907, a more radical commitment to

socialism as an alternative to life under capitalism was cast aside.

## Labor and Socialism in the Colonial Period

The weakness of socialism, and the socialists' isolation from the

mainstream labour movement, were salient features of Victorian radical

politics in the late colonial period.[5] The Social Democratic League (SDL), the

main socialist organisation of the early 1890s, lacked a secure foothold in the

labour movement and the liberal and craft union dominated THC showed

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[4]G.C. Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party, 1906-1932', unpublished MA thesis, La Trobe University, 1974, pp.39, 281-2; Turner, 'Socialist Political Tactics', p.5; Race Mathews, 'Victoria's First Fabians, 1890-1910', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1989, pp.7-8 (An extended version of Mathews's thesis has been published: Race Mathews *Australia's First Fabians: Middle-Class Radicals, Labour Activists and the Early Labour Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993. The references in this chapter relate to the original thesis).

[5]Geoffrey Blainey, *Our Side of the Country: The Story of Victoria*, Methuen Haynes, Sydney, 1984, p.149. See also Scates, 'Faddists and Extremists', pp.448-1121. Scates exaggerates the prominence of socialists in Victoria in the 1890s, and overlooks the smallness of their numbers and their fringe status. They had little impact on the labour movement before the late 1890s.

little interest in its activities.[6] This was one reason for the SDL's strategic

emphasis on the plight of the unemployed, many of whom were non-

unionists and therefore outside the purview of the THC.[7]

As Verity Burgmann has shown, the SDL professed a libertarian

socialism influenced by anarchism.[8] Members of the organisation denied

that they were mere state socialists, since they favoured "the abrogation of

explotation in every guise, and the eradication of all artificially created social

and political inequality".[9] The "direct representation of the workers in

Parliament" was one of the SDL's policies. W.D. Flinn represented the SDL

at the conference which founded the PPL, and several planks in the SDL's

platform also appeared in that of the League: the abolition of plural voting;

equal electoral districts; the tax on incomes exceeding £300 per year; a

progressive tax on land values; no more sale of crown land; and legislative

enactment of the eight hour day. The abolition of plural voting and the

eight hour day, however, were trade union demands that can hardly be

ascribed to the influence of the SDL, while the planks relating to land

reform had more to do with the agitation of Henry George's followers than

the SDL. The demand for a tax on incomes of over £300 might have been

the result of SDL influence.[10]

The SDL was only a minor organisation on the fringes of the labour

movement but its membership included William Maloney MLA, S.A. Rosa,

an organiser of Melbourne's unemployed and a member of the Fitzroy

Branch of the PPL, and W.D. Flinn, a member of the PPL executive.[11] The

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[6]*Age*, September 13, 1890, p.11.

[7]S.A. Rosa, *The Truth About the Unemployed Agitation of 1890*, S.A. Rosa, Melbourne, 1890.

[8]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, p.110.

[9]Social Democratic League of Victoria (SDL), 'Manifesto', 1891, J.P. Jones Papers, VSL MS 9547/1268/5.

[10]PPL, *Platform*, 1891, PPL File, F.J. Riley Collection, NLA; SDL, 'Manifesto', 1891, J.P. Jones Papers, VSL MS 9547/1268/5.

[11]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, pp.109-115; S.A. Rosa, *The Truth About the Unemployed Agitation of 1890*: Geoffrey Serle, 'William Robert (Nuttall) Maloney', *ADB* , Volume 10, pp.389-90; Verity Burgmann, 'Samuel Albert Rosa', *ADB* , Volume 11, pp.447-8.

emphasis which the SDL gave to democratic political reform placed it in a position to influence the Labor Party. The *Age* claimed that of the sixteen delegates at the convention which formed the PPL, thirteen "were men of social democratic principles".[12] D.R. Wyllie, however, a THC representative, denied that the PPL platform was socialistic.[13] The SDL's most radical policies had indeed been omitted, but the SDL leadership shared some of the ideas of the THC leadership about how the interests of the working class could be advanced.[14] Union leaders and socialists agreed on the necessity of parliamentary action in the cause of radical reform. Flinn told a meeting convened to establish the Hawthorn branch of the PPL that

> trades unionism beyond a certain standpoint had been a failure all over the world, and...they had been forced to the conclusion that in no other way could the interests of the labor classes be conserved than by legislative enactment.[15]

Most unionists accepted the need for parliamentary action but unlike Flinn, they had a strong faith in the capacity of unionism to ameliorate working-class conditions. In a letter to fellow-socialist George Black, Flinn attributed the Labor Party's problems to "the preponderance of the horny-handed sons of toil who are almost invariably timid in political matters and in essentials conservative".[16] Union leaders such as Spence, however, advocated the application of "Trades Union methods to political efforts".[17]

In March 1892, the Fitzroy PPL branch selected Rosa to stand for one of the local parliamentary seats. As a consequence of his reputation for militancy, the central council rejected Rosa's candidature in favour of the

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[12]*Age*, June 5, 1891, p.5.
[13]*Argus*, June 10, 1891, p.7.
[14]SDL, 'Manifesto', 1891, J.P. Jones Papers, VSL MS 9547/1268/5.
[15]*Age*, June 29, 1891, p.6.
[16]W.D. Flinn to George Black, January 14, 1892, Black Papers, ML MSS A 1054-1.
[17]*Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, July 15, 1891.

# A SOCIALIST



William Dudley Flinn (1858-1917)

moderate Mauger.[18] There was a similar pattern of events in Carlton

South, where the local League nominated Flinn. His selection was endorsed

by the central council.[19] Matters were more complicated here because Flinn

was a PPL official and in rejecting him, the central council would have been

censuring a member of its executive. Flinn was unpopular with many

League officials, however, because of his leadership of the unemployed and

his criticisms of unionists.[20] He was induced to withdraw from the contest

in favour of Barrett, a tinsmith with a reputation for political moderation.[21]

The ease with which the socialists were displaced reflected their

political isolation. Nothing occurred after 1892 to change this situation. The

desperate public protest of the unemployed, which made life uncomfortable

for Trenwith and the THC after the 1892 election, petered out in 1893 as the

depression worsened.[22] The THC saw protection as the salvation of the

working class and, as a consequence, socialists turned their attention to an

attack on fiscalism which further alienated them from the unions. At the

end of 1893, a meeting of socialists on the Yarra Bank called for the "sinking

of the fiscal question...under both systems, the workers are pitilessly

crushed, plundered and oppressed by the combined capitalistic

monopolists".[23] Similarly, the immigrant English socialist Henry Hyde

Champion's Social Democratic Federation (SDF), formed in 1895, sought to

put aside the fiscal question, criticising the Labor Party's obsession with the

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[18]*Argus*, March 14, 1892, p.7. See also Fitzroy *City Press*, March 11, 1892, p.3; *Commonweal*, March 19, 1892, p.2; John Lack, 'Samuel Mauger', *ADB*, Volume 10, pp.451-3.

[19]*Age*, March 22, 1892, p.6; *Argus*, March 22, 1892, p.6; *Carlton Gazette*, March 25, 1892, p.2.

[20]*Argus*, March 22, 1892, p.6; *Carlton Gazette*, April 9, 1892, p.2.

[21]*Argus*, April 8, 1892, p.7; *Carlton Gazette*, April 9, 1892, p.2; Carlotta Kellaway, 'John George Barrett', *ADB*, Volume 7, pp.189-90.

[22]*Commonweal*, June 4, 1892, p.3; June 18, 1892, p.3; July 9, 1892, p.3; THC, Minutes, July 1, 1892; Bruce Scates, 'A Struggle for Survival: Unemployment and the Unemployed Agitation in Late-Nineteenth Century Melbourne, *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 94, April 1990, pp.53-63; Charlie Fox & Bruce Scates, 'The Beat of Weary Feet', in Verity Burgmann & Jenny Lee (eds.), *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia Since 1788*, McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books, Fitzroy, 1988, pp.132-9; Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984, p.218.

[23]*Worker* (Melbourne), October 21, 1893, p.3.

tariff.[24] This might have been enough to isolate the SDF from the unions,

even if Champion was not remembered by unionists for his criticisms of

their leaders during the maritime strike. He condemned the failure of Party

organisers to establish strong Labor branches in the electorates.[25] It was

partly in an attempt to remedy the failures of the Labor Party that Champion

founded the SDF. Like the Fabian Society, which he also formed at this

time, the SDF was a small, largely middle-class affair.[26] Based on the 1895

May Day Committee and embracing the German Social Democratic Party's

Erfurt Program (1891), it won little support among Labor activists.[27] The

Tailors' Society co-operated with the SDF in the anti-sweating campaign,[28]

and some members of the Carlton ULLP branch were sympathetic to the

new body, arguing that "the people were ready for a Socialistic movement

riper and deeper than that in existence". The young mason, George Elmslie,

told a meeting of the branch that he intended joining the organisation but

other members were opposed.[29] The ULLP was hostile to the SDF; the

socialist body was seen as a potential rival in parliamentary elections.[30]

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[24]*Champion*, June 22, 1895, p.3; July, 27, 1895, p.48. In 1895, the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) issued a manifesto in which it claimed that "the effects of any fiscal change upon the condition of the working classes must of necessity be trivial". While giving tariff protection general support on the grounds that a serious reduction would disadvantage the working class, the SDF opposed the revenue tariff and protection where it was used to prop up inefficient industries or those naturally unsuited to local conditions. Only employers who gave their workers a living wage for an eight hour day should receive protection. Finally, the SDF accepted John Stuart Mill's argument that protection could be used to stimulate infant industries.

[25]*Champion*, July 20, 1895, p.37.

[26]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, pp.117-120. The Victorian SDF did not profess a Marxist ideology, beyond its attachment to the Erfurt program. It expended most its energy in advocating a tax on unimproved land values and the anti-sweating campaign. See also Peter Kellock, 'H.H. Champion: The Failure of Victorian Socialism' , unpublished BA thesis, Department of History, Monash University, 1971; Mathews, 'Victoria's First Fabians', pp.61-66.

[27]May-day Committee (1895), *Report submitted by the Sub-committee of its officers appointed for that purpose on 12th May, 1895, to the May-day Committee, at its meeting on 19th, May 1895*, J.P. Jones Papers, VSL MS 9547/1268/5.

[28]Tailors, Minutes, July 15, 1895, UMA 1/1/1.

[29]*Age* , May 18, 1895, p.7.

[30]THC, Minutes, May 17, 1895; *Age*, May 18, 1895, p.7; June 27, 1895, p.3. See also North Melbourne Working Men's Club, Minutes, May 13, 1895; June 10, 1895, J.P. Jones Collection, VSL MS 9547/1263/2.

In 1897, the advent of the radical weekly, the *Tocsin*, signalled the revival of socialist activity in Victoria. At the time of the election of 1897, a radical group challenged the authority of the Labor moderates. Some members of this coterie were radical trade unionists: Findley (MTS), Anstey (Seamen), Solly (VOBU), Barker (Pressers) and Bayst (Butchers) were active members of the THC. Sangster, Prendergast and Hancock were trade union leaders and parliamentarians; with Maloney, they comprised the radical wing of the PLP. Tom Tunnecliffe, a socialist bootmaker, also came to prominence as a Labor socialist in the 1890s.[31] These trade unionists were self-educated tradesmen and labourers influenced by socialist ideas. Their radicalism, however, was of an eclectic and non-doctrinaire character.

There were also socialist intellectuals and middle-class members of the Labor leagues among the radicals. Members of this group included Bernard O'Dowd, a solicitor in the public service and a poet; J.B. Castieau, a public servant in the Police Department, who divided his leisure time between the public house, the house of ill repute and the noble cause of socialism; Hugh Corbet, an earnest civil servant; J.P. Jones, a Fabian businessman who managed to acquire a fortune selling suits to working men; G.A. Carter, a cigar manufacturer; and H.W. Wilmot, an ironmonger and the father of the poet Frank Wilmot ("Furnley Maurice").[32] Chris Casimir, a University-educated school teacher of Mauritian extraction was a more exotic member of this radical "club".[33] Lionel Lindsay who, with his brother Norman, did

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[31]Peter Love, 'Thomas Tunnecliffe', *ADB*, Volume 12, pp.284-5.

[32]Hugh Anderson, *The Poet Militant: Bernard O'Dowd*, Hill of Content, Melbourne, 1969; Hugh Anderson, 'Introduction', in *Tocsin: Radical Arguments against Federation 1897-1900*, Drummond, Melbourne, 1977, pp.xi-xvi; Victor Kennedy & Nettie Palmer, *Bernard O'Dowd*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1954; Graeme Osborne, 'John Percy Jones, 1872-1955: A Biographical Note', *Labour History*, 28, May 1975, pp.33-4; Bruce Paule, 'John Percy Jones', *ADB*, Volume 9, pp.516-7; Lionel Lindsay, *Comedy of Life*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1967, pp.76-8; Mathews, 'Victoria's First Fabians', p.67; *Labor Call*, April 23, 1914, pp.2-3; David Walker, *Dream and Disillusion: A Search for Australian Cultural Identity*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, p.62; *Socialist* , March 9, 1907, p.3.

[33]E.H. Lane, *Dawn to Dusk: Reminiscences of a Rebel*, William Brooks & Co. [Printer], Brisbane, 1939, pp.60-1.

much of the art work for the *Tocsin*, captured the tone of late nineteenth century socialism in his autobiography:

> As we sat round smoking Carter's excellent cigars the case of some poor woman exploited by the sweater would be cited, and little Dr. Maloney would rise from his seat and orate: 'Comrades, the hour strikes, down with these bloodsuckers that batten on the poor. Advance the revolution' - all in the best melodramatic tradition...[34]

Like the English Fabians, these activists hoped to bring about "the peaceful revolution".[35] As Peter Love has suggested, they appealed to the worker not just as one who laboured, but as a human being with "a social being much broader and richer than that defined by his work".[36] The *Tocsin* platform comprised seventy-four planks, which encompassed an impressive range of concerns from traditional radical and working-class demands such as "one adult, one vote", a universal maximum eight hour day and tariff protection, to more novel policies: the care of neglected children, the purification of sport, and bringing "the People Nearer to Art and Art Nearer to the People". The program included a state socialist plank ("Extension of the Principles of Beneficial Co-operation towards the Ultimate Socialisation of the Means of Production and Distribution"), but went far beyond mere state socialism.[37] Tocsin clubs were formed in the city and suburbs. According to the *Tocsin*, they were "fruitful nuclei of democratic life, nurseries of social-reform education, and disciplined *cadres* for perhaps sudden and momentous democratic action".[38] In a period when Labor Party political organisation in the electorates was virtually non-existent, these clubs were important in sustaining radical political activity.[39]

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[34]Lindsay, *Comedy of Life*, p.77.
[35]Lindsay, *Comedy of Life*, p.77.
[36]Peter Love, 'Frank Anstey: A Political Biography', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1990, pp. 80-81.
[37]*Tocsin*, October 2, 1897, p.6. For the full *Tocsin* platform, see Appendix I.
[38]*Tocsin*, February 10, 1898, p.7.
[39]*Tocsin*, October 21, 1897, p.4; February 10, 1898, p.3; September 29, 1898, p.4.

# SOME VICTORIAN RADICALS AND A
# VISITOR FROM HOME



Standing: Marshall Lyle, Frank Anstey, Ted Findley, G.A. Carter, Charles Bishop, J.P Jones, J.B. Castieau, P. McNamara

Sitting: Stephen Barker, Ben Tillett, William Maloney, G.M. Prendergast, Bernard O'Dowd.

The *Tocsin* pioneers with English socialist and trade unionist, Ben Tillett, c.1898

The militant Victorian Socialist League, whose membership and political ideas overlapped with the Tocsin clubs, was the main socialist organisation in Victoria until 1902. Founded in 1897, it was a small body devoted to the overthrow of capitalism and class domination in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ and Karl Marx.[40] Meanwhile, the Victorian Labour Federation (VLF), formed in 1898 by Frank Anstey, George Elmslie and Tom Tunnecliffe, had as its object "the unification of the workers in one all comprehensive and extensive union" for the purpose of achieving industrial democracy.[41] While it made little progress in this direction, it set up co-operatives for the distribution of various goods - tea, coffee, boots and clothing.[42] The VLF recognised the utility of political action in solving "the Labour Question", but was sceptical about the motives of many politicians. Its rules prevented members of parliament from holding office in the organisation.[43] Other radical political organisations included the Reverend Archibald Turnbull's Labour Church, the Women's Social and Political Crusade, the Marxian and Hegemony Clubs, the Democratic Club, a Yarra Bank propaganda group, the Collingwood and Richmond Working Men's Clubs, and the Knights of Labor.[44] The activities of this radical political culture contrasted markedly with the drabness of the Labor Party and the THC. The gulf between the Council and the socialist bodies was highlighted by Barrett, secretary of the THC, who told the French visitor Albert Metin in 1899, "We have some socialists here...but we don't

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[40]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, pp.124-8.
[41]Victorian Labour Federation, 'Declaration', in R.N. Ebbels & L.G. Churchward (eds.), *The Australian Labor Movement 1850-1907*, Cheshire-Lansdowne in association with The Noel Ebbels Memorial Committee, Melbourne, 1965, p.193. See also Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party', pp. 13-14; Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, p. 121; Love, 'Frank Anstey', pp. 85-103.
[42]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, p. 121.
[43]Victorian Labour Federation, 'Declaration', pp. 193-4; Victorian Labour Federation, *What is the Labour Federation?*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, n.d. [1898], p.14.
[44]*Tocsin*, September 29, 1898, p.4; May 18, 1899, p.5; June 21, 1900, p.8.

agree with them. They are *extremists* and we are above all practical men".[45]
Respectable unionists found little to admire in the activities of the Tocsin
group. In 1899, the UFTS carried a motion condemning the *Tocsin* for "the
offensive matter which is published and the scurrilous manner in which
many public persons are abused" in its columns.[46] In the following year, the
UFTS considered a motion that the Society no longer give its printing to the
*Tocsin* because of the language used in the newspaper and its anti-British
articles.[47] In 1900, Billson of the VOBU condemned a *Tocsin* article on
religion as "Dirty & Indecent". Despite defences of the newspaper by radicals
such as Solly and the anarchist 'Chummy' Fleming, the VOBU meeting
endorsed Billson's views.[48]

In the late 1890s, the *Tocsin* was a critic of the mainstream labour
movement. Its sponsors wanted a Labor Party which would appeal not only
to the manual worker, but to "all who labour with whatever organ Nature
or Fate or God has most adequately endowed them".[49] Labor had appealed
to this broad constituency since the early 1890s. After September 1897,
however, the Labor radicals demanded an independent Labor Party, with
parliamentary candidates pledged to support the Labor platform and to vote
in accordance with caucus decisions. Their mouthpiece was the *Tocsin*. It
declared that "in all matters relating to [the Labor] platform, the member is
merely a delegate, and should be a pledged delegate".[50] The *Tocsin* opposed
coalescence with the Liberals, insisting on the maintenance of the Labor

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[45]Albert Metin, *Socialism Without Doctrine*, Alternative Publishing Co-operative, Sydney, 1977, p.54.

[46]UFTS, Minutes, October 19, 1899, NBAC, ANU T58/1/11.

[47]UFTS, Minutes, June 28, 1900, NBAC, ANU T58/1/11. See *Tocsin*, May 24, 1900, p.4; May 31, 1904, p.4; June 7, 1900, p.4; June 14, 1900, pp.2, 7; June 21, 1900, p.2; June 28, 1900, p.8. These articles were part of the *Tocsin* campaign against the Boer War.

[48]VOBU, June 11, 1900, NBAC, ANU T 5/1/4. The article concerned was almost certainly an editorial with the title 'PEACE AND HUMANITY' which attacked various Ministers of religion for their attitude to the Boer War. The article also contained several anti-Semitic comments. See *Tocsin* , June 7, 1900, p.4.

[49]*Tocsin*, October 2, 1897, p.6.

[50]*Tocsin*, October 2. 1897, p.4.

Party's independence: "[n]o drift or merger into the bastard Liberalism fashionable among many of our worst enemies can be allowed".[51] If the Party were to avoid absorption, however, it would have to require its parliamentary candidates to sign a pledge binding themselves to the organisation.[52] The independence of the Party would also be maintained by the enforcement of voting by caucus determination on party questions (a solidarity pledge) and a prohibition on members entering a Cabinet in which they were not in a majority.[53] This was a plan based on the model provided by the NSW Labor Party. It implied a level of party discipline and a degree of independence from the Liberals which had not been seriously contemplated in Victoria before 1897.[54]

## Labor and Socialism in the Early Commonwealth Period

The influence of socialism on the Labor Party was evident before Tom Mann's arrival in Victoria in September 1902. In August, the PLC executive proposed that the "Gradual nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange" be inserted in the Federal Labor Platform.[55] The Victorians were doomed to disappointment. The Federal conference rejected the Victorian proposal in favour of a plank calling for the nationalisation of monopolies.[56] Meanwhile, late in 1902, the Victorian Socialist League, under the influence of Mann, formed itself into the Social Democratic Party (SDP).[57] The SDP had among its objects the "socialisation

[51]*Tocsin*, March 17, 1898, p.3.
[52]*Tocsin*, November 10, 1898, p.4.
[53]*Tocsin*, October 27, 1898, p.3.
[54]*Tocsin*, November 10, 1898, p.4.
[55]PLC, Minutes, August 23, 1902, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, August 28, 1902, p.7.
[56]*Worker* (Sydney), December 6, 1902, p.5; *Tocsin*, December 18, 1902, p.9; PLC, Minutes, December 13, 1902, VSL MS 10389;
[57]*Tocsin*, November 13, 1902, p.5; Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party', pp. 19-20.

of the means of production, distribution and exchange to be controlled by a Democratic State in the interest of the entire community". Its methods included the education of the people in the principles of socialism and the "independent and political organisation of the workers".[58] The SDP defined its role as educational, and worked in co-operation with Labor to make it more socialistic.[59] The close co-operation between the Labor Party and the SDP was revealed in March 1903 when the latter body asked if it could be represented on the PLC. The PLC informed the socialists that only unions and branches could affiliate, but the SDP was "thanked for any work done in connection with Labour".[60] Harry Scott Bennett, who was the president of the SDP, was also active within the PLC, and a popular speaker at Labor branch meetings.[61] The SDP choir performed at PLC meetings,[62] while the PLC band was a regular feature at SDP affairs.[63] The Hollybush branch of the SDP congratulated one of its members, D.C. McGrath, when he was elected president of the Grenville branch of the PLC.[64] There was, in fact, a considerable overlap of membership between the PLC and the SDP. Tunnecliffe, Prendergast, Hannah, Solly, Roberts and R.G. Blomberg were active in both SDP and PLC circles.[65] The growing influence of these Labor radicals in the PLC is indicated by the victories of Tunnecliffe and Roberts in the Melbourne West and Richmond by-elections in late 1903,[66] and the election of Hannah and Solly as the representatives of the railway

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[58]*Tocsin* , December 18, 1902, p.6; Ebbels & Churchward (eds.), *The Australian Labor Movement 1850-1907*, pp. 194-6.
[59]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, p. 135; *Tocsin*, February 5, 1903, p.5.
[60]PLC, Minutes, March 21, 1903, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, March 26, 1903, p.3.
[61]*Tocsin*, November 27, 1902, p.3.
[62]*Tocsin*, July 23, 1903, p.8.
[63]*People's Daily*, January 4, 1904, p.3; January 12, 1904, p.1.
[64]*Tocsin*, July 23, 1903, p.8.
[65]*People's Daily*, February 5, 1904, p.3; Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, pp. 128-35.
[66]*People's Daily*, December 14, 1903, p.1; December 22, 1903, p.2.

employees in parliament in 1904. Bennett was elected to the Assembly as

the member for Ballarat West in 1904.[67]

After the bitter railway strike in May 1903, there was a burgeoning

interest in socialist solutions. In August, the Prahran Labor branch, in

which Bennett was active, suggested that the PLC add to its platform "the

socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange...".[68] In

early 1904, the Richmond Labor branch discussed a motion that the PLC

platform should be made socialistic. The mover was Fred Katz, an SDP

member.[69] The socialists attacked Labor's policies of village settlement and

the creation of a class of small holders under perpetual leasehold as a plot by

Irvine "to secure support through the Torryfying influence of agriculture".

The socialists associated these policies with individualism, and argued that

the Labor Party should be committed to nationalisation. Other members

feared that the PLC would lose electoral support if it embraced straight-out

socialism, and the motion was defeated twenty-three votes to sixteen.[70]

Still, Laborites identified closely with the European social democratic parties.

When Mann mentioned the successes of the German Social Democratic

Party at a meeting in the Northcote Town Hall, the audience rose as one and

"gave three rousing cheers for the international solidarity of Labour".[71] In

March 1904, Maloney addressed a meeting in Fitzgerald's Circus in which he

appealed to six thousand electors "not on behalf of himself, but on behalf of

that great party, called in Germany the Social Democratic Party, in France,

the Socialist Party, and in Australia, the Labor Party".[72]

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[67]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1890-1964*, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, pp.86-8, 97.
[68]*Tocsin*, August 27, 1903, p.8.
[69]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, p. 132.
[70]*People's Daily*, January 21, 1904, p.2.
[71]*Tocsin*, July 2, 1903, p.6.
[72]*People's Daily*, March 22, 1904, p.2.

In 1904, Labor leaders professed their socialistic beliefs at public

meetings. Tunnecliffe, in an election speech, said he "had no hesitation in

proclaiming himself as a straight-out Socialist"[73] while Prendergast

proclaimed that the "wage system had served its purpose, and must be

succeeded by socialism".[74]  Billson spoke in support of socialism at a

meeting of the SDP, arguing that socialists wanted "a complete

reconstruction of society, to solve the unemployed problem, and gain

industrial freedom for the nation".[75]  Marxist ideas, as Burgmann has

suggested, were an influence on Australian socialists at this time.[76]

Tunnecliffe was not averse to explaining his version of the theory of

surplus value at public meetings, and this aspect of Marxist thought had

some influence in radical circles.[77]  Roberts was evidently influenced by the

theory, declaring that "the worker should see to it that he consumed all that

he produced, for, if he saved by living on less, the capitalistic class

immediately fixed that as the sum for which he should work".[78]  The

English socialist Robert Blatchford, however, was a more important

intellectual influence on the labour movement than Marx and it seems

likely that the crude and simplified version of the theory of surplus value

found in his writings was the direct source for many Victorian radicals.[79]

The impact of Blatchford's writings on the Victorian labour movement

preceded Mann's arrival, but it was in the early 1900s that it became

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[73]*People's Daily*, May 10, 1904, p.3.

[74]*People's Daily*, February 1, 1904, p.1.

[75]*Tocsin*, August 11, 1904, p.8.

[76]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, pp. 5-7

[77]*People's Daily*, February 11, 1904, p.3.  See also P.Z. Cornubian, *Capitalism Exposed: Interpretations of Australasian Facts and Figures from Official Records*, Social Democratic Party of Victoria, Melbourne, 1904. This pamphlet, produced by the Social Democratic Party of Victoria, contained a brief socialist analysis of the Victorian economy.  The author employed the concept of surplus value, providing charts which "demonstrated" the division between wages and the value appropriated by the capitalist.

[78]*People's Daily*, December 30, 1903, p.1.

[79]R.C.K. Ensor, 'Robert Peel Glanville Blatchford (1851-1943)', in L.G. Wickham Legg and E.T. Williams (eds.), *The Dictionary of National Biography 1941-1950*, Oxford University Press, London, 1967, pp. 86-7.

pervasive. *Merrie England* [80] and *Britain for the British* [81] were read and discussed enthusiastically in Labor circles.[82] Blatchford's gradualist socialism, his rejection of violent confiscation, and his acceptance of a parliamentary road to socialism secured him a receptive audience in Victoria.[83] Moreover, Blatchford believed that practical socialism involved the instruments of production becoming state property so that profits which, under capitalism, went into the hands of the "idler" might be appropriated by the state and enjoyed by the people who created them. State ownership and control of the postal and telegraph services foreshadowed the nationalisation of the mines and factories.[84] Like the Victorians, Blatchford saw socialism as part of an evolutionary process in which the "freedom" of the individual to act as he or she desired had been curbed and the real freedom of the community enhanced by the extension of state regulation.[85] Only a Labour Party could be trusted to secure for the workers the full results of their labour.[86]

Graeme Osborne has remarked that Mann was more influenced in his first year as PLC organiser by Blatchford than Marx.[87] This influence was revealed in Mann's *The Labour Movement in Both Hemispheres*, written in early 1903.[88] Here, Mann argued that the workers, defined as anyone who did useful work, were entitled to the entire produce of their labour. The exploiters, who produced nothing but sought to live on rent, interest and profits, should be prevented from doing so by "the complete socialisation of

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[80]Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England*, Clarion, London, 1895.

[81]Robert Blatchford, *Britain for the British*, Clarion Press, London, 1902.

[82]*People's Daily*, December 2, 1903, p.2; *Tocsin*, August 20, 1903, p.2; October 22, 1903, p.2; May 19, 1904, p.8; June 16, 1904, p.8; AIMU, Minutes, February 1, 1906, UMA 2/1/1/2.

[83]Blatchford, *Merrie England*, pp. 98-109; *Britain for the British*, pp. 74-6; 166.

[84]Blatchford, *Merrie England*, p. 100.

[85]Blatchford, *Merrie England*, pp. 105-6.

[86]Blatchford, *Britain for the British*, chs. 17, 18.

[87]G.C.W. Osborne, 'Tom Mann: His Australasian Experience', unpublished PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1972, p.62.

[88]Tom Mann, *The Labor Movement in Both Hemispheres*, J.J. Miller [Printers], Melbourne, 1903.

all the means of production, exchange, and transit".[89] Mann thought that a

Labor Party, supported by socialistic public opinion, could achieve this aim.[90]

The influence of Blatchford's populist socialism was evident in this

argument; Mann recommended that Australians read *Britain for the*

*British* if they wished to know more about socialism.[91]

As a labour leader with an international reputation, Mann's espousal

of socialism could hardly be ignored by the fledgling Victorian Labor Party,

still weak and insecure early in the century.[92] Moreover, his status as one of

the most prominent trade union leaders in the Empire drew public

attention to the Labor Party and socialism which they would not have

attracted in his absence. While Osborne is undoubtedly warranted in his

scepticism about the influence of Mann's socialism on the Victorian public,

especially in the country, Mann did help to create enthusiasm for the Labor

cause among working-class people and their sympathisers.[93] It was largely

as a consequence of Mann's activity that the Labor Party, for the first time,

occupied a central place in Victorian political life.

There was a limit, however, in the extent to which the Labor Party was

prepared to identify itself with socialism, particularly in the form espoused

by Mann. In June 1903 the PLC, under pressure from the FPLP, dropped its

plank demanding gradual nationalisation of the means of production,

distribution and exchange and embraced the platform adopted by the

Commonwealth Labor Conference in 1902.[94] During the 1903 campaign

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[89]Mann, *The Labor Movement*, pp.3-4.
[90]Mann, *The Labor Movement*, p.7.
[91]Mann, *The Labor Movement*, p.25.
[92]Loveday, 'The Federal Parties', pp. 389-90.
[93]Osborne, 'Tom Mann', pp. 73-4.
[94]PLC, Minutes, February 7, 1903; June 6, 1903; June 13, 1903, VSL MS 10389; Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901-1949: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, Volume 1, 1901-1917*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1975, pp. 96, 99 (May 27, 1903; June 17, 1903); *Tocsin*, June 11, 1903, p.6; June 18, 1903, p.8; P. Loveday, 'The Federal Parties', in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin & R.S. Parker (eds.), *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1977, p. 400.

itself, the anti-Labor forces vilified the PLC on account of its links with Mann and socialism. The *Age* and the *Argus* [95] were united in their attitude to the Labor Party which, according to the *Age*, was "the party of Communism and Socialism".[96]   In response, the PLC executive denied any connection with communism or anarchism.   It acknowledged that some members of the Party were socialists, but that "a great many, probably the great majority, are not" and it repudiated "as odious any proposals or theories tending to destroy marriage or the family life".   The PLC executive also tried to clarify its relationship with Mann, declaring that "[w]hatever of Socialism may be in our platform was there...before Mr. Mann came to Australia".[97]   When the results of the election indicated that a link with socialism might not be the electoral liability that the PLC executive had assumed, the Party leadership was less inclined to repudiate socialism, and the PLC asked Mann to continue his work as an organiser.[98]

By the time of the 1904 election, Labor candidates were preaching socialism at election meetings.   Candidates in country electorates, however, were more reticent and Elmslie, who represented Albert Park, an electorate with many middle-class voters, denied that the Labor state platform contained any "socialist planks" or that he was a member of the SDP.[99]   The extent to which Labor was prepared to identify with socialism was thus limited by electoral considerations.   It could never be a matter of inflexible principle to an organisation which aimed to capture and exercise power in a democratic parliamentary system.

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[95]*Argus*, September 24, 1903, p.4; October 20, 1903, p.4; November 13, 1903, p.4; December 8, 1903, p.5.
[96]*Age*, September 30, 1903, p.6.  See also *Age*, December 2, 1903, p.7; December 5, 1903, p.10.
[97]*Age*, December 5, 1903, p.11.
[98]*People's Daily*, December 21, 1903, p.1; January 16, 1904, p.3; January 29, 1904, p.1; Joseph White, *Tom Mann*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1991, p.133.  Mann was re-engaged as PLC Organiser in September 1904. See PLC CE, Minutes, September 20, 1904; September 27, 1904, VSL MS 10389.
[99]Elliot, *Age*, May 16, 1904, p.6; Elmslie, *Ballarat Courier*, March 17, 1904, p.3.

# AN ENGLISH SOCIALIST IN THE ANTIPODES TO SPREAD
# THE GOSPEL OF LABOUR



Tom Mann

Tom Mann, *The Labor Movement in Both Hemispheres*, J.J. Miller [Printer], 1903, cover (National Library of Australia)

**The Religion of Socialism and the Development of a Party Machine**

In 1906, Western District farmer and socialist J.K. McDougall declared that socialism "was not merely an economic scheme; it was a moral and spiritual force".[100] As Henry Pelling has remarked, for people raised in a religious atmosphere the labour movement "offered not merely an ethical background but also something of the outward forms of religion to which they were accustomed". The Labor Party did not offer its socialism as an alternative to a belief in the life of the world to come (although it might have had this significance for a minority of Party members). For most supporters of the Party, a belief in socialism complemented rather than replaced religious belief.[101] Victorian Laborites quoted with approval a statement which they attributed to *Encyclopedia Britannica* - the "ethics of Socialism are identical with the ethics of Christianity" - thus combining a Labor faith in respectable authority with a view of socialism as embodying the highest principles and most cherished values of the community.[102] Solly told an audience of farmers and businessmen at Wickliffe in the western district "that the Socialism advocated by the Labour Party was that laid down by Christ when on earth". Miss Maggie McDougall then provided a rendition of 'The Holy City'.[103] The *Typographical Journal* declared that "Socialism is simply applied Christianity"[104] while the Bendigo Labor branch proposed a Socialist Church to preach "pure Socialism as taught by Jesus Christ; to proclaim the brotherhood of man; to help the poor and

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[100]*Tocsin*, April 27, 1905, p.4.
[101]Henry Pelling, *The Origins of the Labour Party 1880-1900*, Macmillan, London, 1954, p.151.
[102]*Tocsin*, November 19, 1903, p. 10; McDougall, *Tocsin*, September 29, 1904, cover. This is actually a slight misquotation. The statement by Thomas Kirkup in the ninth edition of *Britannica* is "...the ethics of socialism are closely akin to the ethics of Christianity, if not identical with them". See 'Socialism', in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edition, Vol.XXII, Adam & Charles Black, Edinburgh, 1887, p.206.
[103]*Tocsin*, September 1, 1904, p.7.
[104]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, December 19, 1903, p.8.

needy".[105] Socialism, like Christianity, demanded faith, fellowship and good works. It would bring personal and social redemption, replacing competitive capitalism, based on greed and selfishness, with a "Co-operative Commonwealth".[106]

Labor branches also combined social and cultural activities with more serious political agitation. In 1902, the Carlton branch, after hearing H.B. Higgins and Gregor McGregor speak on wages boards and arbitration, were entertained by songs, violin selections, a tambourine dance and Irish jig, a piano recitation, a comic rendition of 'How McDougal Topped the Score', and a skipping rope dance by Miss Jeanie Hoggan.[107] The North Melbourne branch held a Moonlight Bay excursion which was "a pleasant relief" and tended "to encourage the workers to fight more vigorously for their own amelioration".[108] The Collingwood branch had its own choir[109] while the St. Kilda branch formed a brass band "for the purpose of inspiring, and as a means to developing and pledging every worker to the Universal Socialistic Covenant".[110] Music was an important part of the activities of Labor branches in these years. The PLC had its own brass band and Song Book while the minutes of the Creswick branch reveal that much of its time was occupied in musical and theatrical activities.[111] In 1905, a Labor Cycling Club, modelled on the English Clarion cyclists, was formed. These earnest Laborites combined their cycling with a study of nature, interspersed with discussion of political questions: "some knotty problems were solved - to our satisfaction".[112] There was a PLC cricket competition, which advanced

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[105]*Tocsin*, June 21, 1906, p.1.
[106]Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', *History Workshop Journal*, 4, 1977, pp.5-56.
[107]*Tocsin*, August 7, 1902, p.3.
[108]*Tocsin*, December 11, 1902, p.1.
[109]*Tocsin*, March 23, 1905, p.8.
[110]*Tocsin*, May 11, 1905, p.8.
[111]PLC (Creswick), Minutes, March 7, 1904; March 21, 1904; March 28, 1904, UMA.
[112]*Tocsin*, February 9, 1905, p.8.

physical fitness and Labor sociability.[113]  At a meeting of the Fitzroy branch in 1905, "Mr. Pozzi spoke to the Branch on Silk Worm Culture".[114]  In the early years of the century, politics was not regarded as totally distinct from social and cultural activity.  Labor branches often provided a focus of social life in a similar manner to churches, lodges and friendly societies, offering "fraternisation on a community basis".[115]  This function was particularly important in country districts.  In February 1904, when the Coleraine PLC held a progressive euchre party and dance, the "knowledge of the unity of political spirit among those present gave added zest to the enjoyment".[116]

Labor branches also ran candidates in municipal elections.  From the early 1890s, Victorian union leaders had shown increasing interest in local government elections.[117]  Laborites were excited by the experimentation of the Progressive alliance on the London County Council in the 1890s.  The *Tocsin* was an enthusiastic advocate of the "gas and water" socialism of the Fabians, and it urged the labour movement to take a closer interest in municipal affairs.[118]  The unions' main motive for intervention in council elections, however, was their desire to enforce a minimum wage for local government employees.[119]  A few unionists were elected to inner city councils in the 1890s, but the restricted franchise in municipal elections and plural voting hindered Labor's efforts in this direction.[120]  As late as 1914, it

[113]PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, October 23, 1905; PLC (MDC), Minutes, April 7, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, October 19, 1905, p.8.

[114]PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, June 14, 1905.

[115]Ian Campbell, 'Groups, Parties and Federation', in P. Loveday & I. Campbell, *Groups in Theory and Practice*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1962, p.68.

[116]*Coleraine Albion*, February 5, 1904.

[117]*Age*, July 11, 1891, p.10; March 14, 1892, p.6; *Commonweal*, June 18, 1892, p.3; *Worker* (Melbourne), October 21, 1893, p.1;

[118]*Tocsin*, October 28, 1897, p.7; March 3, 1898, p.2; June 9, 1898, p.4; June 23, 1898, p.3; September 1, 1898, p.4.

[119]THC, Minutes, June 21, 1895.

[120]John Lack *A History of Footscray*, Hargreen Publishing Company, Melbourne, 1991, pp.153-5.

controlled only two councils, Port Melbourne and Richmond.[121] Participation in local government contests, however, was significant for the Labor Party because it provided a field of branch activity between parliamentary elections. In 1905, the Labor Party also ran candidates for the local school boards, but without success.[122]

Even the Victorian parliament became a forum for the exposition of socialist ideas in the early 1900s, much to the bemusement of non-Labor parliamentarians. Labor parliamentarians usually defined socialism as the extension of state activity. In their hands, the conception of socialism as a new life gave way to the narrower evolutionary state socialism which dominated Labor rhetoric for much of the twentieth century. Socialism would develop as a part of an evolutionary process rather than as the outcome of class struggle or the radical transformation of social consciousness through education.[123] The people could hasten the evolutionary process, however, through the prudent use of the ballot box.[124] Tunnecliffe was the most eloquent theorist of this socialism. In a series of pamphlets, he argued for the efficiency, justice and inevitability of public ownership of industry. Socialism, he declared, was "the result of the slow development of economic principles which are latent in the womb of society...".[125] Social evolution was on the side of the socialists, but true socialism would also demand "democratic organisation and administration of all public activities in the interests of the community".[126] Other Labor socialists gave less emphasis to the ideal of industrial democracy, but agreed

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[121]*Worker* (Melbourne), October 14, 1893, p.3; *Age*, August 26, 1898, p.6; September 1, 1898, p.2; *Tocsin*, August 31, 1899, pp.1, 5; *Labor Call*, September 4, 1913, p.5.
[122]*Tocsin*, July 27, 1905; August 10, 1905, p.4; August 17, 1905, p.8.
[123]Solly, *Argus*, October 16, 1908, p.6.
[124]*Ballarat Courier*, December 5, 1904, p.6.
[125]Tom Tunnecliffe, *Successful Socialism*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, n.d. [1901], p.44. See also Tunnecliffe, *The Problem of Poverty*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, 1904.
[126]Tunnecliffe, *Successful Socialism*, pp.18-19. See also Scott Bennett, in Max Hirsch, *An Exposure of Socialism*, Benwick Press [Printer], Melbourne, 1904, p.57.

that capitalist society had within it the makings of a socialist system. Ted
Warde explained:

> A lot had been said against Socialism, but if they put a letter in the Post
> Office, and had it conveyed without further trouble - that was
> Socialism. If they had their children vaccinated by the State - that was
> Socialism. When the farmers had free lectures delivered to them by
> State experts, or when they received advances for grain - that, too, was
> Socialism.[127]

Labor socialists saw socialism as the extension of a principle and practice
already in existence - state enterprise. The development of socialism was
part of an evolutionary process which had been going on for centuries, and
it remained "for the people to enter fully into its heritage".[128] The process of
monopolisation was interpreted as a "prelude to socialisation".[129] Capitalist
competition led to the development of  monopolies from which, in turn,
would evolve collectivist production.[130] Moreover, the abolition of private
ownership would solve the problem of underconsumption, which Labor
socialists regarded as endemic to capitalism.[131] Collectivist methods of
production for use rather than profit would produce a balance between
consumption and production, leading to an enduring prosperity.[132]

This evolutionary socialism was compatible with the emergent
labourism of the Party leadership because it located the achievement of a
socialist society in the distant future. The commitment to socialism as a
new life was appropriated by the Victorian Socialist Party (VSP), formed in
1906 by Mann. The VSP had a choir, orchestra, brass band and dramatic
society; a Sunday School for the education of children in the principles and

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[127]*People's Daily*, March 24, 1904, p.2.
[128]Hannah, *Argus*, September 7, 1903, p.6.
[129]*Tocsin*, June 30, 1904, p.1.
[130]*Tocsin*, June 30, 1904, p.1.
[131]THC, Minutes, June 23, 1905.
[132]Beard, *VPD*, CVII, July 14, 1904 pp. 262-3.

ethics of socialism (with its own Socialist Reader and Ten Commandments);

a class for the training of socialist speakers; a co-operative store; a Socialist

Savings Bank; and a 'Ruskin Football Club'. Sunday night meetings in the

Bijou Theatre and mid-week gatherings in the Socialist Hall introduced

members to a wide range of subjects while dances and weekend camps were

occasions of socialist conviviality and opportunities for courtship among

the younger socialists. Mann, who was instrumental in the development of

this range of activities, even performed socialist baptisms. There was a

strong interest in cultural and literary activities, which Bernard O'Dowd, a

poet and former Tocsin socialist, and Marie Pitt, also a poet, did much to

promote.[133] At the same time as the Socialist Party embraced the ideal of

socialism as a new life, the Labor branches were beginning to lose much of

their vitality. These bodies were gradually transformed into local electoral

committees, which often maintained only a precarious existence between

elections, even in the working-class suburbs.[134] This was partly a

consequence of the development of an "elaborate party machine...which

[came] to associate its own well-being with the prospects for socialism".[135] It

encouraged a narrow vision of socialism as the extension of the functions of

the state through parliamentary action by the Labor Party. Tunnecliffe

registered this process in a rejection of socialism as a religious ideal in *The*

*Problem of Poverty* (1904):

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[133]Bertha Walker, *Solidarity Forever!: A Part Story of the Life and Times of Percy Laidler - the first quarter of a century*, The National Press, Melbourne, 1972, pp.33-47; Copy of the Socialist Party of Victoria Membership Card (of J.P. Jones), Merrifield Collection, J.P. Jones File, VSL; Lloyd Ross, 'The Education of John Curtin', *Australian Highway* , Volume XXVII, August 1, 1945, copy in Merrifield Collection, J.P. Jones File, VSL; Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party', p.130.

[134]PLC CE, Minutes, June 1, 1907; October 5, 1907; October 19, 1907; December 21, 1907; August 22, 1908, VSL MS 10389. The minutes of the Fitzroy branch of the PLC reveal that it did not have a continuous existence between 1905 and 1911. See PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, 1905-1911, Merrifield Collection, VSL. It is also significant that the PLC rule books for 1905 and 1906 contained copies of Labor songs for the use of branches; later editions did not. See PLC, *Constitution*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, 1905; PLC, *Constitution*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, 1906.

[135]Yeo, 'A New Life', p.31.

> Victory to the strongest is the law to which we all conform...No
> picturing of ideals; no roseate visions of the future, no tears, or
> sympathy, or talk of human love can count.  When the division is
> called the numbers alone tell the tale.[136]

Tunnecliffe drastically simplified the question of socialist agency: "more
Labour members are needed".[137]  This might be contrasted with the views
expressed by Tunnecliffe as 'Camille' in 1900, when he criticised the rigidity
of Fabianism and Marxism, which were examples of scientific socialism
inspired by the "dismal science".  Both varieties of socialism were
preoccupied with economic relations at the expense of ethics.   For 'Camille',
socialism was "a religion of life and love":

> ...it is the life of the Nazarene we have to translate into action, and it is
> the spirit of His teaching which, permeating society, leads to the
> perfecting of the social ideal.[138]

After 1900, this ethical socialism was gradually displaced in Tunnecliffe's
political thought by the materialist and evolutionist assumptions he had
earlier condemned.[139]

## Socialism and the Emergence of Labourism, 1905-1910

The zenith of radical socialist influence on the Victorian Labor Party
occurred in 1904-5; thereafter, the moderate elements in the Party stiffened
their resistance and the socialist star began to wane.  Indeed, the division of
the Party into antagonistic moderate and radical sections was evident at the
1905 state conference.  Harry Scott Bennett, on behalf of the militant Ballarat

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[136]Tunnecliffe, *The Problem of Poverty*, p.16.
[137]Tunnecliffe, *The Problem of Poverty*, p.17.
[138]*Tocsin*, July 12, 1900, p.6.
[139]Tunnecliffe, *Successful Socialism*, p.102. For a discussion of the ethical strand in British socialism, see Stuart Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain 1917-1933*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980, ch.2.

West Labor branch, moved that the "Nationalisation of means of Production, Distribution & Exchange" be made a plank in the state platform. His parliamentary colleague, Beard, in response, moved that the Party should "secure the enactment of such legislation as will raise the conditions of the workers & serve as successive steps towards the establishment of a collectivist state - By election to all public bodies of candidates pledged to the Platform of this Council". Beard's gradualist amendment was defeated twenty-four votes to twenty, but the conference accepted by a narrow margin the insertion of the word "gradual" before "Nationalisation" in Bennett's motion. The radicals repelled an attempt to amend the motion so that nationalisation would apply only to private monopolies, a policy which would have brought the PLC into line with the Federal Party. Bennett claimed that this "would amount only to advanced Liberalism". His amended motion was carried, but on the suggestion of E.J. Russell, an active Socialist and from 1906, a Labor Senator, it was transferred from the State platform to the Objective in the Constitution.[140] This outcome was interpreted as a victory for the radical section. As Mann declared later in the year, the PLC had "decided to definitely declare in favour of Socialism".[141] The insertion of the word "gradual" and the relegation of the clause to the Objective were evidently regarded as acceptable compromises by the left. In retrospect, it is difficult to account for the optimism of the radicals. Labor might have been formally committed to socialism, but its acknowledgment that this would be a long-term process located the Party in the political mainstream, adjacent to progressive liberalism. Moreover, the resistance offered by the moderate section of the Party, spearheaded by the parliamentarians Anstey, Maloney, Beard, Elmslie and Prendergast,

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[140]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 22-23, 1905; *Tocsin*, April 27, 1905, pp.4-5.
[141]Tom Mann, 'Socialism', in John Laurent (ed.), *Tom Mann's Social and Economic Writings: A pre-Syndicalist Selection*, Spokesman and the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union, Nottingham, 1988, p.104.

indicated that the radicals were unlikely to have things their own way in the future.[142]

By 1906 a moderate political alternative was gaining support in the Party. This trend was evident when Pat Heagney asked the liberal editor of the *Bacchus Marsh Express*, Christopher Crisp, a confidant of James Service and Alfred Deakin, for advice about the appointment of "a first class pressman" to run a new democratic paper in the labour interest. It seems likely that this was an effort to persuade Crisp to accept the editorship.[143] As we have already seen, the Labor Party's relationship with Victorian liberalism had been modified by 1906, but the approach to Crisp suggests that traditional relationships and attitudes had not been transformed. For Labor moderates, a commitment to socialism meant a vague preference for an interventionist state and by 1906, their attitudes on many questions were not easily distinguishable from those of a progressive liberal such as Crisp, who accepted the designation "state socialist".[144]

The Labor moderates held that an independent Labor Party, supported by a strong trade union movement, ought to pursue its immediate policy objectives in the parliamentary arena. Their central assumption was that Labor could, through the implementation of a program of reform, modify market outcomes in favour of the working class and other "producers" and thus improve the lot of the common people.[145] State intervention would eliminate the worst aspects of capitalistic social relations by providing for a minimum wage and an eight hour day through the wages boards and conciliation and arbitration machinery. In the long term, by regulating the division of profits and wages, the boards would transform class relations.[146] McLeod, the editor of the *Labor Call*, argued that Labor's program would

[142]See *Tocsin*, April 27, 1905, p.4, for the debate over the socialist objective.
[143]Pat Heagney to Christopher Crisp, June 24, 1906, Christopher Crisp Papers MS 743/202.
[144]J.H. Rundle, 'Christopher Crisp', *ADB*, Volume 3, p.495.
[145]*Labor Call*, December 24, 1908, p. 5.
[146]Stuart Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1989.

mean nominal private ownership of industry and actual public control.[147] If this was an optimistic view of the potential of the wages board system, it was nevertheless in accord with the belief of many Labor supporters that every advance of the Labor platform brought the achievement of a socialist state closer. In this respect, the attitudes of the moderates were not entirely distinct from those members of the Labor Party who wanted the PLC to make a firmer commitment to socialism. At least before syndicalism began to influence the Victorian labour movement from 1907, there was a broad acceptance that the victories of the Labor Party were also victories for the socialist cause.[148] The radicals, however, wanted the Party to situate its policies within a strategy which emphasised the socialist objectives of the movement while Labor moderates, on the other hand, remained suspicious of grand theorising and argued that the Party should concern itself with winning majority support for its platform.[149] As the *Tocsin* declared,

> We are not now to be side-tracked by any body of irresponsible visionaries. The trend of events at present is towards collectivism. Our clear duty is to do the work that lies nearest to hand. The vast majority, so far from desiring, cannot even conceive of universal collective ownership and control. Are we to sit idle while they are enslaved by unchecked landlordism, starved by under-pay, robbed by professional boodlers, murdered by unregulated industry, denied knowledge which should be the common lot of all, and left to perish of want in their old age?[150]

There was also some concern among Labor moderates about the socialist doctrine of the class war. 'Empiric', writing in *Labor Call*, contrasted the socialists who believed that the interests of the employers and the workers were antagonistic with the Labor Party, which accepted that they had

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[147]*Labor Call*, June 25, 1908, p.4.
[148]*Socialist*, August 11, 1906, p.4; October 6, 1906, p.4.
[149]*Socialist*, April 21, 1906, p.4; 'L.B.M.', *Labor Call*, July 11, 1907, p.7; Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science*, p.59.
[150]*Tocsin*, March 15, 1906, p.7. The editor of the *Tocsin* from 1905 was N.A. McLeod.

"several precious interests in common which must be defended". These were parliamentary government, freedom of speech and the press, education, the franchise, literature and science.[151] 'Empiric' claimed that while revolutionaries saw socialism as both a religion and a science of society, for Labor it was "merely a good business proposition, embracing industry and the fruits of industry".[152] The development of this moderate political alternative to radical socialism was one reason for the emerging breach between the Labor Party and the Socialists. In May 1905, the *Tocsin*, which was now a virtual mouthpiece of the Labor Party executive, declared that for "all practical purposes, Socialism is beside the question. The Labour party can neither bring it in nor keep it out, for the Labour party is only the people".[153] Labor's recognition of popular sovereignty, which it inherited from liberalism, was the foundation of the emergent labourism.[154] Party moderates argued that in the absence of popular support for socialism, the Labor Party should concentrate on the moderate reforms acceptable to a majority of its constituents rather than attempt to convert the masses to socialism.[155]

By the end of 1905, there were signs of tension between the PLC and the Social Questions Committee (SQC).[156] The SQC was a Fabian-style body formed in 1905 by Mann and J.P. Jones for the advocacy of socialism and the collection of information on the social conditions of the poor, with a view to amelioration.[157] The members conducted a house-to-house canvass to

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[151]*Labor Call*, July 25, 1907, p.3.
[152]*Labor Call*, August 1, 1907, p.3.
[153]*Tocsin*, May 18, 1905, p.4. See also *Tocsin*, April 20, 1905, p.4.
[154]See, for example, E.J. Russell's comment: "If I were asked to-morrow to vote by way of a referendum on the question, 'Socialism or no Socialism', I would vote on the 'No Socialism' ticket. I would not be a party to forcing it upon an unwilling people even if I could...I am a democrat first, and then a Socialist...I am a straight-out Laborite, prepared to proceed on Socialistic lines only as far as the people's education will allow them to go" (*Labor Call*, July 25, 1907, p.7).
[155]*Labor Call*, July 11, 1907, p.7.
[156]*Tocsin*, August 24, 1905, p.8; January 4, 1906, p.7.
[157]*Tocsin*, December 7, 1905, p.3.

collect data on underfed children and unemployment,[158] and embraced

Labor as an ally and friend.[159] Some Labor activists associated with the SQC

were Blomberg, Hannah, Solly, E.J. Russell and the bootmaker A.A.

McDonell.[160] When the SQC inaugurated Saturday night propaganda

meetings which threatened to clash with the efforts of the PLC Metropolitan

District Council (MDC) late in 1905, the MDC discussed the advisability of

joining with the SQC for propaganda purposes. It resolved "that the MDC

take no action in the way of allying itself with any other body".[161] The

*Tocsin* report of the MDC meeting stated that

> while no derogatory word was uttered against the leaders of the body
> referred to [the SQC], it was nevertheless contended that the initiation
> of propaganda work by that body would lead to ultimate confusion, and
> a probable split in the Labour vote.[162]

When the MDC received protests from several Labor branches, it repeated

the decision "that meetings held by MDC must be under the auspices of the

PLC only and not in conjunction with or on behalf of any other party".[163]

At the local level, however, co-operation between the PLC and the SQC

continued, facilitated by the overlap of membership between the two bodies

and shared ideals.[164]

In February 1906, the SQC became the Socialist Party (VSP).[165] By 1907,

it boasted almost 2000 members, making it the most popular socialist body

which had ever existed in Australia.[166] The first issue of the Party

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[158]*Tocsin*, October 12, 1905, p.7; Mathews, 'Victoria's First Fabians', pp. 88-9.

[159]Mathews, 'Victoria's First Fabians', pp. 67-8, 88-110.

[160]*Tocsin*, February 8, 1906, p.6.

[161]PLC (MDC), Minutes, November 18, 1905; December 2, 1905, VSL MS 10389.

[162]*Tocsin*, December 7, 1905, p.8.

[163]PLC (MDC), Minutes, December 16, 1905; December 30, 1905, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, December 21, 1905, p.5.

[164]Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party', pp.35-6; PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, February 12, 1906; *Tocsin*, January 4, 1906, p.7.

[165]*Tocsin*, March 8, 1906, p.5.

[166]Bertha Walker, *Solidarity Forever!*, p.29.

newspaper, the *Socialist*, edited by Mann, appeared on 21 April 1906 announcing a familiar policy: "...we shall at all times urge the necessity for all Labor men and women being straight-out Socialists".[167] The Socialists aimed to secure immediate social reform, while never losing sight of the "Socialist millennium".[168] There is a sense in which the VSP, in ideological terms, resembles the PLC of the period 1902-4; it certainly inherited aspects of its populism:"our hopes rest chiefly on the Initiative and Referendum where the people, without the parliamentarians will decide for themselves what measures shall become law".[169] The VSP, however, maintained a critical distance from the Labor Party. In July 1906, the *Socialist* commented,

> ...Labourism, minus Socialism, does but aim at patching up the present system by attempts at regulating working hours and wages in the interests of workers, but leaving the ownership of raw material and the tools of production in the hands of the capitalist monopolists.[170]

As the 1906 federal election approached, the *Socialist* advised VSP members to join the committee of a selected Labor candidate: "The crudity of Labour Party Socialism does not justify apathy on our part".[171] The VSP disagreed with Labor's policy to confine nationalisation to monopolies, but would accept it as a minimum.[172] There were, in fact, signs of Socialist ambivalence about the PLC. When some VSP speakers were arrested in Prahran in late 1906 in a celebrated 'Free-speech fight', the *Socialist*, somewhat unfairly, criticised the Labor Party for its "masterly inactivity".[173]

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[167]*Socialist*, April 21, 1906, p.4.

[168]*Socialist*, April 21, 1906, p.4.

[169]*Socialist*, April 21, 1906, p.1.

[170]*Socialist*, July 28, 1906, p.4.

[171]*Socialist*, December 1, 1906, p.5.

[172]*Socialist*, November 24, 1906, p.4; December 22, 1906, p.2.

[173]*Socialist*, December 1, 1906, p.3. This criticism was not warranted. The leader of the Labor Party, G.M. Prendergast, raised the matter in parliament while several Labor branches passed resolutions protesting against the actions of the Prahran Council. See *Socialist*,

In early December, it explained that the failure of the Socialists to run candidates of their own and the activities of Socialists in the Labor Party were

> not to be taken as admissions that the Labour Party platform is more than a partially Socialistic one, or that we are at all content with either the ability or the will of that Party to carry into legislative effect the programme of pure Socialism.[174]

After the election, it noted a tendency on the part of Labor parties "to adopt Liberal platforms rather than Labour".[175] Despite some resistance from militants, however, the Socialist Party's official policy towards Labor remained unchanged for the time being.[176]

These signs of Socialist disaffection were, in part, a consequence of a hardening of moderate opinion within the PLC against the socialist element in the Party, which was evident at the 1906 state conference. When Heagney moved for the adoption of the Federal Objective, Platform and Pledge (as adopted in 1905), there was an unsuccessful attempt to amend the Objective from the collective ownership of monopolies to a more radical demand: collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.[177] This set the tone of the conference; the moderates were able to repel every socialist advance. While there had been a radical socialist

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November 10, 1906, p.5; November 17, 1906, p.5; *VPD*, CXIV, October 18, 1906, pp.2098-2107; November 8, 1906, pp.2688-90.

[174]*Socialist*, December 8, 1906, p.4. This issue of the *Socialist* was edited by H.H. Champion; Mann was in prison as a result of his participation in the Prahran Free-speech fight. See Osborne, 'Tom Mann', p.139. Champion was less sympathetic than Mann to the strategy of working within the Labor Party. While this fact might have induced the more aggressive stance of the *Socialist* at this time, the change was consistent with a broad shift of Socialist opinion against the Labor Party from about September 1906. See Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party', pp. 53-4.

[175]*Socialist*, December 22, 1906, p.2.

[176]Socialist Party of Victoria (VSP), Minutes, December 31, 1906; January 2, 1907, Merrifield Collection, VSL; *Socialist*, January 12, 1907, p.3.

[177]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 13, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.2.

member of the state executive in the previous year - McDonell - none was successful in the election in 1906.[178] The socialist demand for a six hour day was defeated,[179] as was the attempt to change the name of the PLC to the "Victorian Socialist Labor Party".[180] The proposal "that no anti-socialist be eligible for membership of the organisation" met a similar fate.[181] An opponent of this motion, representing the Ararat branch, warned that barring anti-socialists from membership "would mean ruin to country branches, which numbered among their active members many anti-Socialists".[182] The country delegates, who formed a larger contingent at this conference than in 1905, thus bolstered the cause of the moderates.

The socialist offensive, which aimed at reconstituting Labor as a Socialist Party, thus failed. The moderates now moved that the socialist state objective, adopted at the 1905 conference, be replaced by the moderate federal objective: "collective ownership of monopolies and the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the State or municipality". This was carried on the voices.[183] In another manoeuvre directed against the socialists, the Party moderates attempted unsuccessfully to have a resolution passed declaring that no member of the PLC should belong to another political party.[184] Many delegates had been alarmed by McDonell's statement that the "Socialists would only fight seats for which Labour candidates were not standing" which suggested a departure from a purely propagandist role.[185]

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[178]*Tocsin*, April 27, 1905, pp. 1,5; April 19, 1906, p.3.
[179]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.4.
[180]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 14, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.3.
[181]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.4.
[182]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.4.
[183]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 14, 1906, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin* , April 19, 1906, p.4. This superseded a motion proposed by the Catholic Yarra Bank agitator, Harry Foran, on behalf of East Melbourne branch: "that evolutionary, not revolutionary Socialism is the true remedy for the ills of Labor in Australia" (PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 15, 1906, VSL MS 10389).
[184]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.4.
[185]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.4.

There were now signs of a steady retreat from socialism. It is no coincidence that this occurred in an election year: 1906. The Labor leadership could no more ignore the electoral grip of the Liberal Protectionists on many of its potential supporters than the Liberal Protectionists could disregard the demands of wage-earners when formulating their policies. While it was still possible for a moderate Labor politician such as J.W. Billson to declare in March 1907 that the "ultimate goal" of the Party was socialism, an increasing emphasis on individualism was evident in labour political discourse from 1906.[186] In February of that year, James Mathews, speaking at a meeting of the Albert Park PLC, said that "there was no 'class struggle' existing in Victoria...the struggle was among the workers themselves in their desire for individual gain".[187] In April, Heagney asserted that

> Australians did not require to be aroused. They wanted commonsense politics, from level-headed politicians. They had the greatest possible measure of political power, and wanted no inflammatory speeches. Class consciousness was a mistake. They should realise that it took all sorts to make a nation.[188]

There was also evidence of this reorientation in the *Tocsin*, which declared that

> Collectivism appears to be the coming order, but it must be based on human nature as we know it, with all its capacity for progress and friendship, but also with its instinct of self-advancement, and its disposition to watch the main chance. Political or economic systems

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[186]*Age*, March 5, 1907, p.8. Rawson has noted a change in the terminology of Labor leaders in the period between Federation and the Great War. He argues that "party spokesmen were now more disposed to accept their opponents' charge that they belonged to a socialist party and to defend the party in these terms". The socialist professions of Labor moderates such as Billson ought to be seen in this context. See D.W. Rawson, *Labor in Vain? A Survey of the Australian Labor Party*, Longmans, Melbourne, 1966, p.63.
[187]*Tocsin*, March 1, 1906, p.8.
[188]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.8.

built on sympathy must fail in the future as in the past. Selfishness is
the great mainspring of human action...[189]

A correspondent with the *Tocsin*, 'Koala', regarded class consciousness as
dangerous when it became a militant form of class-feeling which led to
hatred. The only form of class consciousness consistent with the ideals of
justice and humanity was "the cultivation of the spirit of independence and
self-reliance among workers, coupled with the recognition of the fact that, as
workers, they do not get the full reward of their labour".[190] Another
correspondent rejected the socialist idea of organising parties "in accordance
with industrial class distinctions". This writer could not "see the feasibility
of the 'class-conscious' plan of organisation" since this involved "the
obliteration of the middle class" who, with the better paid workers, were the
most loyal supporters of the Labor Party.[191] The expression of these
sentiments did not, however, amount to an abandonment of collectivism in
favour of individualism, nor should the strategy be regarded as a product of
mere opportunism by the Party leadership.[192] Burgmann's argument that
the corrupting influence of the "paliamentary club" on Labor
parliamentarians caused the Party's abandonment of socialism ignores the
political context in which labourism developed.[193] The emergence of
labourism was an outcome of the recomposition of liberalism in a political
context in which socialism, as an "ideology of working-class mobilisation",
had lost much of its explanatory power.[194]

In the period of intense political struggle after 1900, socialist ideas
gained currency because they helped to explain the political isolation of the

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[189]*Tocsin*, June 21, 1906, p.1.
[190]*Tocsin*, June 21, 1906, p.2.
[191]*Labor Call*, August 22, 1907, p.2.
[192]This was how it was portrayed by the *Truth*, December 29, 1906, p.4.
[193]Burgmann, *'In Our Time'*, p.197.
[194]Terry Irving, 'Socialism, working-class mobilisation and the origins of the Labor Party', in B. O'Meagher (ed.), *The Socialist Objective: Labor and Socialism*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1983, p.42.

working class and pointed to a solution in the form of an independent
working-class party committed to a parliamentary strategy. After 1904,
however, traditional political patterns re-emerged. In state politics, the
controversial issues of Irvine's reign - parliamentary reform, retrenchment,
the wages board system, separate representation of state employees and the
railway strike - gave way to a political environment dominated by
developmental issues and gaming and liquor reform. Most socialists
regarded these matters as incidental to the main conflict in capitalist society,
that between capital and labour. In the absence of major party controversies,
most political energy was consumed by the parochial concerns of
parliamentarians committed above all else to obtaining a share of state
largesse for their electorates.[195] Bent presided over a return to a style of
politics which resembled that of the period 1883-1890 when, in the reign of
the "Grand Coalition", parochialism and development had been the
dominant political themes.[196] By 1906, radical socialism had lost much of its
rhetorical force because state parliamentary politics was now about
consensus and compromise as much as conflict and confrontation.
Moreover, while unemployment among the unskilled was still high and
the casual labour market continued to exact a heavy toll from those forced to
participate in it, the economy recovered after 1904. Unemployment declined
from over thirteen per cent in 1903 to less than six per cent by 1907.[197]
Socialists found it easier to explain social misery than prosperity.

The transition from the intense political conflict of the period 1902-3 to
the relative quietude of Bent's reign might help to explain the socialist and
Labor member for Ballarat West Harry Scott Bennett's decision not to stand

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[195]Kay Rollison, 'Groups and Attitudes in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 1900-1909',
unpublished PhD Thesis, La Trobe University, 1972, pp.339, 343-4.
[196]Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*,
Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, p.36.
[197]P.G. Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment: An Historical Assessment', unpublished PhD
thesis, Australian National University, 1967, p.82.

for re-election in 1907. According to the *Socialist*, Bennett, while "not underestimating the value of political action upon sound Socialist lines...feels that better work can be done at present in the agitatory field".[198] The Victorian Parliament provided few opportunities for a committed socialist such as Bennett in this period, and the departure of such an idealist from the parliament was not surprising. In July 1906, he had acknowledged in the Assembly that "with the present capitalistic system of producing wealth it is impossible for any Premier...to do away with the trouble of the unemployed man".[199] The Victorian Parliament was no place for a "revolutionary socialist".[200]

In federal politics, the passage of the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill in 1904 and the fall of the Reid Ministry in June 1905 inaugurated a period of Lib-Lab reform in which Deakin governed with the support of the Labor Party until late in 1908. The tariff issue was unresolved until the passage of the protectionist Lyne Tariff in 1908.[201] Consequently, the *Tocsin* 's declaration in June 1906 that the fiscal question was more important than the issue of "socialism versus anti-socialism" or "nationalisation of monopolies" was justified.[202] The efforts of Reid and organisations such as the VEF and the AWNL to make socialism the issue of the 1906 election achieved only moderate success, not only because the tariff question remained unresolved but also as a result of the influence of religious sectarianism. Socialists found this form of conflict confusing because it could not be easily explained in terms of class and exploitation. Harry Scott Bennett was evidently perplexed:

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[198]*Socialist*, January 12, 1907, p.3.
[199]*VPD*, CXIII, July 10, 1906, p.202.
[200]*VPD* , CXIII, July 10, 1906, p.203.
[201]E.A. Boehm, *Twentieth Century Economic Development in Australia*, 2nd. edition, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1979, p.189.
[202]*Tocsin*, June 14, 1906, p.6. See also Maloney's comment, *Age*, March 6, 1906, p.5. He favoured an Labor arrangement with the Chamber of Manufacturers and the PAV in 1906 because the main issue of the election would be Free-trade versus Protection.

> In a young country like Australia, to think this hideous serpent [of sectarianism] should be thrown into their midst, to induce men to fly at each other's throats, was surely one of the greatest curses to be inflicted on mankind.[203]

Despite these changes in the political climate, socialist ideas remained influential in many Labor branches. One speaker at the 1906 PLC Conference claimed that ninety per cent of the members of the Socialist Party were also members of the PLC.[204] By mid-1906, however, it was becoming difficult to ignore the widening breach between the radical vision of the Socialist Party and the labourism of the PLC leadership, with its scepticism about socialist theorising and utopian dreaming, its conviction that individuals were animated by self-interest, and its belief that a political party which hoped to be successful had to adapt itself to this reality.[205] In May, the Catholic *Tribune* declared that the PLC was "not prepared to swallow the Tom Mann brand of Socialism".[206] Moreover, in the second half of 1906, relations between the Socialists and the Labor Party deteriorated.[207] In August, the *Tocsin* declared, "No party in Australian politics is to-day fighting for socialism as its political faith, although many imagine themselves Socialists...".[208] Letters critical of the Socialist Party from correspondents writing under pseudonyms appeared in the *Tocsin* .[209] Early in 1907, the Socialists attempted to recover their position in the Labor Party. Several of the VSP's most active members, including Lizzie Ahern

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[203]*Advocate*, February 23, 1907, p.18. The Socialist Party underestimated sectarianism. In January 1907, the *Socialist* thought that Methodist lay-preacher and moral reformer W.H. Judkins had advanced "a really fine programme of genuine democratic reform...", completely ignoring the sectarian aspects of his candidature. See *Socialist*, January 12, 1907, p.3.
[204]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.4.
[205]*Tocsin*, June 7, 1906, p.2.
[206]*Tribune*, May 19, 1906, p.1.
[207] Osborne, 'Tom Mann', pp. 150-1.
[208]*Tocsin*, August 2, 1906, p.2.
[209]*Tocsin*, August 23, 1906, p.1; November 15, 1906, p.5.

and Frank Hyett, joined the Abbotsford branch of the PLC.[210] In the following month, a meeting of the Socialist Party was informed that the branch desired to nominate Frank Hyett for the Abbotsford seat in the State Parliament. Abbotsford was held by the Labor's Beazley, a former Liberal. The VSP agreed that Hyett was "at perfect liberty to nominate if he felt disposed as this would be in accordance with the declared policy of the Socialist Party", but nothing eventuated.[211]

When the PLC state conference assembled at Easter in 1907, the socialists were again defeated. Their attempt to modify the Party objective failed by forty-nine votes to twenty-nine.[212] Heagney described their proposed socialist objective as "a negation of the platform" since the Labor Party recognised private property and proposed to "multiply the number of property holders by a more equitable diffusion of wealth". Labor's policies, argued Heagney, would "give an immense stimulus to Individualism".[213] The Socialists also failed in an attempt to have their "ticket" elected to the central executive at the 1907 conference: the VSP was thus still unrepresented in the Labor Party leadership.[214] Meanwhile, the AWU and the non-metropolitan branches strengthened their position.[215]

In July 1907, the VSP participated in the Interstate Socialist Conference which established the Socialist Federation of Australasia (SFA). The most important decision of the conference from the Labor Party's point of view was that no SFA member would "seek election as the candidate of either the Australian Labor Party or any other non-Socialist Party, for either

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[210]*Labor Call*, January 31, 1907, p.8.

[211]VSP, Minutes, February 11, 1907, Merrifield Collection, VSL. The Richmond and Prahran Labor branches were also said to have asked Hyett to stand for parliament on their behalf.

[212]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 1, 1907, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, April 4, 1907, p.8; *Socialist*, April 6, 1907, p.5.

[213]*Labor Call*, April 18, 1907, p.7.

[214] It appears that a Socialist ticket was passed around at the 1907 conference. See *Labor Call*, May 30, 1907, p.7.

[215]*Labor Call*, April 4, 1907, p.8.

Parliamentary or Municipal positions".[216]   This resolution was approved by a meeting of the VSP.[217]   At least as it was interpreted by the *Socialist*, it did not prevent socialists from retaining their membership of the PLC, nor from voting for Labor candidates, but it severely restricted their room for manoeuvre.[218]   There were resignations from the Socialist Party and from the Labor Party as members felt compelled to declare their allegiance.[219]

In Port Melbourne in 1907, the local PLC branch asked the Socialist and Laborite E.F. Russell to contest the municipal election on behalf of the Labor Party.   In light of the decision of the recent Socialist conference, Russell could not run under the auspices of the PLC, but he believed "that he would receive P.L.C. support even as a straight out Socialist candidate".   The Socialist Party executive thought that since the invitation came from the PLC, the idea should not be encouraged and that in future, "no Socialist candidate municipal or parliamentary shall sign the platform of any other political party".[220]   In any event, the Port Melbourne branch selected only two candidates for three vacancies; it was clear that Russell would receive informal support from the local Laborites.   As a consequence, the PLC central executive, which wanted three Labor candidates to stand, sent its president, Ager, and secretary, Heagney, to a meeting of the Port Melbourne branch.[221]   Before this meeting eventuated, Russell resigned from the PLC "as he was also a member of the Socialist Party, his position was illogical".[222] He intended to run for the seat as a revolutionary socialist.   This development prompted severe condemnation of the socialists by Ager.   He

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[216]*Socialist*, June 22, 1907, p.2.
[217]VSP, Minutes, July 18, 1907, Merrifield Collection, VSL.
[218]*Socialist*, June 29, 1907, p.4.
[219]W.D. Flinn to H.H. Champion, August 8, 1907, R.S. Ross Papers, NLA MS 8222/4; E.J. Russell to Tom Mann, July 30, 1907, R.S. Ross Papers, NLA MS 3222/4; VSP, Minutes, November 12, 1907; *Labor Call*, August 29, 1907, p.8; September 12, 1907, p.5.
[220]VSP, Minutes, July 8, 1907, Merrifield Collection, VSL.
[221]*Labor Call*, July 18, 1907, p.8.
[222]PLC CE, Minutes, July 27, 1907, VSL MS 10389.

declared that they "had only a vague idea of honesty, and the Labor Party would be better without them". Meanwhile, Heagney

> did not regret that the Socialists had at last determined to come out into the open and challenge the Labor Party. The trouble had been brewing for nearly two years...Some Socialists had been working as a treacherous clique in the P.L.C. for some time.

Heagney thought the attack would benefit the Labor Party because it would force members and electors to declare their allegiance, remove misconceptions from the public mind, and might lead to accessions to the ranks of Labor from the liberals.[223]

The Socialist Party made a new departure when it selected Russell as its endorsed candidate.[224] A motion introduced by the Socialist Party moderate W.D. Flinn that a referendum be held on whether the Party should contest municipal or parliamentary seats in opposition to Labor candidates was defeated.[225] Russell's strong performance in the election (he finished fourth on the poll, but with 834 votes, only 125 behind the leader) seemed to confirm the VSP strategy of running its own candidates.[226] However, many Labor voters had supported Russell for the third vacancy; the result was a poor indication of the VSP's actual support as distinct from the Labor vote.

The breach with the socialists had the effect of prompting Labor to clarify its own position in relation to socialism. Despite the split, there were still many committed socialists in the ranks of the Labor Party. E.J. Russell, John Curtin, W.D. Flinn, and George Dupree had resigned from the Socialist Party in favour of the PLC.[227] Some of these activists retained a deep

[223]PLC CE, Minutes, August 10, 1907, VSL MS 10389; *Labor Call*, July 18, 1907, p.8.
[224]VSP, Minutes, July 22, 1907, Merrifield Collection, VSL; *Socialist*, July 27, 1907, p.5.
[225]VSP, Minutes, August 7, 1907, Merrifield Collection, VSL; *Labor Call*, August 15, 1907, p.1.
[226]*Socialist*, August 31, 1907, p.3.
[227]VSP, Minutes, November 12, 1907, Merrifield Collection, VSL.

commitment to socialism.[228]  Curtin actually rejoined the Socialist Party a

few months after his resignation, but continued his PLC membership.

Others followed the same course.[229]  That the Labor Party was not yet

regarded as a lost cause by Victorian socialists was revealed at the 1908 PLC

Conference when the following objective was adopted as that to be

advocated by the Victorian delegates at the Federal Conference:

> The securing of the full results of their industry to all wealth producers
> by the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution
> and exchange, to be attained through the extension of the industrial
> and economic functions of the State and local governing bodies.

This also became the objective of the State Labor Party.[230]  Laurie Cohen,

reflecting on the conference a few months later, recalled that "a large

majority...were declared Socialists".[231]  It is certainly true that the

conservative elements in the Party were isolated, and Curtin and Flinn had

been particularly active.  After the conference, there was a debate between

the various factions in *Labor Call* .[232]  Heagney criticised the socialists on the

grounds that they favoured the overthrow of capitalism while Labor only

wanted the nationalisation of monopolies and the extension of the

functions of the state.  Heagney argued that without making any serious

changes to the capitalist system, Labor could eliminate poverty.[233]  Cohen

and Charles Gray, both left-wing members of the PLC executive, objected to

Heagney's claims which, they argued correctly, contradicted the recent

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[228]Flinn himself became a bitter antagonist of the Socialist Party, criticising what he
regarded as the undemocratic nature of the internal party affairs.  See W.D. Flinn to H.H.
Champion, August 8, 1907, R.S. Ross Papers, NLA MS 8222/4 .
[229]Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party', p.64.
[230]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 20, 1908, VSL MS 10389.  See also *Labor Call*,
April 30, 1908, p.7.
[231]*Labor Call*, June 11, 1908, G.
[232]I am using the term "faction" in the general sense, and am not suggesting that there were
formally organised factions in the PLC at this time.
[233]*Labor Call*, June 4, 1908, p.2.

conference decision.[234] When the central executive called on its secretary to explain the views he had expressed in *Labor Call*,[235] Heagney replied that the Labor parliamentarians were not bound by the socialist objective because they were already pledged to the collective ownership of monopolies.[236] By late 1908, however, it was evident that a large group in the PLC favoured not only a socialist objective, but reconciliation with the Socialist Party.[237]

There were organisational reasons for this desire for compromise on the part of a section of the Labor Party. The effect of the split on the PLC metropolitan branches is difficult to determine since they were already in decay by early 1907, but it is likely that as a result of the loss of many socialist activists during 1907 the situation worsened.[238] The labourism of the PLC leadership and the politicians, with its emphasis on the capture of votes in the cause of piecemeal reform, was likely to win over an increasing number of voters in the electorates, but few activists for the Party organisation. After the state election of March 1907, there was no further federal or state election due until 1910. This certainly contributed to political lethargy. Between June 1904 and December 1907, more than fifty branches had become unfinancial. There were only ninety-six financial branches late in 1907 and attempts to revive the branches met with little success.[239] In September, Heagney reported that "a general apathy prevailed in both town and country".[240] Later in the year, *Labor Call* admitted that the "people seem to have had a surfeit of politics".[241] In February 1908, there were only nineteen financial branches in the metropolitan area and forty-three branches in the country, with a total membership of 910 and 1880 respectively. By February

[234]*Labor Call*, June 11, 1908, G; June 25, 1908, p.2.
[235]*Labor Call*, June 25, 1908, p.8.
[236]*Labor Call*, July 2, 1908, p.2.
[237]*Labor Call*, October 22, 1908, p.6.
[238]*Argus*, February 21, 1907, p.7.
[239]PLC CE, Minutes, December 21, 1907, VSL MS 10389.
[240]PLC CE, Minutes, September 7, 1907, VSL MS 10389.
[241]*Labor Call*, December 19, 1907, p.8.

1909, however, there had been a major increase in the number of branches

and members in the country due to the organisational efforts of the AWU

and the PLC, but the number of metropolitan branches had only increased

by three and the metropolitan membership, by 150.[242] While it was not the

only reason for the stagnation of the Labor branches in the city, the split

between the PLC and the Socialist Party made the process of organisational

recovery more difficult.

The decision of the PLC to approach the Socialists late in 1908 with a

view to reconciliation was an outcome of left-wing pressure from within

the PLC. It was the Brunswick PLC, the Marble and Stone Workers Union

and the AIMU which suggested a conference with the Socialist Party "with

the object of consolidating the working class movement".[243] These were all

militant bodies: Laurie Cohen was secretary of the Marble and Stone

Workers; E.F. Russell filled the same position in the AIMU; and John

Curtin was president of the Brunswick PLC. This left-wing element was

uncomfortable with the Labor Party's retreat from socialist ideology, and did

not share Heagney's desire for a moderate Labor Party to which no liberal

could object. Moreover, they opposed compulsory military training, which

had been embraced by the Federal Labor conference earlier in 1908. It seems

likely that the Labor left saw in the Socialist Party a potential ally in the

struggle against the Federal Labor Party's defence policy, which was

supported by the PLC right (led by Heagney and the AWU).[244]

At the 1908 state conference, the Labor left had restored the Victorian

Party's symbolic links with socialism. Later in 1908, they sought to heal the

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[242]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 8, 1909, VSL MS 10389.

[243]PLC, Special Conference, Minutes, November 21, 1908, VSL MS 10389. See also AIMU, Minutes, November 19, 1908, UMA 2/1/1/3.

[244]*Worker*, October 1, 1908, p.17; *Labor Call*, November 5, 1908, p.8; November 12, 1908, p.8; November 19, 1908, p.7; *Socialist*, September 11, 1908, p.4. At a Special Conference of the PLC held in November 1908 to consider compulsory military training, a majority of delegates decided that they were not competent to deal with the matter. This amounted to a decision to uphold the Australian Labor Party's defence policy. See *Labor Call*, November 26, 1908, p.3.

breach with the Socialist Party itself. While there was opposition to the proposal from some disenchanted former members of the VSP, a Special Conference held to consider compulsory military training agreed to a conference with the Socialist Party by thirty-one votes to twenty-six.[245] When the conference met, the VSP delegates requested that the PLC pledge its candidates "to the necessity of the social revolution to secure working class emancipation" and to recognise "that the Labor movement rests on the class struggle". At the following meeting of the PLC, Cohen and Gray submitted a motion to the executive based on the Socialist Party's request. The executive postponed consideration of the matter.[246] Meanwhile, the Socialist Party's decision to run its own candidates in the election ended the hope of a compromise with the Labor Party.[247] It is doubtful whether the Socialists ever seriously considered an alliance. Their participation aimed to avoid the accusation that they were contributing to working-class disunity,[248] a motive which was also close to the heart of some Labor Party members who supported the proposal for a conference.[249] It was the PLC left, the original proponents of the conference, who were made to appear foolish.

Mann had not, in 1908, given up hope that Labor would become a Socialist party.[250] However, the 1908 conference of the SFA decided that members of affiliated bodies should not be permitted to support Labor candidates or "retain membership in the Labor party or any other non-Socialist political party". Moreover, the conference decided to run

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[245]*Labor Call*, November 26, 1908, pp.3, 7.
[246]PLC CE, Minutes, December 12, 1908, VSL MS 10389; *Argus*, December 14, 1908, p.8; *Labor Call*, December 17, 1908, p.16.
[247]PLC CE, Minutes, January 30, 1909, VSL MS 10389.
[248]*Socialist*, December 18, 1908, p.3. On the eve of the negotiations with the PLC, the *Socialist* declared, "Our work as Socialists is to hit hard the present Parliamentary machine and all its parts, whether they be named Liberal or Labour". It called for nominations from those willing to stand as Socialist candidates. (*Socialist*, December 11, 1908, pp. 4-5.)
[249]See G.M. Prendergast's comment in *Labor Call*, November 26, 1908, p.7.
[250]*Labor Call*, April 23, 1908, B; September 17, 1908, p.10.

candidates "whenever and wherever possible".[251] In October, a VSP

referendum resulted in majority support for independent socialist

candidates in parliamentary elections.[252] The Socialists, as we have seen,

participated in a conference with the PLC late in 1908 but Curtin reported to

the VSP that "no definite proposals had been submitted by the P.L.C...".

Consequently, the Party proceeded with the selection of candidates.[253]

McDonell contested Collingwood and attracted eighty-two votes; Percy

Laidler won eighty-five votes in Melbourne.[254] This was a disastrous

result.[255] The VSP position in the election, however, had not been one of

uncompromising hostility to Labor: the *Socialist* advised members to vote

for Labor candidates where there was no socialist standing, a position which

appears to have accorded with the views of a majority of members.[256] The

Socialists regarded running parliamentary candidates as an extension of

their educational role rather than as a genuine electoral challenge to the

Labor Party.[257] The experience of the Party in the 1908 election virtually

ruled out the possibility of running independent socialist candidates in

future.[258] Official contact between the PLC and the Socialist Party was

virtually non-existent, but there were still some informal connections.[259] By

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[251]*Socialist*, July 17, 1908, p.1.

[252]Hewitt, 'A History of the Victorian Socialist Party', p.75.

[253]VSP, Minutes, December 10-11, 1908, NLA MS 564/1/1.

[254]Colin A. Hughes & B.D. Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly 1890-1964*, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975, pp.112, 115.

[255]VSP, Minutes, December 30, 1908, NLA MS 564/1/1. A member even gave notice of motion to wind up the VSP at this meeting.

[256]*Socialist*, December 25, 1908, p.2; VSP, Minutes, December 30, 1908; February 3, 1909, NLA MS 564/1/1.

[257]*Socialist*, December 18, 1908, p.5.

[258]The VSP rejected a motion to run a candidate for one of the Federal constituencies in 1910. See VSP, Minutes, February 23, 1910. In 1911, when an intending candidate (not a member of the Party) enquired about the possibility of his candidature being endorsed by the VSP, he was informed "that we do not intend to endorse any candidate for the next state elections" (VSP, Minutes, October 24, 1911), NLA MS 564/1/3.

[259]William Smith and John Curtin remained members of both parties (VSP, Minutes, November 29, 1911) while J.P. Jones did not resign until his nomination as a Labor candidate for the Victorian Legislative Council in 1910 (VSP, Minutes, March 21, 1910; April 4, 1910). In April 1910, a motion was carried at a VSP executive meeting that Curtin's "action in speaking

1910, the VSP was moving away from its position of isolation, but the golden days of the Labor-Socialist alliance were now behind it.[260]

The Labor Party, for its part, after the Socialist debacle in the 1908 state election, was more than ever convinced of its own status as the natural expression of working-class political interests. In 1910, the PLC withdrew from participation in the May Day celebrations. The immediate pretext was the Committee's decision to remove the Labor plank "Industrial Arbitration" from its program,[261] but the PLC had been considering the possibility of running the May Day celebrations independently since 1908.[262] The 1910 conference of the PLC decided that in future, arrangements for May Day would be made by the PLC executive and the THC.[263] This was an assertion of Labor's political autonomy, in the same sense as the Party's rejection of a program of joint propaganda with the Chamber of Manufacturers in 1906 announced its organisational independence from the Liberal Protectionists.

The Socialists left their mark on the Labor Party. The PLC left remained strong enough at the 1909 PLC Conference to resist the attempt to bring the Party's state objective into line with that of the Federal Party, and the language of class struggle had a growing influence on the Labor Party in the years before the Great War.[264] Some ideas propagated by Socialist Party members, especially those influenced by syndicalism, had a significant

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from the Labor platform be condemned as rank hypocrisy". A general meeting of the VSP rejected the executive's recommendation (See VSP, Minutes, April 11, 1910; April 20, 1910). In September 1910, the Socialists resolved to write to J.H. Scullin "challenging him to state his Party's position relative to the Socialist party" (VSP, Minutes, September 19, 1910). Labor politicians continued to act as speakers for the Socialist Party (VSP, Minutes, October 17, 1910; September 26, 1911), NLA MS 564/1/2-3.
[260]Ian Turner, 'Socialist Political Tactics', p.16-17.
[261]PLC, *Central Executive's Report*, June 4, 1910, in PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, June 1910, VSL MS 10389.
[262]*Labor Call*, March 26, 1908, p.8.
[263]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, July 1910, p.22.
[264]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 9, 1909, VSL MS 10389.

impact on the Labor Party (mainly through the militant unions) even after formal contact between the two parties became infrequent.[265] Indeed, the Socialist Party remained an important reference point for the Labor Party, particularly for the Labor left.

The Labor Party was a political space in which various actors sought to reconcile the class struggle ideology of the Socialists, derived primarily from Marxism and syndicalism; the more defensive class consciousness of most trade unionists, in which there was an emphasis on "the cultivation of the spirit of independence and self-reliance among workers";[266] and a populist formulation which envisaged a union of the classes against class privilege and monopoly, and whose roots were in working-class liberalism. The result of this process was labourism, a kaleidoscopic pattern of class and non-class identities which sought to give a political coherence to the grievances of the Labor Party's diverse constituencies.[267]

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[265]See p.200.
[266]*Tocsin*, June 21, 1906, p.2.
[267]See ch. 10

# CHAPTER NINE:
# SECTARIANISM, CLASS AND GENDER:
# CATHOLICS, WREN, LIQUOR AND THE LABOR
# PARTY

## Introduction

Roman Catholics participated in the dominant liberalism of the second half of the nineteenth century, but their place in the tradition remained ambiguous. Many of them opposed the liberal policy of secular education, and they agitated for state aid to churches in return for the provision of educational services to children.[1] Celia Hamilton has suggested that in 1900, Catholic support was divided between the three major political groups in Victoria: the McLeanites, the Turnerites and the Labor Party.[2] Between 1900 and 1914, however, there was a political mobilisation of Victorian Catholics in support of the Labor Party.[3] The development of this alignment was, as Hamilton has suggested, "slower and less sweeping...than in New South Wales...", but by 1910 there was evidence of solid Catholic support for Victorian Labor.[4] Many Catholics, however, voted Labor for reasons that had little to do with religion.

After 1905, this developing political alignment was dramatised by militant Protestant opinion into an "alliance" between Labor and the Catholic Church. The debates of 1906-7 over liquor and gambling reform acquired a strong sectarian flavour as the Labor Party defended working-class pursuits against middle-class reformers who had resolved to stop activities

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[1]Geoffrey Serle, *The Rush to be Rich: A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974, pp.154-6.
[2]Celia Hamilton, 'Irish-Australian Catholics and the Labour Party: A Historical Survey of Developing Alignment in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland, 1890-1921', unpublished MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1957, p.89.
[3]Hamilton, 'Irish-Australian Catholics', pp.185-6.
[4]Hamilton, 'Irish-Australian Catholics', p.133.

they regarded as immoral and uncivil. In this climate, anti-Labor political activists and organisations, aided by a large and influential section of the press, portrayed the Labor Party as the tool of corrupt external influences such as the Catholic Church and the liquor and gambling forces.

The social reform movement was almost exclusively Protestant, dominated by nonconformists, with clergymen prominent in the agitation. When we consider the large number of working-class Catholics and the more relaxed attitude of the Catholic Church to the particular evils condemned by the reformers, that the debates should have acquired a strong sectarian flavour was to be expected. In their response to the social reform movement, some Labor politicians emphasised anti-clerical themes, but the allegation that the reformers had a particular bias against the amusements of the working class provided Labor anti-clericalism with a strong class content. At the same time, Labor's defence of this culture was often expressed in populist terms. Party members railed against the "wowsers", idealised the harmless pastimes of the people, and emphasised the far worse vices of wealthy and powerful hypocrites who evaded public attention while agitating against the pleasures of ordinary working folk. Moreover, Labor's defence of these aspects of working-class life had a strong masculinist bias. While Chris McConville has suggested that many women had frequented hotels in the nineteenth century, they were probably always a minority and by 1906, had been largely excluded. The public house, like the tote and the pony track, was a masculine domain.[5] In 1906, Labor Party members were defending not merely working-class culture but a culture of male conviviality.

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[5]Chris McConville, 'Rough women, respectable men and social reform: a response to Lake's "masculinism"', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 88, April 1987, pp.434-5. See Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Portrait of an Australian Working-Class Community 1900-1965*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1988, p.196. See also Marilyn Lake, 'The Politics of Respectability: Identifying the Masculinist Context', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 86, 1986, pp.116-131.

**Catholics, Labor and Socialism, 1903-1907**

Catholics were approximately twenty-two per cent of the population of
Victoria in 1901, but they were disproportionately represented in the state's
working class.[6] In the working-class municipalities of the metropolis,[7]
about twenty-five per cent of the population identified themselves as
Catholics while in the more exclusive suburbs south and east of the Yarra,[8]
Catholics comprised less than fifteen per cent of the residents.[9] Many
working-class Catholics participated in the political mobilisation of the 1902-
3 period. T.C. Carey, T.M. Burke, J.H. Scullin, Pat Heagney, G.D. ('Wingy')
O'Connell, R.I. Loughnan, T.J. Fitzgerald, Harry Foran and E.J. Russell were
all Catholics and active members of the Labor Party at this time. The
Catholic newspaper, the *Tribune*, opposed Irvine as a tyrant whose "reign
depends merely on his Collins-street masters" while the *Advocate*
approved Irvine's program in early 1903, but later roundly condemned the
Government's handling of the railway strike.[10] Cardinal Moran was

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[6]Janet McCalman, 'Class and Respectability in a Working-Class Suburb: Richmond, Victoria,
Before the Great War', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 78, April 1982, p.92.

[7]My sample includes Melbourne, North Melbourne, Brunswick, Flemington & Kensington,
Fitzroy, Collingwood, Richmond, South Melbourne, Port Melbourne, Footscray and
Williamstown. Of these, municipalities such as Brunswick (20.6), Footscray (19) and
Williamstown (17.5) had rather low proportions of Catholics in comparison with Richmond
(26), Melbourne (29), and North Melbourne (35). I have excluded Northcote (18) and Essendon
(16) because they were mixed suburbs in 1901. See *Census of Victoria*, 1901, Religions of the
People, Tables 4, 7.

[8]Kew, Hawthorn, Prahran, Malvern, Caulfield, Brighton and St. Kilda. It is likely that
female domestic servants made a significant contribution to the number of Catholics in these
suburbs.

[9]*Census of Victoria*, 1901, Religions of the People, Tables 4, 7.

[10]*Tribune*, October 31, 1903, p.5 (The *Tribune* was edited jointly by W.P. McMahon, a former
teacher and later, a Catholic Federation activist, and Father W.B. Mangan). *Advocate*, May
23, 1903 p.20. The *Advocate* was managed by Joseph Winter (not the Labor parliamentarian),
a leading Home Rule advocate. See Geoffrey Serle, 'Samuel Vincent Winter and Joseph
Winter', *ADB*, Volume 6, pp.425-7. For the *Advocate* 's attitude to the Irvine Government, see
Hamilton, 'Irish-Australian Catholics', p.130.

sympathetic to the railway men,[11] and the Archbishop of Melbourne, Thomas Carr, called for arbitration.[12]

The *Tribune* was a forum for the discussion of socialism in 1903. While some writers argued that socialism and Christianity were antagonistic doctrines,[13] others distinguished between anti-clerical European socialism and the socialism of the Labor Party which extended the right of private property, "that basic principle of individual life and social harmony".[14] According to Catholic and Socialist J.F. O'Brien, socialism was "a constitutional effort by legislative means, to improve the social condition of the people as a whole - not the laboring classes only, but everyone". He favoured nationalisation of the land and some industries.[15] Another correspondent, 'Australian', thought that socialism sought the "redress of the civil disorders of the State...".[16] These attitudes even gained adherents among the clergy. The Reverend E.J. Kelly DD, a Melbourne priest, read a paper to a meeting of the Melbourne Deanery which was published as a pamphlet under the title *Socialism* by the Catholic Truth Society in 1907. He argued that while many of the schemes enunciated by socialist propagandists lacked practicability, socialism embodied the spirit of the age, the trend towards collective solutions to social problems.[17] Unlike most Catholic writers on socialism, Kelly did not regard the anti-clericalism of some socialists as grounds for condemnation of the philosophy as a whole.[18]

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[11]A.E. Cahill, 'Catholicism and Socialism: The 1905 Controversy in Australia', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 1, No. 2, December 1960, p.93.
[12]*Tribune*, May 9, 1903, p.10.
[13]*Tribune*, March 14, 1903, p.5; November 7, 1903, p.4.
[14]*Tribune*, April 4, 1903, p.9.
[15]*Tribune*, February 28, 1903, p.10. See also *Tribune*, March 21, 1903, p.3.
[16]*Tribune*, April 11, 1903, p.9. See also *Tribune*, February 21, 1903, p.6; August 1, 1903, p.3.
[17]E.J. Kelly, *Socialism*, The Australian Catholic Truth Society, Melbourne, n.d. [1907], pp.8-9. See also *Truth* (Melbourne), September 7, 1907, p.7. For biographical details on Kelly, see *Advocate*, January 12, 1918, p.16.
[18]Kelly, *Socialism*, pp.13-14.

He expressed what he regarded as the common ground between socialists and Catholics:

> Regulated co-operation and the corporate forms of industry are the preference of both. Both are democratic; the shepherd boy may become a Pope, and all citizens of the socialist State are to be 'comrades'.[19]

This attempt to reconcile socialism and Catholicism probably went further in accommodating socialism than even many lay Catholic supporters of the Labor Party were prepared to go, but Kelly's acceptance of an evolutionary socialism and the need for immediate reforms in the interests of the working class were consistent with the program and strategies of the Party.[20] Indeed, Labor supporters could argue that the Party's commitment to the alleviation of the burdens of working people through state action was consistent with Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the Church's major statement on social justice.[21] Labor's policies accorded with *Rerum Novarum*'s condemnation of unrestrained competition, its recognition of the right of private property, and acceptance of the family as the basic unit of society. The Catholic press thus supported Higgins's Harvester Judgment in 1907 because it not only enshrined the family wage but was a manifestation of the state's role in curbing modern industrialism.[22]

The Catholic press found attractive Labor's opposition to sectarianism, and its promotion of "a splendid national spirit", which appealed to Australian Catholics, most of whom shared an Irish ethnicity.[23] By 1904, some Catholics regarded Labor as a bulwark against the introduction of scripture lessons into state schools which they opposed as tantamount to the protestantisation of the education system and the establishment of a state

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[19]Kelly, *Socialism*, p.19.
[20]Kelly, *Socialism*, p.22.
[21]Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, The Australian Catholic Truth Society, Melbourne, 1931.
[22]*Advocate*, November 16, 1907, p.24; *Tribune*, March 20, 1909, pp.4-5. For Catholic hostility to modern industrialism, see *Tribune*, May 20, 1905, p.4.
[23]*Tribune*, March 12, 1904, p.5.

religion.[24]  The Labor Party's identification with socialism in this period,
however, posed ethical problems for Catholics who believed socialism to be
contrary to Church doctrine. The *Tribune*  criticised Tom Mann, advising
Catholics to vote Labor, but not to join the societies formed by the Labor
Party organiser.  Catholic Labor supporters could have been forgiven for
refusing to take this advice seriously, however, especially when
accompanied by the admission that the actions of the Irvine Government
had flung even

> the ablest, the most educated, and best disciplined class of the
> community, the civil servants, into the ranks of the Socialists.  It is not
> Tom Mann that is organising Socialism: it is the legislators, the papers,
> and the fat man.[25]

This was a recognition of a process of working-class mobilisation which
included many Catholic workers who gravitated towards the Labor Party for
reasons which had nothing to do with religion.  Indeed, the *Tribune*  was
concerned that Catholics' obedience to the Church might be endangered by
their adherence to radical political doctrines.[26]

In early 1905, a controversy over the Labor Party's commitment to
socialism erupted in Sydney when some Catholic laymen pronounced the
socialistic aims of the Labor Party to be in conflict with the Catholic
Church.[27]  The matter was taken up in Victoria, where the commitment of
the Labor Party to socialism seemed even less ambiguous.  In February 1905
the *Tribune*  condemned Labor for having "thrown its magnificent
opportunities into the gutter of socialism...". [28]  When Cardinal Moran

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[24]*Tribune,* May 21, 1904, p.4; June 11, 1904, p.4.
[25]*Tribune,* August 8, 1903, p.5.
[26]*Tribune,* August 8, 1903, p.5.
[27]Cahill, 'Catholicism and Socialism', pp.89-91.
[28]*Tribune,* February 18, 1905, p.4.

defended the Labor Party against its critics, the *Tribune* moderated its
criticism, but was not sanguine about the Labor Party:

> We have our own opinion, and it is not too optimistic, of the ultimate
> trend of the socialistic movement in Australia, so far as its more
> aggressive principles are concerned...[29]

The more cautious *Advocate*, on the other hand, declared that in relation to
the industrial socialists who favoured nationalisation of industry, "the
Church pronounces no judgment either for or against them".[30]  This was
consistent with Carr's opinion that nationalisation was impractical, but not
immoral from the Church's point of view.  However, he declared that the
aims of the extreme socialists, who wanted to dissolve the family tie, destroy
religion and establish communism were contrary to Church doctrine.[31]  Carr
and the Catholic press remained disturbed by the radical element in the
Victorian Labor Party, and by Mann's prominence in particular but there
were other developments in 1905 which encouraged Catholic participation
in Labor Party politics.[32]  The Party's Interstate Conference rejected a radical
socialist objective proposed by the Victorians.[33]  Moreover, when Mann
severed his connection with the PLC in 1905, there was relief among some
Catholics at the departure of a man they associated with continental anti-
clerical socialism.[34]  The moderate FPLP under Watson's leadership was a
source of reassurance to Catholics concerned about socialist influence in the
Labor Party.  By 1905, the Catholic hierarchy and press were firmly
committed to the support of Catholic participation in the Labor Party so as to
reduce the influence of radical socialists.[35]  Carr agreed with Moran that it

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[29]*Tribune*, March 4, 1905, p.4.
[30]*Advocate*, May 13, 1905, p.20.
[31]*Advocate*, May 13, 1905, p.17.  See also *Tribune*, May 13, 1905, p.8.
[32]Hamilton, 'Irish-Australian Catholics', p.181; *Advocate*, December 10, 1904, p.23; July 22,
1905, p.26; *Tribune*, August 12, 1905, p.5.
[33]*Tribune*, July 15, 1905, p.1.
[34]*Advocate*, September 9, 1905, p.17.
[35]Cahill, 'Catholicism and Socialism', p.96.

was "a matter of great importance to detach the Labour Party in deed and in reputation from the extreme section of the Socialists".[36]

## Sectarianism and the Growth of Catholic Support for the Labor Party, 1905-9

The years between 1905 and 1908 were the climax of a new wave of sectarianism in Victoria.[37] In 1905, the Commonwealth Parliament passed a resolution calling for Home Rule for Ireland, prompting a political mobilisation of conservative Protestants, who equated Home Rule with disloyalty to the Empire.[38] The federal election of 1906 was the occasion for vigorous organisation by various religious and sectarian groups. A Protestant Electors' Committee (PEC)[39] interviewed candidates and publicised its selections. It opposed Labor candidates because they were bound by caucus decisions and had thus surrendered their individual freedom to a party machine. Moreover, the Labor Party's support for Home Rule, which involved "the disintegration of the empire", prevented the PEC from offering pledged Labor candidates its support.[40] The main issue of the election for PEC candidate W.J. Lormer "was whether Australia was to be ruled from the Thames or from the Tiber".[41] In the 1890s, Lormer had been active in anti-sweating and protectionist campaigns and was sympathetic to the labour movement.[42] With the rise of sectarianism and the increasing

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[36]Carr to Moran, May 10, 1905, Moran Papers, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives.
[37]John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth, 1890-1910*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1976, p.199.
[38]*Liberty and Progress*, December 21, 1905, p.203; *Argus*, December 27, 1906, p.5.
[39]The avowed purpose of the Committee was "concentrating Protestant influence in securing the election to the Federal and state Parliaments of men of high character, who will support loyal, equitable, liberal, and progressive legislation". See *Argus*, June 12, 1906, p.4.
[40]*Argus*, September 29, 1906, p.16. See also *Argus*, September 20, 1906, p.9.
[41]*Argus*, November 27, 1906, p.7.
[42]In 1894, Lormer had written to Deakin, requesting him to become Leader of the Opposition to facilitate "the return to power of a Ministry purely democratic and liberal". See Lormer to Deakin, May 29, 1894, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/8/19. Lormer was also on the committee of the Anti-Sweating League. See *Age*, August 10, 1895, p.8.

cohesion and discipline of the Labor Party after 1900, he drifted away from his earlier radicalism and opposed Labor because it was an agent of Rome which denied its members the freedom to act according to their consciences. Indeed, he resigned from the Protectionist Association in 1905 due to "the aggressive and offensive attitude of the Roman Catholic wing of the Labour party".[43] In the mind of the militant Protestant, the Labor caucus was a metonym for the Catholic confessional, since both were secret bodies which demanded supplication to a corrupt external authority and denied the individual's right to make a personal judgment.

The Catholics also organised in preparation for the election. Some Catholic laymen formed a Voters' Registration Society, and asked parish priests to encourage parishioners and parochial societies to become involved in voter registration.[44] This effort had Carr's support.[45] By October 1906, there were seventy-five such committees throughout Victoria.[46] Catholics perceived threats on several fronts, primarily in the attempt to introduce scripture lessons into state schools.[47] The *Advocate* and the *Tribune* both endorsed lists of House of Representatives and Senate candidates, the *Advocate* for the first time. Invariably, they selected Laborites or Protectionists. In an unprecedented burst of political partisanship, the *Advocate* declared that the best way to frustrate the efforts of the PEC to destroy Catholic liberties was "to ally ourselves to the Labor Party, because it is honest and opposed to sectarianism".[48] There were, however, other reasons for the Catholic position. The *Advocate* supported radical land reform and closer settlement to promote the higher population

[43]*Liberty and Progress*, December 21, 1905, p.203.
[44]*Tribune*, July 7, 1906, p.3.
[45]*Argus*, December 3, 1906, p.9; December 22, 1906, p.15.
[46]*Tribune*, October 20, 1906, p.5.
[47]*Tribune*, October 20, 1906, p.5; *Advocate*, October 6, 1906, pp.24-5.
[48]*Advocate*, November 24, 1906, p.17.

required the defence of Australia from the "Asiatic hordes". The PEC, it argued, was not only

> the champion of sectarianism, but it is helping the capitalist, the free-trader, the land monopolist, the importer, the promoter of trusts and rings, and the unpatriotic opponent of a White Australia.[49]

The Catholic press's selected Senate candidates comprised the Labor candidate and Catholic, E.J. Russell, Tom Tunnecliffe (Labor) and James Styles (Protectionist).[50] Stephen Barker, the third Labor nominee, was not supported by the Catholic press because, as the *Advocate* explained, Barker had "associated himself with anti-Catholic bigots".[51] Barker denied this allegation.[52] "Let us have...floating above the orange and the green, the flag we all revere - the red flag of labour...", he cried, in an appeal which was unlikely to have much force in Catholic circles.[53] The decision of the Catholic press to endorse only two Labor Senate candidates was probably based on the recognition that Catholic opinion was still divided between Liberal Protectionism and the Labor Party, and might also have been an attempt to avoid the accusation of an alliance between Labor and the Catholic Church. The election results were startling. The Labor candidates who also received Catholic endorsement gained about equal support (Russell, 131 500; Tunnecliffe, 131 071) while Barker received only 88 511 votes.[54] This outcome indicates that many Catholic voters, in accordance with the advice of their press, were not prepared to vote the whole Labor ticket.[55] Labor spokesmen could not but recognise that two of their

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[49]*Advocate*, November 17, 1906, pp.24-5.

[50]*Tribune*, November 24, 1906, p.1.

[51]*Advocate*, November 24, 1906, p.17.

[52]*Advocate*, December 8, 1906, pp.20-1.

[53]*Argus*, December 12, 1906, p.9.

[54]Statistical Returns, 1906 Commonwealth Election, *CPP*, Session 1907,*Votes and Proceedings*, No.7, p.473.

[55]Hamilton, 'Irish-Australian Catholics', pp.112-3. Hamilton estimates from these figures that Catholics comprised one-third of the Victorian Labor vote in this period.

candidates had benefited from "other influences".[56] *Labor Call* recognised

that it "was not anti-Socialism or anti-Laborism, but sectarianism" which

was the most important influence in the metropolitan area, and its attitude

was pragmatic:

> The Labor Party has always eschewed sectarianism, and has acted as if
> no such influence existed. It does, however, exist, and it would be idle
> to pretend to the contrary...We can no more eliminate it than we can
> sink fiscalism. We may advise our people against it, but it is in our
> ranks as well as in those of our opponents...We must take this
> revivified ancient force into consideration...[57]

Unsuccessful Labor candidates were less optimistic about the political

possibilities of sectarianism.[58] The Catholic press and the PEC had also

issued lists of House of Representatives nominees and in the metropolitan

electorates, sectarian issues were prominent.[59] Mauger (Maribyrnong) and

Hume Cook (Bourke) received the endorsement of the PEC for their

opposition to Home Rule. Bedford, the unsuccessful Labor candidate for

Bourke declared that the "election was not fought that day, but was fought

200 odd years ago, when 'Dutch Billy' of Orange, landed in England..."[60]

while a member of the VOBU attributed Solly's defeat by PEC nominee

Coon in Batman to the workers allowing themselves "to be split on the

sect".[61] In Richmond, a brawl occurred when a hotel patron declared that

Frank Tudor, the Labor member for Yarra and a deacon of the

Congregationalist Church, was an agent of the Romans.[62]

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[56]*Argus*, December 19, 1906, p.7; *Labor Call*, December 20, 1906, p.7.
[57]*Labor Call*, December 13, 1906, p.4.
[58]*Worker*, December 27, 1906, p.10; *Argus*, December 17, 1906, p.7; *Advocate*, December 22, 1906, p.18.
[59]*Tribune*, November 24, 1906, p.1; *Argus*, November 3, 1906, p.20.
[60]*Argus*, December 13, 1906, p.7.
[61]VOBU, Minutes, December 17, 1906, NBAC, ANU T5/1/6. See also *Truth*, December 15, 1906, p.4.
[62]*Truth*, January 5, 1907, p.3.

There is some evidence that female voters played a significant role in the development of anti-Labor religious sectarianism. The theory that women were more susceptible than men to conservative clerical influence was a logical extension of the Labor Party's belief in the natural conservatism of women voters.[63] Women, however, were probably a majority of the congregation in most Protestant churches while the involvement of many Protestant women in the temperance movement through the Women's Christian Temperance Union overlapped with the concerns of churchmen.[64] As a consequence, women were likely to play a significant role in any Protestant political mobilisation. The Catholic *Tribune* attributed the strength of the vote for PEC Senate candidates in Bourke, Maribyrnong and Batman in 1906 to the women's vote to which the PEC had appealed.[65] In 1903, the Public Questions Committee of the Presbyterian General Assembly had issued a pastoral letter to be read from the pulpits urging women to vote. The Rev. W.M.M. Alexander hoped that the ministers going among the people would emphasise "the necessity of voting for legislators who would shape national policy in accordance with Christian principles".[66] At a time when the *Age, Argus* and members of the Protestant clergy were accusing the Labor Party of irreligion and anarchism, the anti-Labor implications of this kind of advice could hardly have been missed.[67] Indeed in 1903, the Presbyterian Church General Assembly had protested against the practice of holding political meetings on Sundays.[68]

[63]Muriel Heagney, 'Victorian Labour Women', p.18, in Muriel Heagney Papers, VSL MS 9106/1162/6a; *Argus*, March 1, 1907, p.7; *Age*, February 26, 1907, p.5; *Labor Call*, February 28, 1907, p.3; *Tribune*, December 22, 1906, p.5; March 23, 1907, p.5.
[64]Anthea Hyslop, 'Temperance, Christianity and Feminism: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria, 1887-97', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 66, 1976, pp.34-9.
[65]*Tribune*, December 22, 1906, p.5. See also *Tribune*, March 23, 1907, p.5.
[66]*Age*, December 2, 1903, p.7.
[67]*Argus*, October 20, 1903, p.4; November 12, 1903, p.6; November 13, 1903, p.4; *Age*, November 12, 1903, p.6; December 2, 1903, p.7; December 5, 1903, p.10.
[68]*Argus*, September 17, 1903, p.4.

The object of this agitation was evidently the Labor Party.[69] In Collingwood, the Prohibition and Public Morals League held a meeting in October 1903 to block the local Labor branch's effort to persuade the Collingwood Council to permit the use of the Town Hall for Sunday political meetings. The same meeting urged the suppression of John Wren's Collingwood tote.[70] The Public Morals League's concern about these matters foreshadowed the conflicts of 1906-7, when the agitation of the social reformers against the liquor trade and gambling evolved into an attack on working-class culture and Labor.[71]

In the state election held in early 1907, the Catholic Voters' Registration Society and the PEC were still active.[72] PEC candidates again alleged an alliance between the Labor Party and the Catholic Church. In the view of the Catholic press, Bent appeared to be under the "LASH OF THE ORANGE WHIP" when he committed the Ministerial Party to holding a referendum on scripture lessons in state schools.[73] The Labor Party, however, did not receive the unqualified support of the Catholic press. It is significant that the *Tribune* still saw the Victorian Labor Party as "much in advance of public sentiment", and dominated by "socialist bosses".[74] Catholics had reason to feel alienated from the State Labor Party, since it contained only two Catholic members.[75] At the same time, the *Tribune* acknowledged that Catholics were rallying to the Labor cause:

> The sectarianists apparently are as antagonistic to Labour as to
> Catholicism, and their present strategy is in the direction of driving

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[69]*Argus*, September 15, 1903, p.6; September 26, 1903, p.15.

[70]*Age*, October 7, 1903, p.8; *Argus*, October 7, 1903, p.8.

[71]See pp.348-63.

[72]*Argus*, February 25, 1907, p.8; February 8, 1907, p.6; February 13, 1907, p.8; February 14, 1907, p.8

[73]*Tribune*, March 2, 1907, p.5. See also *Advocate*, February 23, 1907, pp.22, 25; *Tribune*, February 23, 1907, p.4; *Argus*, February 18, 1907, p.7; E.H. Sugden & F.W. Eggleston, *George Swinburne: A Political Biography*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1931, p.226.

[74]*Tribune*, January 26, 1907, p.5.

[75]*Argus*, March 1, 1907, p. 7.

Catholics and Labourites into one corner, thus reinforcing themselves with the power of Conservatism...[76]

Sectarianism thus helped to direct Catholics into the Labor camp, but Catholics also voted Labor for reasons which had little to do with religion.[77] They might have been much less influenced by their lay and religious leaders than either their leaders or the Protestant sectarians imagined. The *Tribune* acknowledged as much in 1909 when it remarked that "Labour draws its support from amongst us by the same attractions which it exercises amongst non-Catholics, namely, the merits of its policy".[78] That they were voting Labor in large numbers was evident when Catholic candidates won the seats of Port Fairy in 1908 and Warrenheip in 1913. Both areas had a heavy concentration of Catholic smallholders.[79] Indeed, the Labor vote in both state and federal elections was weakest in areas with a low number of Catholics. In 1911, the Wimmera-Mallee and Gippsland-Eastern Victorian regions had Catholic populations of about seventeen and eighteen per cent respectively, well below the figure for the whole of the state, which was 22.6 per cent. It is significant, however, that Tanjil County, where the Labor seat of Gippsland North was located, had a Catholic population of over twenty-two per cent, and the area had been represented in the Assembly by a Catholic, McLean, from 1880 until federation. The Western District, on the other hand, where the Labor vote was much stronger in both state and federal elections, had a higher proportion of Catholics: about twenty-six per cent.[80] In Melbourne, the growth of Catholic support for the Party cannot be easily measured, but it is certain that the years between 1900 and 1910 saw a

[76]*Tribune*, March 2, 1907, p.4.
[77]*Labor Call*, January 30, 1908, p.8.
[78]*Tribune*, April 24, 1909, p.4.
[79]See pp.220, 225.
[80]I have excluded the counties of Grenville and Grant for my purposes here, since they included Geelong and Ballarat. *Census of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1911, Vol.2, Part 6, Religions, Table 40. For McLean, see John Rickard, 'Allan McLean', *ADB*, Volume 10, pp.329-31

Labor and the Sectarian Octopus

*Labor Call*, January 31, 1907, p.1.

gradual shift to the Labor Party by Catholic voters. This process of alignment, however, remained partial. Hamilton suggests that the Victorian Liberals, who reorganised in state politics under the leadership of John Murray in 1909, retained a strong middle-class Catholic vote.[81] Murray, the member for Warrnambool, was an ecumenical Protestant who enjoyed friendly relations with the Catholic community.[82] The policy of the Murray Ministry in 1909 was, according to the *Advocate*, "that of a thoroughly liberal but moderate Government".[83]

## Catholics, Wren, Liquor and Labor

Catholics were prominent in inner-suburban Labor Party politics by 1904. In September 1905, a group which included Loughnan, O'Connell and Heagney gained control of the Richmond Labor branch after a bitter internal conflict.[84] It was also at this time that the so-called "Wren machine" came to prominence. Chris McConville, in his study of John Wren's political influence, has argued convincingly that machine politics on the model of the large cities of the United States did not develop in Victoria, mainly because Wren lacked the power of patronage enjoyed by machine "bosses" in North America.[85] Still, Wren's influence on the Labor Party has been a controversial matter.[86] Frank Hardy's novel *Power Without Glory* (1950)

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[81]Hamilton, 'Irish-Australian Catholics', pp.133-4.

[82]*Age*, October 3, 1906, p.6. In 1907, *The Advocate* criticised the Warrnambool branch of the PLC for running a candidate against Murray. See *Advocate*, February 16, 1907, p.22. Catholics were approximately one-third of the population in the Warrnambool district. *Census of Victoria*, 1901, Religions of the People, Table 7.

[83]*Advocate*, January 23, 1909, pp.27-8. *The Advocate* hoped that the state Labor Party conference would permit the SPLP to co-operate closely with the Liberals, even to the extent of permitting coalescence. See *Advocate*, January 23, 1909, p.24.

[84]*Argus*, June 24, 1905, p.16; September 5, 1905, p.9; *Tocsin*, June 29, 1905, pp.1, 6; August 31, 1905, pp.1, 8; September 14, 1905, p.8; *Richmond Guardian*, September 9, 1905.

[85]Chris McConville, 'John Wren: Machine Boss, Irish Chieftain or Meddling Millionaire?', *Labour History*, 40, May 1981, pp. 50-57.

[86]For biographical details of Wren, see Niall Brennan, *John Wren, Gambler: His Life and Times*, Hill of Content, Melbourne, 1971; Hugh Buggy, *The Real John Wren*, Widescope,

has been accepted by some historians as an accurate depiction of the relationship between Wren and the Party, but the author certainly exaggerates Wren's influence.[87] The earliest date at which Wren is supposed to have been a corrupting influence on the Labor Party is in 1898, when the Legislative Assembly dealt with a bill which aimed to strengthen the hand of the police in dealing with Wren's Collingwood tote. In 1904, the *Typographical Journal* alleged that a state Labor member in 1898 had been instrumental in thwarting this proposed legislation.[88] The Labor member that the *Journal* had in view was almost certainly John Hancock, but there is no evidence of a connection between Wren and Hancock.[89]

Wren's first definite intervention in Victorian politics was in the Fitzroy by-election in 1901 when he supported the candidate selected by the local Labor branch, P.J. O'Connor, a Catholic, against the Labor Party central council's selection, P.W. McGrath.[90] The tactics later associated with the so-called "Wren machine" were evident in the Fitzroy election: interjectors interrupted McGrath's meetings, and violent brawling broke out between supporters of the two candidates.[91] Wren's supporters might only have been partly responsible for this, since there was bitter local hostility to the

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Melbourne, 1977; James Griffin, 'John Wren', *ADB*, Volume 12, pp.580-3. See also Griffin, 'A Vaudeville of Devils', *Eureka Street*, Vol. 2, No. 7, August 1992, pp.32-36; 'Don't Kiss Me Hardy', *Eureka Street*, Vol. 2, No. 8, September 1992, pp.22-4; 'The Evatt-Wren Letters', *Eureka Street*, Vol. 2, No. 9, October 1992, pp.22-8. For an assessment of the historiography of Wren, see James Griffin & Geoffrey Browne, 'Some Light in Shady Places? Thoughts Towards a Biography of John Wren, Entrepreneur and Sportsman', in Philip Bull, Chris McConville & Noel McLachlan (eds.), *Irish-Australian Studies: Papers Delivered to the Sixth Irish-Australian Conference*, July 1990, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1990, pp.63-79.

[87]Frank Hardy, *Power Without Glory*, Sphere Books Limited, London, 1970. See also C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia, Volume V*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981, p.273; Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1975, pp.311-12, 338n.

[88]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, November 1, 1904, p.8.

[89]Hancock played a prominent part in the opposition to Isaacs' Police Offences Act (Part 4) Further Amendment Bill which was defeated by one vote. See *VPD*, XC, December 16, 1898, pp.3941-3955.

[90]*Fitzroy City Press*, May 17, 1901, p.2; *Tocsin*, June 6, 1901, p.1; June 13, 1901, p.6.

[91]*Age*, May 21, 1901, p.6; June 17, 1901, p.5; *Fitzroy City Press*, May 24, 1901.

interference of the central council in the by-election. The *Lone Hand's* claim in 1907 that Wren "put O'Connor in", is an exaggeration.[92] O'Connor was a former Mayor of Richmond, a member of the Board of Works and a prominent Catholic layman.[93] The *Tribune* accorded O'Connor its support, and saw "in the tactics of the [Trades] Hall politicians a desire to make a dead set on Catholic candidates".[94] O'Connor received strong support from Catholic voters as well as many residents who resented the PLC's interference.[95] He topped the poll with 1187 votes while McGrath attracted a mere 478.[96] It seems unlikely that Wren's intervention had much influence on the result.

In 1904, Wren's influence on the Labor Party again became a matter of controversy. The *Bulletin* alleged that in the Abbotsford branch of the PLC, "some 200 or more of the tote man's friends were found previous to the last Vic. State election". According to the *Bulletin*, Wren's aim was the return of the Labor candidate Beazley who opposed legalisation of the totalisator and whose parliamentary vote was, as a result, likely to help to protect Wren's tote monopoly.[97] This seems unlikely. By 1904, Beazley was unassailable in Abbotsford, so Wren could be of little assistance to him. Indeed, he was returned unopposed in 1904.[98] It is more likely that Wren intervened in the 1904 Melbourne East election for the Legislative Council. On 13 May 1904, a meeting of the Abbotsford, Fitzroy, Richmond and Collingwood Labor branches was held at the Working Men's Club in Johnston Street, Collingwood (the same street as Wren's tote) to select a candidate for the seat. H.E. Laslett, a member of the South Melbourne

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[92]*Lone Hand*, May 1907, p.84.
[93]James Smith (ed.), *The Cyclopedia of Victoria, Volume II*, The Cyclopedia Company, Melbourne, 1904, pp.202-3.
[94]*Tribune*, June 22, 1901, pp.4-5.
[95]*Tribune*, June 22, 1901, p.1.
[96]*Fitzroy City Press*, June 21, 1901.
[97]*Bulletin*, December 1, 1904, p.37.
[98]*Argus*, May 24, 1904, p.7.

Council, was nominated, but could not complete his speech amid a growing uproar to which members of the Abbotsford branch contributed. The meeting was terminated.[99]   At a subsequent gathering, Laslett claimed that he had been approached by a Catholic priest who asked him to retire in favour of P.J. O'Connor (O'Connor had lost his Fitzroy seat as a NRPL candidate in 1902, and was a candidate for the Melbourne East seat). O'Connell, a member of the Abbotsford branch and later a prominent figure in Richmond municipal politics, demanded that Laslett name the priest, which he refused to do.[100]  It is possible that Wren played a role in this controversy but, if he supported O'Connor, was probably disappointed since that candidate finished at the bottom of the poll behind Labor and non-Labor candidates.[101]

In 1904, the *Typographical Journal* was concerned about Wren's influence on the Party, criticising Senators Dawson and Findley for attending a function at the City Tattersall's Club to celebrate the victory of Wren's horse, Murmur, in the 1904 Caulfield Cup.[102]  Andy Dawson, who was briefly the Queensland premier in 1899, enjoyed a close relationship with Wren: it was Dawson that the *Bulletin* had in view in 1906 when it said that Wren "keeps his own tame Senator".[103]  In 1906, the Labor Senator wrote a letter to the *Herald* criticising Sergeant David O'Donnell, the man who led the effort to prosecute Wren, for his alleged implication that Wren was responsible for the bombing of his house.[104]

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[99]*Argus*, May 14, 1904, p.19.

[100]*Argus*, May 18, 1904, p.4; *Age*, May 18, 1904, p.8.

[101]W. Pitt, 3112 votes (38.66%); A. McLellan (Labor), 2556 votes (31.76%); P.J. O'Connor, 2381 votes (29.58%). There were two vacancies. See Colin A Hughes & Don Aitkin, *Voting for the Australian State Upper Houses 1890-1984*, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1986, p.21.

[102]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, November 1, 1904, p.8. See also *Bulletin*, October 27, 1904, p.9; *Liberty and Progress*, October 25, 1904, p.154.

[103]*Bulletin*, July 5, 1906, p.9.

[104]*Herald*, January 10, 1906, p.1.

In late 1904, Cornelius Crowe, an ex-policeman, security guard and member of the Labor Party, sought an inquiry into the activities of the Independent Order of Foresters which, he claimed, had obtained a license to carry on life assurance contrary to the provisions of the Companies Act.[105] Crowe tried to persuade the Labor Party to take up the matter. When he failed, he blamed Wren for blocking an inquiry, and issued circulars which included allegations of corruption in the police force and among various public men, including Wren.[106]   Crowe explained that Wren's motive in concerning himself with the affairs of the Foresters was that "exposure of bribery would not suit his book, he having by bribery conducted an illegal business for years".[107]  Crowe asserted that Labor branches in the vicinity of the tote were controlled by Wren,[108] and he referred to the "rumour that the P.L.C. exists but to select Parliamentary representatives to suit J. Wren".[109] Crowe's circulars caused an immediate storm in the Labor Party.[110]  When the matter came to the attention of the MDC, the president, John Phillips, against whom Crowe alleged corruption, claimed that it was "10 years since he spoke to Mr. J. Wren".[111]  The Party leadership was sufficiently concerned about the matter to call a conference between the state executive and the MDC executive.[112]  They concluded that since Crowe had failed to produce

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[105]Cornelius Crowe, *The Inquiry Agent: A Drama of Real Life Played on the Stage of the World*, G. Tytherleigh [Printer], Melbourne, 1909, pp.53-4 (I am indebted to Professor Jim Griffin for showing me a copy of this rare pamphlet which has disappeared from the National Library of Australia). See also *Age*, December 2, 1904, p.4.

[106]Crowe, *The Inquiry Agent*, pp.53-4. The titles of these circulars were 'The Victoria Police and the Tote' and 'Wren's Club'. See *Liberty and Progress*, November 25, 1904, p.185; December 24, 1904, p.213.

[107]*Liberty and Progress*, November 25, 1904, p.185.

[108]The Collingwood branch denied this allegation, and asserted that Wren was opposed to the Labor Party. This was fair comment, in light on Wren's support for P.J. O'Connor in at least two elections. See *Tocsin*, December 8, 1904, p.8.

[109]*Tocsin*, December 22, 1904, p.8.

[110]PLC CE, Minutes, November 12, 1904, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, November 10, 1904. Crowe even wrote to J.C. Watson in regard to Wren's influence on the Victorian Labor Party. See PLC (MDC), Minutes, December 17, 1904, VSL MS 10389.

[111]PLC (MDC), Minutes, November 5, 1904, VSL MS 10389.

[112]PLC (MDC), Minutes, December 3, 1904, VSL MS 10389; *Age*, December 22, 1904, p.5; *Tocsin*, December 1, 1904, p.8.

evidence for his allegations, it would not deal with any further

communications from him.[113] On 10 December 1904, Crowe was bashed by

two men wielding iron bars.[114] While he clearly believed that Wren had

ordered the attack, Crowe had published accusations against so many public

men that no one individual was obviously responsible. There is no

evidence that the bashing was connected with Crowe's allegations against

the PLC.[115] Sergeant D.G. O'Donnell, no friend of Wren, thought Crowe "a

half-daft sort of fellow".[116]

In late 1905, the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) refused to allow Wren to

run his horses at Flemington. The matter was raised in parliament by Edgar

Wilkins, the Labor member for Collingwood, and several speakers in this

debate, both Labor and non-Labor, thought that Wren had been treated

unfairly.[117] Some Labor members defended Wren's character, but they were

not alone: W.A Watt thought Wren "as straight as a rush" and A.S. Bailes

opined that "there was not a cleaner living, more honest man walking

about Victoria...".[118] These comments are significant in light of later

allegations about the closeness of the relationship between Wren and the

Labor Party, as is Labor man Hannah's comment that he "did not know Mr.

Wren, and never had met him in his life...".[119] Prendergast later claimed

not to have met Wren until 1906, and there is no evidence of a close

relationship between Wren and any of the members of the SPLP until

1907.[120] Beazley and Wilkins, the Collingwood members, probably knew

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[113]*Tocsin*, December 22, 1904, p.8.

[114]*Age*, December 14, 1904, p.7. See also Ross McMullin, *The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p.54.

[115]B.R. Nugent implies that there was a connection between Crowe's allegations about Wren's influence on the PLC and the bashing. See B.R. Nugent, 'Frank Anstey in Victorian Politics', unpublished MA thesis, University of New England, 1973, p.305.

[116]O'Donnell, quoted in Griffin & Browne, 'Some Light in Shady Places?', p.68.

[117]*VPD*, CXI, October 17, 1905, pp.2102-18.

[118]*VPD*, CXI, October 17, 1905, p.2110.

[119]*VPD*, CXI, October 17, 1905, pp.2108-9.

[120]*Argus*, March 9, 1907, p.20.

Wren through the Collingwood Football Club and Anstey, who was a devoted boxing spectator, might have encountered him at one of the contests which Wren promoted, but there is no evidence of a close association at this time.[121]

Wren's closer identification with Labor can be traced to the social reform controversies of 1906, in which Wren and most of the SPLP found themselves assailed by Judkins,[122] a Methodist layman, Henry Worrall,[123] a Methodist minister, and the movement these men led in favour of the suppression of gambling and the liquor traffic.[124] In 1906, the Bent Government, under pressure from the reformers, introduced bills to control the sale of liquor and gambling. The SPLP's attitude to these bills aroused much controversy, and led to allegations that it was beholden to corrupt interests outside the parliament.

Before 1900, there was a temperance element in the Victorian labour movement which was associated with liberalism, craft unionism and working-class respectability. While the links between temperance, nonconformity and labour were not as clear in Victoria as in Great Britain, the union movement had many total abstainers in its ranks. Prominent THC leaders such as Trenwith and Barrett had strong links with temperance organisations, yet there were also advocates of the liquor interest such as Murphy and Bromley in the movement.[125] Bromley acted as an agent of the

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[121]Richard Stremski, *Kill for Collingwood*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, pp.13-15, 58-61; Nugent, 'Frank Anstey', p.308.

[122]Keith Dunstan & Graeme Davison, 'William Henry Judkins', *ADB*, Volume 9, pp.527-8.

[123]John Lack, 'Henry Worrall', *ADB*, Volume 12, pp.574-5.

[124]For an account of the social reform movement of 1906, see Michael McKernan, 'An Incident of Social Reform, Melbourne, 1906', *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 10, No. 1, June 1978, pp.70-85; Anthea Hyslop, 'The Social Reform Movement in Melbourne 1890 to 1914, unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1980, ch.10; Keith Dunstan, *Wowsers: Being an Account of the Prudery Exhibited by Certain Outstanding Men and Women in such Matters as Drinking, Smoking, Prostitution, Censorship and Gambling*, Cassell, North Melbourne, 1968; Renate Howe & Shurlee Swain, *The Challenge of the City: The Centenary History of Wesley Central Mission 1893-1993*, Hyland House, 1993, pp.69-74.

[125]C.J. Kellaway, 'The Melbourne Trades Hall Council: Its Origins and Political Significance, 1855-1889', unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, pp.376-7; Celestina Sagazio, 'The Victorian Labor Party, 1885-1894', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Melbourne, 1986,

Licensed Victuallers' Association in the 1890s and enjoyed a very close relationship with the liquor trade until his death in 1908, when the *Brewers' Journal* lamented that it would "be hard to find a better friend...".[126]

In 1902, P.J. Brandt (Bakers) launched a temperance crusade in the THC. In April, he persuaded the Council to carry a motion "[r]ecognising the undeniable fact that intoxication is destructive of the dignity, prosperity, and best interest of Labor, with a loss to the country". The Council voted to "exert its utmost endeavours to secure a desired reform in minimising the evil". It favoured popular control of the liquor traffic and a system of state inebriate asylums.[127] In July, Brandt proposed that the Council request the Government to nationalise the drink traffic. He had also formulated a scheme which would have given licensed victuallers five years notice before the issue of licences ceased and the state assumed control of the drink traffic. Moreover, Brandt proposed full local option, which would allow residents to prohibit the drink traffic in their districts. This scheme was consistent with moderate temperance opinion in the Protestant churches. The THC rejected the scheme, but embraced nationalisation of the drink traffic as its policy.[128]

By this time, the Carlton Brewery had already acquired a reputation as a patron of the labour movement.[129] The PLC's *Black and White List* (1904)

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pp.58-9; *Australian Brewers' Journal*, April 20, 1907, p.470. See also Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986, pp.215-7.

[126]*Australian Brewers' Journal*, October 20, 1908, p.26. For Bromley's role as an agent of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, see THC, Minutes, June 30, 1899; July 28, 1899; *Argus*, July 29, 1899, p.10; *Tocsin*, August 3, 1899, p.2.

[127]THC, Minutes, March 21, 1902; April 4, 1902; *Argus*, March 22, 1902, p.19; April 5, 1902, p.14.

[128]THC, Minutes, July 11, 1902; *Argus*, July 12, 1902, p.14.

[129]THC, Minutes, August 7, 1903; August 14, 1903; *Argus*, August 8, 1903, p.15; August 15, 1903, p.15.

contained an advertisement for 'Carlton Ale',[130] and Carlton made frequent donations to both unions and the Labor Party.[131] It emphasised its status as a "fair" employer.[132] It was certainly Carlton that the *Typographical Journal* had in view when it alleged that Prendergast was the author of a publication which cost £80, all of which "was paid by a large capitalistic corporation, which owned a number of 'tied' public-houses".[133] 'Carlton Ale' advertisements appeared on PLC election material while liquor interests successfully courted the unions interested in the trade in the defensive agitation against the temperance movement.[134]

In 1904, however, the THC was still interested in co-operating with moderate elements in the temperance movement. It accepted an invitation to discuss the liquor question from the Council of Churches, a Protestant organisation representing the major nonconformist churches.[135] In May 1904, this conference formulated a scheme for the state control of the liquor traffic.[136] Its provisions included five years' notice to licensed victuallers in

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[130]G.M. Prendergast (ed.), *Black & White List: Containing all the Important Division Lists of the Victorian Legislative Assembly for Session 1902-3, Special Strike Session of May, 1903, Session 1903 and other information*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, 1904, cover.

[131]UFTS, Minutes, March 24, 1904, NBAC, ANU T 58/1/14; Bricklayers, Minutes, March 28, 1904, NBAC, ANU T8/2A/6; Plumbers, Minutes, January 24, 1905, NBAC, ANU T 17/1/2; *Tocsin*, February 8, 1906, p.6; *Labor Call*, November 23, 1911, p.8.

[132]THC, Minutes, October 27, 1905; Brewers and Maltsters, Minutes, December 21, 1904, in Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Employees Union of Australia (Victorian Branch) Collection, UMA 1/1/1. See also the Labor politician E.J. Holloway's tribute "to the sound Australian spirit of the Carlton directors and management...". Holloway, 'From Labour Council to Privy Council', unpublished typescript, n.d., p.8., E.J. Holloway Papers, NLA MS 2098.

[133]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, May 1, 1907, pp.11-12.

[134]*Australian Brewers' Journal*, November 20, 1907, p.106; *Alliance Record*, March 1, 1908, pp.40-1; Brewers and Maltsters, Minutes, December 21, 1902; June 5, 1904; July 19, 1905; November 20, 1907, UMA 1/1/1.

[135]THC, Minutes, November 6, 1903; April 15, 1904. The THC representatives included temperance advocates such as Brandt and Barker, but there were also members, such as Solly, who did not identify conspicuously with the temperance cause.
The Church of England was not represented on the Victorian Council of Churches. See Frank Engel, *Australian Christians in Conflict and Unity*, The Joint Board of Christian Education, Melbourne, 1984, pp.91-2, 123.

[136]An earlier conference at which the Victorian Alliance was represented was aborted when the Alliance, which supported prohibition, moved for the omission of a clause providing for public management of the liquor traffic. See *Argus*, April 30, 1904, p.18.

lieu of compensation; a reduction of the number of houses in each district; state control of the liquor traffic; shorter hours of opening; harsher penalties for breaches of the regulations; and effective regulation of clubs.[137] The scheme satisfied the temperance element in the THC led by Brandt and THC secretary Barker. The Brewers' and Maltsters' Union, however, argued that it embodied prohibition rather than nationalisation, and opposed the scheme.[138] It is likely that many members of the THC were embarrassed by the proposals, and the matter was adjourned on several occasions during 1904.[139]

In March 1905, the temperance enthusiasts again attempted to commit the Council to their cause when they moved "[t]hat this Council recognising the injurious effect of the Drink evil on Trades unionism follows the example of Trades unionists in Great Britain by forming a Trade union Total Abstinence Association".[140] James Brown, who initiated the proposal, argued that it would assist trades unionism and the Labor Party: "There were many good unionists, who were not abstainers, but they would be even better if they left drink alone".[141] Barker spoke in favour, but acknowledged that "[t]here was a narrowing of sympathy and lack of hearty support of labour principles in the temperance movement".[142] Other speakers in the debate thought that sectarianism was permeating the Council via the temperance issue.[143] Indeed, the temperance question always had a sectarian underside. Temperance organisations were dominated by members of the Protestant churches while Catholics remained

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[137] 'A Scheme for the State Control and Management of the Liquor Traffic', in THC, Minutes, May 20, 1904; *Argus*, May 21, 1904, p.13.
[138] THC, Minutes, June 10, 1904; *Argus*, June 11, 1904, p.18.
[139] THC, Minutes, July 15, 1904; July 22, 1904; July 29, 1904; August 5, 1904; August 19, 1904; August 26, 1904; September 2, 1904; September 9, 1904; September 16, 1904; October 28, 1904. *Argus*, July 23, 1904, p.13.
[140] THC, Minutes, March 3, 1905; May 12, 1905.
[141] *Tocsin*, May 18, 1905, p.3.
[142] *Argus*, May 13, 1905, p.17.
[143] *Argus*, May 13, 1905, p.17.

aloof. This raised doubts in the minds of many Protestants about the commitment of the Catholic Church to temperance.[144]  By 1905, then, many of those involved in the THC discussion recognised that the temperance issue could not be easily separated from increasing sectarian conflict.[145] Brown's motion was defeated.

In 1905, the state Labor Party conference passed a motion in favour of nationalisation of the drink traffic.[146]  This was the policy advocated by Labor members in the Assembly debate on the Bent Government's liquor bill in 1906.  Since the proposal was not likely to be accepted by the parliament, they argued in favour of compensation for hotel-keepers forced to close their premises under the Act.  According to F.W. Eggleston,

> the Labour party, although a great number of them were total
> abstainers, were far more enthusiastic for compensation to
> hotelkeepers than for compensation for compulsory purchase under
> the Closer Settlement Act; indeed with one or two exceptions, such as
> Mr. Lemmon, the Labour party voted with the trade.[147]

This was an unfair criticism.  The Labor members were not the only section of the House to argue in favour of compensation (nor did they advocate compulsory resumption of the land without compensation).  As Rollison has remarked, the "division between those in favour of compensation and those against ran right through all three parties".[148]  Indeed, some Labor members argued that parliament had the right to take away liquor licences without compensation, and most accepted that the regulation of the drink evil would benefit the working class.[149]  Labor members such as Elmslie and

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[144]Hyslop, 'The Social Reform Movement', pp.303-6; McKernan, 'An Incident of Social Reform', pp.71-2
[145]*Tocsin*, May 18, 1905, p.3.
[146]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 23, 1905, VSL MS 10389; *Tocsin*, April 27, 1905, p.4.
[147]Sugden & Eggleston, *George Swinburne*, p.186.
[148]Kay Rollison, 'Groups and Attitudes in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 1900-1909', unpublished PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1972, p.525.
[149]Rollison, 'Groups', p.525.

Anstey linked working-class drunkenness to the evil social conditions of the masses. Reformers, they argued, should attack causes, not symptoms.[150]

The Labor Party, however, attracted much criticism for the stand of some of its members. The *Age*, the *Argus* and the *Bulletin* accused Labor of having formed an alliance with the liquor trade, while Judkins and the social reform movement were bitter in their diatribes.[151] Eggleston has explained Labor's championship of the liquor interest in terms of the strength of the Irish-Australian Catholic element in the Party:"...the hierarchy, deprived of some of the pleasures of life, look leniently on other forms of indulgence".[152] Childe explained the "alliance" between Labor and liquor as a marriage of convenience in which the liquor interest provided cars and money at election time in return for parliamentary favours from the Labor Party.[153] There are elements of truth in these interpretations, but they fail to explain the relationship between Labor and liquor interests. It is evident that many Victorian Labor parliamentarians were sympathetic to the liquor trade, and they received support from this source at election time.[154] J.C. Dillon, president of the Licensed Victuallers' Association, thought that an "alliance" existed when he declared at an Association function in February 1908:

> Mr. Judkins had referred to the 'sad spectacle of the union of labour and beer'. It was sad - but only to the temperance party. The necessity for that union was recognised by their executive officers. He

[150]*VPD*, CXIII, August 30, 1906, pp.1243, 1282; September 4, 1906, p.1302.

[151]*Age*, February 11, 1907, p.5; March 14, 1907, p.7; *Argus*, March 18, 1907, p.6; *Bulletin*, January 3, 1907, p.22; February 7, p.22.

[152]F.W. Eggleston, 'The Victorian Parliament as I Knew It', in 'Confidential Notes on Australian Politics', unpublished typescript, n.d. Menzies Library, Australian National University, p.25.

[153]Vere Gordon Childe, *How Labour Governs: A Study of Workers' Representation in Australia*, F.B. Smith (ed.), Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1964, pp.76-9.

[154]Patrick Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901-1949: Minutes of the Meetings of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, Volume 1, 1901-1917*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1975, pp.189, 189n (February 19, 1907); *Argus*, March 1, 1907, p.7.

congratulated the union and the trades on the fact that both parties had recognised their responsibilities to one another.

The Labor members Prendergast, Bromley, Elmslie and Sangster were present at this function.[155] The PLC secretary Heagney denied that any alliance existed, but the Labor leader Prendergast's more than cordial relations with liquor interests were difficult to ignore.[156] In 1907, the *Truth* revealed that Prendergast had acted as a broker between Emelia Poppens, a North Melbourne publican, and prominent brewing interests.[157] Poppens was a constituent and supporter of Prendergast, and the Labor leader had arranged finance for her business from his brewing friends.[158] Prendergast was also named as co-respondent by William Poppens, Emelia's husband, in divorce proceedings at this time, but was later cleared.[159] The affair further tarnished the Party's reputation, yet the broader context of Labor's relationship with liquor interests must be taken into account. In particular, the sectarian implications of the temperance question and, more particularly, the hostility of the Catholic Church to the Protestant-dominated movement, are significant. It is evident that the increasing presence of Catholics in the Party and the decline of the liberal temperance tradition epitomised by men like Barrett and Trenwith might have helped forge a closer relationship between Labor and the liquor interests. The Labor parliamentarians' defence of the publicans was, however, part of the broader process of constructing a working-class base of support for the Labor Party. The liberal craft union tradition of the nineteenth century had always been a minority movement in colonial society. The respectable and (usually) sober

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[155]*Argus*, February 14, 1908, p.5.
[156]*Argus*, February 15, 1908, p.21. See also THC, Minutes, February 14, 1908.
[157] These were R.H. Lemon of the Carlton Brewery and secretary of the Liquor Trades Defence Union; J.C. Dillon of the Abbotsford Brewery and secretary of the Licensed Victuallers' Association; and Nicholas Fitzgerald MLC, a prominent Catholic brewer.
[158]*Truth*, November 23, 1907, p.5. See also *Liberty and Progress*, December 23, 1907, p.266; March 25, 1908, p.55.
[159]*Truth*, December 7, 1907, p.7; May 30, 1908, p.5.

trade union leaders of colonial Victoria who pioneered the eight hour day, managed the Trades Hall and formed the Labor Party in 1891 were of the working classes, but they were not a representative sample of colonial working men. Even in 1906, the leadership of the labour movement, with some exceptions, was probably less sympathetic to gambling and drinking than most of their working class constituents. Most Labor leaders understood the impact which excessive indulgence of these pleasures by a breadwinner could have on women and children. However, a Party which claimed to be the natural representative of the workers and sought to capture parliamentary power on their behalf could not afford to remain aloof from controversies in which their culture was attacked as corrupt and immoral.[160] While many Liberals (especially those influenced by evangelism) regarded drunkenness as an evil which ought to be repressed in the interests of society because it produced "public disorder, vice and misery", for Laborites it was a reflection of evil social conditions.[161] The culture of male conviviality was a bastion to be defended by Labor from the "wowsers" who sought to use the state to control the pleasures of the working class. It is, therefore, not surprising when we consider the centrality of the public house to the culture of Victorian working men that many Labor members should have been sympathetic to the publicans and hostile to the temperance cause. It is significant, however, that the Victorian Alliance could recommend several Labor candidates for the 1907 election: John Lemmon, David Smith, Harry Beard, D.C. McGrath and A.R. Outtrim.[162] It did not regard the Labor Party as an agent of the liquor trade

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[160]See Anstey's comment during the parliamentary debate on the Licensing Bill: "I have to defend myself, my family, and the people with whom I am associated against the assumption that they are the only people whose immorality is to be guarded against". See *VPD*, CXIII, August 30, 1906, p.1279.

[161]Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p.195.

[162]*Alliance Record*, March 1, 1907, p.36.

in the same way as the PEC saw it as an agent of Rome.[163]  There were other total abstainers in the ranks of Labor such as Billson and Hannah, who were strongly opposed to the consumption of liquor.  Billson declared during the 1906 debate that liquor was

> the greatest enemy that the Labour Party have to fight against.  Were it not for the drinking habits of the workers...they would start thinking, the thinking would lead to action, that action would mean the reversal of the present system, and a reversal of the present system would bring more health, wealth and happiness to the people...[164]

The liberal roots of this set of attitudes are apparent.  Alcohol reduced the capacity of working men to exercise rational judgment, which liberals regarded as the key to human progress.[165]  Moreover, it was the sober, not the dissolute, who made the best unionists, because a thirsty man could never be trusted to maintain that solidarity which would advance the cause of labour.[166]  At the same time, while Labor members such as Sangster, Solly, Bromley, Prendergast, Beazley, Anstey and Elmslie were sympathetic to the trade, they were no more closely identified with it than J.A. Boyd, A.A. Billson or G.H. Bennett, non-Labor advocates of brewing interests.[167]

The opposition of many Labor members to the Gaming Suppression Bill also led to allegations of corruption and immorality.  According to Eggleston, Wren "was able to secure the assistance of the leaders and most of the members of the Labour party".[168]  Naturally, both Wren and the members of the SPLP denied this allegation.  Indeed, for a Party alleged to be under Wren's influence, there was a surprising lack of unity in the Labor

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[163]*Alliance Record*, March 1, 1907, p.38.  For the Alliance's opinion that the Labor Party was sympathetic to temperance, see *Alliance Record*, March 1, 1908, pp.40-1.
[164]*VPD*, CXIII, September 4, 1906, p.1321.
[165]Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, p.5.
[166]*Argus*, May 13, 1905, p.17.
[167]*Australian Brewers' Journal*, February 20, 1907, pp.340-1; March 20, 1907, pp.397-8; July 20, 1907, p.664; October 21, 1907, pp.1, 39; February 20, 1908, p.355; October 20, 1908, p.26; March 21, 1910, p.326.
[168]Sugden & Eggleston, *George Swinburne*, p.192.

ranks over strategy and remarkable coherence in the arguments of the members alleged to be upholding Wren's interests.[169] These arguments were not convincingly answered by supporters of the Ministry's proposals. Moreover, some non-Labor members advanced similar objections to the Gaming Suppression Bill as the Labor members, but escaped the degree of public odour which attached itself to the SPLP.[170]

It seems unlikely that the attitude of the Labor members was a direct consequence of Wren's personal influence. Labor members argued that the bill sought to eliminate "innocent amusements" such as raffles, art unions and lotteries which "cannot by any stretch of imagination be termed gambling...". Elmslie wondered whether the Government would insist on cherries being grown without stones to prevent boys playing for cherry pips.[171] The most powerful argument raised by the Labor members, however, was that the bill discriminated against working men by suppressing the tote and eliminating betting on the Flemington flat, where admission was free, while leaving the VRC with a gambling monopoly by allowing on-course betting in places where a fee was charged for admission.[172] J.W. Billson, a respectable anti-gambler and total abstainer,[173] thought that the Government had left itself open to the charge of "hypocrisy in their determination to conserve one party and suppress another".[174]

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[169]This is evident from an examination of the divisions in the committee stage of the bill in *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly*, Session 1906, Volume 1. See also W.A. Watt's comment: "The Labour Party is crumbling to pieces" (*VPD*, CXIV, October 18, 1906, p.2123), prompted by Martin Hannah's opposition to Wren's gambling interests. For an account of the passage of the Gaming Suppression Bill through the Legislative Assembly, see Rollison, 'Groups', pp.539-54.

[170]See, for example, J.A. Boyd's speech *VPD*, September 25, 1906, p.1677.

[171]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1746.

[172]*VPD*, CXIV, September 25, 1906, p.1674-5.

[173]It is indicative of the bitterness of the campaign against the Labor Party, however, that an anonymous circular accused even Billson of being favourably inclined towards rich betting men and Wren in particular. See *Age*, March 11, 1907, p.7. Eggleston (in his 'The Victorian Parliament as I Knew It', p.4.) describes Billson as "a man of great ability, probably the ablest debator [sic] in the House, very abstemious and probably saved annually 25 % of his meagre salary...He was modest and unassuming...".

[174]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1792.

Moreover, the clauses in the bill which limited the number of meetings at racecourses to sixteen (which was the number of meetings at Flemington each year) and banned race meetings at courses of less than six furlongs appeared to be directed at the working-class sport of pony-racing and at Wren in particular, whose courses were shorter than proposed statutory requirement.[175] Solly saw in the bill a reflection of the VRC's desire "to crush that individual [Wren] out of existence".[176] He declared that " a parson-ridden country is the worst country one could possibly live in...", in a characteristic burst of anti-clericalism.[177]

On the left of the Party, there was an anti-clericalism which found expression in attacks on "Churchianity", a perverted form of Christianity which had abandoned Christ's concern for social justice in favour of the acquisition of property and power, and the defence of the existing social order.[178] This anti-clericalism was evident at a meeting of striking building workers in 1906:

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| Martin Hannah: | Archbishop Clarke - (Boohoos) - in speaking last Sunday at St. Paul's Cathedral on the prosperity of the country, said he was sorry to see that the workers were discontented. |
| Senator De Largie: | He's all right. |
| Hannah: | Of course he's all right, and so is his class. I am told Archbishop Clarke puts in about four hours a day. |
| A voice: | He does not carry the hod.[179] |

Love has shown that an anti-clericalism was an important aspect of Anstey's political ideas.[180] It owed much to Mann's influence, but its strong bias

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[175]*VPD*, CXIV, September 26, 1906, p.1688.
[176]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1752.
[177]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1752.
[178]The term was most likely coined by Tom Mann. See *Tocsin*, October 5, 1905, p.7.
[179]*Argus*, December 31, 1906, p.5.
[180]Peter Love, 'Frank Anstey: A Political Biography', unpublished PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1990, pp.165-6.

against the Protestant clergy reflected the disproportionate number of Catholics in the working class and their growing prominence in the labour movement.[181] Solly, however, earned the censure of even the Catholic press when he criticised the churches for spending "hundreds of thousands of pounds...in building churches for the people to enter once a week, instead of every halfpenny being spent to assist the poor and the downtrodden in getting justice".[182] The state Labor executive condemned these attacks on the churches and the clergy, and it criticised the Labor Party members concerned.[183] The Party leadership realised that Labor had little to gain from anti-clericalism, especially in light of the growing Catholic support for the Party and the continued prominence of Protestant laymen in the labour movement.[184]

There was considerable support in the labour ranks for the suppression of gambling. Several Labor branches passed resolutions condemning the evil.[185] The Collingwood and Abbotsford branches considered that "labour representatives, morally and publicly supporting gamblers and gambling, is not conducive to the best interests of the labour movement...".[186] Lemmon, the member for Williamstown, supported Judkins's agitation in mid-1906 and the THC also gave the campaign its approval at this time.[187] It was represented in the deputation which waited on Bent in June 1906 to urge on him the suppression of gambling,[188] but it retreated from this position of co-operation when the sectarian and anti-working-class biases of the reformers

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[181]*Tocsin*, October 5, 1905, p.7.

[182]*Tribune*, June 16, 1906, pp.1, 5.

[183]*Argus*, June 11, 1906, p.5; *Tribune*, June 16, 1906, p.1; *Tocsin*, June 14, 1906, p.8; *Truth*, (Melbourne), June 16, 1906, p.4. The Melbourne edition of *Truth* has been used throughout this thesis.

[184]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, June 1, 1906, p.8.

[185]PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, June 18, 1906; *Argus*, June 20, 1906, p.9.

[186]*Argus*, June 26, 1906, p.6.

[187]*Argus*, June 29, 1906, p.6.

[188]*Argus*, June 21, 1906, p.7.

became apparent.[189] The Employers' Federation contributed to this process by linking gambling with socialism; both "vices" deluded "the public into thinking it is easier to get something for practically nothing, than to work for it".[190]

Labor Party anti-clericalism highlighted the manner in which the social reform controversy was linked to the sectarianism of the period, but this was only a minor element in the Labor Party's response to the anti-gambling proposals of the Government. The defence of the integrity of working-class life was paramount. In general, Labor defenders of this culture constructed class in masculine terms. The world of illegal totalisators, gambling clubs and pony-racing was dominated by men, and it would have been difficult to avoid a masculinist bias in political debate even if Labor men had ever seriously questioned the assumption that what was good for the working man was also in the interests of working-class women. As Joan Scott has argued, class is typically "constructed as a masculine identity, even when not all the actors are male".[191] This formulation of class had significant implications for the Labor Party's attitude to gender which, as we have seen in a previous chapter, involved a virtual denial of the political significance of gender difference. In the Assembly debate on the Liquor Bill, Labor's Warde, who represented Flemington, defended the right of the working man to gamble within his means.[192] It was the irregularity of working people's earnings which encouraged them "to speculate so as to relieve the grip of poverty...".[193] The tote provided men with relief from their

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[189]McKernan, 'An Incident of Social Reform', p.76.
[190]*Liberty and Progress*, March 24, 1906, p.272. See also *Liberty and Progress*, October 25, 1905, p.149; November 25, 1905, p.175; February 26, 1906, p.253; March 24, 1906, pp.268-70.
[191]Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p.72. See also Christine di Stefano, 'Masculine Marx', in Mary Lyndon Stanley & Carole Pateman (eds.), *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, pp.146-163.
[192]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, pp.1794-7.
[193]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1801.

surroundings, an escape from the debt and anxiety of everyday life.[194] Working-class women were absent from this argument. Solly objected to the poor being condemned as "wicked" for spending a shilling on the flat or at Wren's tote while the rich went on speculating on the Stock Exchange, "robbing those who produce the wealth of the country".[195] Anstey, who was in principle less sympathetic to gambling, saw the evil as

> a partial reflex of the society to which we all belong - rotten and reeking with the gambling of its people, based upon speculation and upon corruption, based upon making something out of some other man.[196]

Only when the competitive society was replaced with a co-operative system would gambling die out.[197] People were creatures of their environment, and the energies of reformers should be devoted to improving the material conditions of the people rather than attempting to transform their moral conditions by law.[198] Labor members thus attempted to construct a social democratic response to the gambling question which took account of the actualities of working-class life.[199] The supporters of the bill failed to come to terms with these arguments, and Anstey easily exposed the contradictions in the Government position when he moved that the bill be amended to suppress all gambling. If gambling was evil, he argued, it was evil everywhere, not only in Collingwood or on the Flemington flat.[200]

There is no reason to suppose that the views expressed by the Labor members in the debate over the Gaming Suppression Bill were insincere because they upheld some of Wren's gambling interests.[201] The *Bulletin,*

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[194]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, pp.1799, 1802.
[195]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1757-8.
[196]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1780.
[197]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1782.
[198]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, pp.1786.
[199]*VPD*, CXIV, September 27, 1906, p.1749.
[200]*VPD*, CXIV, October 2, 1906, pp.1820-1.
[201]Nugent ('Frank Anstey', pp.304-70, 459) claims that there was between Anstey and Wren a "liaison of convenience. Anstey was often in need of money - Wren provided it; Wren was

however, asserted that "the conduct of the Victorian State Labor party in constituting itself WREN's champion covers that party with shame and disgrace".[202] Its campaign against the supposedly Wren-dominated Labor Party, however, should be placed in the context of that journal's dissatisfaction with the PLC's refusal to adhere to the FPLP's alliance with the Liberal Protectionists.[203] The Party's alleged association with Wren gave the *Bulletin* another stick with which to beat Victorian Labor. Similarly, the *Age* sought to discredit Victorian Labor, which in its view had "arrested Liberal development", by alleging that Labor was allied to liquor and gambling interests and pointing to "the use of the Labor party which has recently been made by one of the wealthier members of the professional gambling ring...".[204] These journals sought to undermine Labor's legitimacy by portraying it as the tool of corrupt external influences.

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often in need of parliamentary support - Anstey provided that...Anstey repaid Wren's gifts by performing the duties of a watch-dog in the Victorian parliament over Wren's interests" (Nugent, 'Frank Anstey', p.311). This is a harsh judgment. Nugent alleges that Anstey was a 'Wren man' as early as 1903, but he provides no evidence that there was any association between the two men before 1907. His suggestion that Anstey pursued a consistent strategy in defence of Wren's interests ignores the substance of Anstey's criticism of the Gambling Suppression Bill. Nugent also ignores the cultural and political context of the social reform controversies. This context makes Anstey's response to the bill explicable as a defence of working-class culture and an attack on what he regarded as the hypocrisy of the churches. That Anstey received financial support from Wren from about 1907 is almost certain but, in the absence of much useful evidence concerning the relationship between the two men before 1914, whether or not one regards Anstey as a 'Wren agent' depends on the extent to which one accepts the sincerity of his arguments against the anti-gambling legislation. I can see no reason to doubt his sincerity. Anstey's acceptance of gifts from Wren did lead to Anstey's reputation being deservedly tarnished and Nugent is probably correct when he argues that Anstey's judgment was affected by Wren's 'generosity', but this does not mean that Anstey was a Wren puppet. Finally, an underlying assumption of Nugent's argument is that Wren was an evil man with whom no man of integrity could associate without being corrupted. As Griffin and Browne ('Some Light in Shady Places?', pp.63-79) have suggested, this is a dubious assumption. See also *Bulletin*, March 7, 1907, pp.6-7 for Anstey's reply to the accusation that Labor was allied with Wren and the liquor interest.

[202]*Bulletin*, November 8, 1906, p.9.

[203]*Bulletin*, May 3, 1906, p.6.

[204]*Age*, March 14, 1907, p.6. See also *Age*, September 28, 1906, p.5, where Solly is described as Wren's "protege".

# A HERO OF THE MELBOURNE WORKING CLASS



Jack Wren, as seen by *Punch*

He who shall hurt the little Wren
Shall never be belovd by Men

('Auguries of Innocence', William Blake)

In a parliamentary debate late in 1906, the Liberal MLA R.F. Toutcher claimed a corrupt association between Prendergast and Wren.[205] Wren made an indignant reply in the press:

> My personal knowledge of Mr. Prendergast is but of the slightest; I have not spoken to him above twice in my life, and on any occasions our conversation never touched in any way upon any legislative question that affected me or any of my business affairs.[206]

This was consistent with Prendergast's statements about his relationship with Wren; he also claimed to have met Wren only twice. On the first occasion, Wren had visited him for the purpose of presenting him with papers which revealed that the Chief Secretary Sir Samuel Gillott had lent money to the notorious Madame Brussels, who ran a brothel near Parliament House. Wren wanted Prendergast to raise the matter in parliament, but the Labor leader refused. The second occasion on which Prendergast and Wren met was when the tote boss returned to collect the papers, which he passed on to John Norton, who publicised the case in *Truth*.[207] Prendergast was adamant that he had never discussed the Gaming Suppression Bill with Wren.[208] The *Lone Hand* claimed, however, that while the bill "was being blocked in the Victorian Assembly by members of the Labor Party the crack of Wren's intimidating whip echoed along the corridors of the House".[209] It presented no evidence to support this allegation. This is not to suggest that Wren did not seek to influence the Party. Frank Lawrence, the secretary of Wren's Tattersalls Club, offered to donate eighty pounds to the PLC central executive for the purpose of

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[205]*Truth*, December 1, 1906, p.6. Toutcher remarked, "Perhaps Wren can buy you", which Prendergast denied indignantly. See *VPD*, CXV, November 29, 1906, p.3299.
[206]*Argus*, December 1, 1906, p.16.
[207]*Bulletin*, December 20, 1906, p.10; *Lone Hand*, May 1907, p.89; *Truth*, December 1, 1906, p.4. See also Cyril Pearl, *Wild Men of Sydney*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1977, pp.200-8.
[208]*VPD*, CXIX, September 15, 1908, p.755; *Argus*, March 9, 1907, p.20.
[209]*Lone Hand*, May 1907, p.88.

carrying out a canvass of the Essendon electorate. Wren was obviously the source of this offer, but the executive decided not to accept it.[210] Moreover as early as August 1906, there were rumours in the press that Wren was about to initiate a Labour daily newspaper in Melbourne.[211] He later approached Prendergast with a scheme, but it was abandoned.[212]

Wren sought publicity and popularity in the labour movement during 1906. He gave £100 to a deputation of the unemployed who visited the Tattersalls Club and donated £830 to the Building Trades Strike Committee in late 1906.[213] Moreover, when the manufacturers stopped the supply of bricks to the builders who had conceded the forty-four hour week to the men, Wren proposed to purchase a works to supply bricks to anyone who wanted them.[214] According to the *Bulletin*, Wren was "setting himself to bag the Melbourne Trades Hall bodily. Apparently he is not satisfied with the capture of the State Labor party", but it seems likely that Wren had his eye on the State Labor Party - he made his donations to the striking building workers while the debate on the Gaming Suppression Bill continued.[215] It is significant, however, that Hannah, who led the strike, did not support Wren's gambling interests in the Assembly.[216]

Wren's intervention in this strike was an attempt to cultivate support in the labour movement which was his major ally in the struggle against

[210]PLC CE, Minutes, October 27, 1906, VSL MS 10389. W.A. Watt, the MLA for Essendon, was a prominent supporter of the Gambling Suppression Bill in the Assembly.

[211]*Town and Country Journal*, August 29, 1906, p.23, in Wren File, Australian Dictionary of Biography, Division of Historical Studies, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

[212]Rollison, 'Groups', p.548; *Liberty and Progress*, April 25, 1907, p.77; PLC CE, Minutes, April 20, 1907; August 3, 1907, VSL MS 10389.

[213]For Wren's donation to the unemployed, see *Argus*, June 26, 1906, p.5. See also *Australasian*, June 30, 1906, p.1529. Earlier, Wren had offered to donate the money through the Victorian Socialist Party. See Champion, in *Liberty and Progress*, July 25, 1906, p.85.

[214]For Wren's involvement in the building strike, see *Argus*, November 15, 1906, p.8; December 1, 1906, p.19; January 7, 1907, p.4; January 8, 1907, p.5; *Bulletin*, November 22, 1906, p.20; W. Mears to J. Wren, December 13, 1916; J. Wren to W. Mears, January 2, 1916 [1917], in Victorian Operative Bricklayers Society Collection, NBAC, ANU T 8/8.

[215]*Bulletin*, December 6, 1906, p.10.

[216]*VPD*, CXIV, October 18, 1906, pp.2122-3; *Bulletin*, November 15, 1906, p.24.

the social reformers. At a function organised by the building unions to make a presentation to Wren in recognition of his services, he reported that he "had been watching the actions of the parsons, and he thought it absolutely essential that the Labor leaders of the country should fight those men".[217] Many Labor supporters answered Wren's call. At a rowdy election meeting for the Protestant candidate for Melbourne in 1906, Lormer, the crowd gave three cheers for Maloney and Jack Wren.[218] In this campaign, Wren used his influence against Mauger in Maribyrnong, who was a supporter of the social reform campaign and an opponent of Home Rule.[219]

Socially excluded from the bourgeoisie on the grounds that he acquired his wealth by immoral means, Wren endeared himself to many labouring people through his generosity, his hatred of ostentation and his identification with the values of working people who also felt alienated from social power.[220] As *Punch* declared, Wren "reads the working classes like a book, anticipates their whims, caters for their fancy".[221] It was this intimate knowledge of working-class life, based on personal experience, which helped Wren to accumulate a fortune, yet it also helped to gain him the sympathy of a large section of the labour movement by 1907. Indeed, it is possible that the motives for Wren's generosity were more directly commercial than most of his critics recognised. For a man who provided popular entertainment to Melbourne's working class, notoriety was valuable publicity. In 1906, there were even rumours that Wren would stand as a Labor candidate for parliament.[222] "Next to Mr. Frank Tudor, M.H.R., declared *Liberty and Progress*, Wren is the popular hero".[223]

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[217]*Bulletin*, April 11, 1907, p.7.
[218]*Argus*, December 4, 1906, p.7.
[219]*Argus*, March 15, 1907, p.5. Wren was a supporter of Home Rule. He donated £50 to the cause on one occasion in 1906. See *Argus*, June 2, 1906, p.16.
[220]*Liberty and Progress*, May 25, 1907, p.105.
[221]*Punch*, July 19, 1906, p.76.
[222]*Bulletin*, July 5, 1906, p.9; *Liberty and Progress*, February 26, 1906, pp.247-8.
[223]*Liberty and Progress*, November 25, 1904, p.185.

In the 1907 state election, the liquor and gambling questions dominated, and became enmeshed in the broader sectarianism of the campaign.   A League of Sportsmen was formed to oppose candidates sympathetic to the social reform movement; it devoted most of its energies to the Brunswick contest, where Anstey was opposed by Judkins.[224]  The Victorian Alliance, under the secretaryship of former THC secretary Barrett, supported candidates who had worked for control of the liquor traffic[225] while the Liquor Defence Association was also active.[226]  Love concedes that Anstey probably received assistance from this source.[227]  Wren was a conspicuous figure in the Hawthorn electorate, where he resided.  He supported J. M. Rose, a former Liberal member of the Assembly.[228]  Rose decided to stand for the seat in 1907 as an independent against George Swinburne, a member of the Bent Ministry and a devout Methodist reputed to be behind the anti-liquor and anti-gambling legislation.[229]  On 7 March, Swinburne declared at an election meeting that Rose was supported by the liquor and gambling interests, and that Wren lobbied Prendergast when the Bills were before the Assembly.  He pointed out that Wren had signed Rose's nomination paper.[230]  Wren responded by bringing several cab-loads of his supporters to Swinburne's next meeting.  There were wild demonstrations in favour of Wren who attempted, unsuccessfully, to take a place on the platform.  He could not be prevented from addressing several

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[224]*Age*, February 13, 1907, p.7; February 26, 1907, p.8.

[225]These included the Labor candidates John Lemmon, D.C. McGrath and Harry Beard, much to the chagrin of the PEC.  See *Age*, February 18, 1907, p.8; February 20, 1907, p.8. Remarkably, the Licensed Victuallers of the Footscray district also selected Lemmon.  See *Argus*, March 13, 1907, p.8.

[226]D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria', in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin & R.S. Parker (eds.), *The Emergence of the Australian Party System*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1977, pp.101-3.

[227]Love, 'Frank Anstey', pp.177-8.  R.H. Lemon, secretary of the Liquor Defence Association, was present at Anstey's farewell in April 1907 (He was returning to the U.K.).  See *Argus*, April 9, 1907, p.6.

[228]Rose had been unsuccessful as the Labor candidate for Hawthorn in 1904.

[229]Rose was supported by the League of Sportsmen.  See *Age*, March 11, 1907, p.7.

[230]*Argus*, March 8, 1907, p.6.  See also George Swinburne, Diary, March 7, 1907, UMA.

questions to Swinburne in a nervous stammer. When the chairman sought to end the interrogation, the meeting degenerated into a free fight and general riot, from which Wren was carried shoulder high by his supporters, blood spurting from a cut on his forehead.[231] Swinburne, however, won the election.[232]

In May 1907, a new monthly called the *Lone Hand*, owned by J.F. Archibald of the *Bulletin*, published an article with the title 'Wren and His Ruffians: A Notorious Bird of Prey' which included allegations about Wren's influence on the Labor Party.[233] Since 1901, the author declared, "the ill-gotten money of Jack Wren has talked in many State and a few Federal elections, not always on the winning side, but invariably on the rowdier side".[234] He advanced deposit money for Labor candidates, donated money to the Labor Party, and organised his "horde of Tote ruffians" to turn up to meetings of his chosen candidate, or opponent. The author produced no new evidence linking Wren with the Party. In 1908, the *Bulletin* alleged that Solly's preselection as the Labor candidate in the Carlton by-election was secured through Wren's influence. Frank Lawrence, it asserted, had been active in the matter and the 300 voters who took part in the ballot included members of a two-up school. Moreover, Wren was alleged to have entered David Gaunson, his solicitor, in the contest in the liberal interest to ensure Solly's victory.[235] The possibility cannot be ruled out that Wren did intervene in this contest, but Solly must have had strong claims on the seat. He had powerful trade union connections, experience as a member of the Richmond Council, and had served a term in the Legislative Assembly as

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[231]*Age*, March 15, 1907, p.7; *Argus*, March 15, 1907, p.5; *Truth*, March 23, 1907, p.6; George Swinburne, Diary, March 14, 1907, UMA. See also Sugden & Eggleston, *George Swinburne*, p.228.

[232]Hughes & Graham, *Voting for the Victorian Legislative Assembly*, p.104.

[233]Griffin and Browne suggest that the article was written by Montague Grover, "a pioneer of the mass media in Australia". See 'Some Light in Shady Places?', p.67. For details of Grover, see Sally O'Neill, 'Montague MacGregor Grover', *ADB*, Volume 9, pp.133-4.

[234]*Lone Hand*, May 1907, p.84.

[235]*Bulletin*, October 22, 1908, p.8.

the representative of the Railway Officers (1904-6). Solly had also been defeated by Cotter in the Richmond preselection a few weeks before.[236] His main rival for preselection in Carlton was McLeod, a solicitor who was also editor of *Labor Call*.[237] McLeod lacked Solly's base of support in the unions and had no experience of public office. The Carlton branch's preference for Solly was thus hardly surprising, and the *Bulletin*'s allegations of Wren's interference might have been, in part, an outcome of bitterness at the defeat of the type of middle-class radical intellectual with whom that journal had long identified.

McConville has suggested that by 1909, Wren controlled the Fitzroy Labor branch, and was influential in the Collingwood and Clifton Hill branches.[238] There is some evidence to support these claims. In March 1909, the *Bulletin* pointed out that Lawrence was vice-president of the Fitzroy branch of the PLC. It went further, claiming that "[a]nywhere within a three-miles radius of the site of Wren's defunct tote, the odor of its decomposed remains infects the atmosphere of Labor party gatherings".[239] Lawrence denied "that he had joined the Branch as a nominee or at the instigation of Mr. John Wren...he had nothing whatsoever to do with that gentleman". While admitting that he was formerly a secretary to Wren's Tattersalls Club, this was merely as a public accountant.[240] The *Bulletin*, however, continued to attack Lawrence and the PLC: "the local Political Labor League might as well affiliate with Wren's Trotting Club, and Pony Racing Society, patrons of Wren's 'sport' to have the right of membership in the P.L.L.".[241] Similarly, a man named Kierce who, according to the

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[236]*Age*, September 16, 1908, p.7.
[237]*Argus*, October 9, 1908, p.6.
[238]McConville, 'John Wren', p.57.
[239]*Bulletin*, March 11, 1909, p.20.
[240]PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, March 15, 1909, Merrifield Collection, VSL. See also PLC (Fitzroy), Minutes, March 29, 1909.
[241]*Bulletin*, April 8, 1909, p.24.

*Bulletin*, was "the official measurer of ponies at WREN's pony meetings" was active in the Collingwood branch, and had proposed several new members.[242] This is hardly compelling evidence of branch-stacking or Wren domination, however, and there were limits to Wren's influence in the Labor Party. Wren could manipulate local branches, but he could not easily control the state executive while the unions exercised so much influence. Moreover, the growing prominence of Wren supporters in the inner-suburban branches should be placed in the context of burgeoning Catholic support for the Labor Party from 1901; Wren's influence was not necessarily a factor wherever there were Catholics in a Labor branch. Still, the 1911 preselection ballot for the seat of Batman indicated the value of having Wren's support. Wren's money and influence assisted the Catholic lawyer Frank Brennan, who defeated a long list of preselection candidates, many of them unionists with established reputations in the labour movement.[243] Party members were taken to the preselection ballot in cabs. After a protest from eight unsuccessful candidates about irregularities in the poll, a state executive enquiry upheld the selection of Brennan.[244] Brennan recalled:

> I saw cabs there, I saw people who were friends of mine in cabs. I have no knowledge if the cabs were used by any other candidate. No person told me they were engaging cabs on my behalf.

Brennan admitted that he knew Lawrence, but was not aware that he was soliciting support for his candidature, or bringing people to the poll in the day of the election.[245] The mention of Lawrence suggests Wren's intervention, but the unsuccessful candidates produced no evidence of

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[242]*Bulletin*, March 25, 1909, p.7.

[243]*Argus*, January 11, 1911, p.7. See also McMullin, *The Light on the Hill*, p.87; Kevin Ryan, 'Frank Brennan: A Political Biography', unpublished MA thesis, La Trobe University, 1978, pp. 54-71.

[244]PLC CE, Minutes, January 12, 1911; January 15, 1911, NLA MS 131; *Argus*, January 16, 1911, p.7.

[245]PLC CE, Minutes, January 15, 1911, NLA MS 131.

ballot-rigging.[246] It was incidents such as the Batman by-election, however, which suggested to unionists that they were losing control of the Labor Party at the point where it really mattered, the preselection of parliamentary candidates. In 1911, the AIMU urged that the deposits of all parliamentary candidates be provided by the central executive, so that there would be no financial bar to members of proven ability offering themselves, and presumably as a means of avoiding dependence of Wren's patronage.[247] Wren, however, was not the only wealthy patron of the Party who advanced money for deposits: J.P. Jones also assisted the Party in this respect.[248] The state executive agreed with the AIMU's proposal, but argued that it lacked the means to give it effect.[249]

Wren's influence on the Victorian Labor Party before 1914 has been exaggerated. His power was limited by the nature of the Party structure. Wren could dominate neither Party conference nor the state executive. The increasingly important role played by the unions in the Party also constrained Wren's influence. It was the Labor branches which were most susceptible to penetration by the Wren "machine" but even at this level his success was qualified. Wren had strong supporters in many inner-suburban Labor branches by 1914, but he realised by this time that there were easier ways than this to protect his interests and practise his gift as a wire-puller. He found that forming personal relationships with Labor (and non-Labor) politicians was a more profitable exercise than manipulating local Labor branches. Moreover, Wren's public role increasingly turned on the Catholic Church and the cause of Ireland from 1916.[250] His public identification with

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[246]Ryan, 'Frank Brennan', pp.68-9. According to Ryan (p.71), "The Batman pre-selection fiasco of 1911 is clear evidence that Wren exercised no monolithic control even over his own home area at this time".
[247]*Labor Call*, November 11, 1909, p.8
[248]Pat Heagney to J.P. Jones, November 5, 1908; J.E. Fenton, to J.P. Jones, November 12, 1911; Receipt for £75: J.P. Jones deposits, November 13, 1906, in J.P. Jones File, Merrifield Collection, VSL.
[249]*Labor Call*, November 11, 1909, p.8.
[250]McConville, 'John Wren', pp.59-62.

the cause of labour, so strong in 1906, gave way to a more covert involvement in Victorian political life. The bloodied face of Jack Wren would never again grace a Victorian election platform.

The strength of Catholic working-class support for the Labor Party was also evident in 1914. When the Catholic Federation, formed in 1911 to press Catholic political demands, but under the influence of Coadjutor-Archbishop Mannix in 1914, challenged the Labor Party to concede Catholic educational demands, it met with a cool response. In September 1914, the PLC executive informed a deputation from the Catholic Federation that it had no power to allow candidates a free hand on the question of grants to denominational schools.[251] When the Federation questioned Labor candidates on the education issue, the executive ruled that they could only be answered from the public platform.[252] The executive also refused to concede the Federation's major demand - state payment for secular teaching in denominational schools[253] - and it adjudged the Catholic Federation a proscribed body.[254] Catholic Federation hostility to the Labor Party did not, however, translate into a major decline in the Labor vote. While there was a slight drop in the percentage of the valid vote received by Labor (from 43 per cent in 1911 to 39.5 per cent in 1914), Labor won two extra seats, regaining Port Fairy with its strong Catholic population.[255] Most Catholics remained loyal to the Labor Party in 1914, despite the actions of Mannix and the Federation.[256] The education issue did not arouse the same passion in most

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[251] PLC CE, Minutes, September 18, 1914, NLA MS 131.

[252] PLC CE, Minutes, October 2, 1914; October 23, 1914, NLA MS 131.

[253] PLC CE, Minutes, October 16, 1914, NLA MS 131.

[254] PLC CE, Minutes, November 27, 1914, NLA MS 131.

[255] *Labor Call*, December 3, 1914, p.1; Colin A. Hughes and B.D. Graham, *A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics, 1890-1964*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1968, pp.478-9.

[256] Celia Hamilton, 'Catholic Interests and the Labor Party: Organized Catholic Action in Victoria and New South Wales, 1910-1916, *Historical Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 33, November 1959, pp.67-8.

Catholic electors as in the clergy, the press and the Catholic Federation.[257] The conscription controversy of 1916-17 was destined to overwhelm the conflict between the Labor Party and the Catholic Federation over state aid, and consolidate Catholic support for the Labor Party.

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[257]Hamilton, 'Catholic Interests', p.68.

# A CATHOLIC WORKING-CLASS FAMILY



The Mount Family of Fitzroy, c.1914.
John Mount was a stonemason, member of the
Trades Hall Council and a Fitzroy Laborite.

# CHAPTER TEN:
## CLASS, LABOUR AND POPULAR RADICALISM,
### 1900-1914

> Two dogs on the outskirts of the crowd were engaged in a lively
> combat...One of the dogs was facetiously dubbed Labor and the other
> Capital, but as the rain was falling steadily during the third round, the
> combatants retired by mutual arrangement before the decisive result
> was achieved.[1]

(Description of Carlton Labor meeting)


### Labourism and Class: Historical Perspectives


There has been much conceptual confusion about the relationship of

labourism to class. Old Left historians such as Gollan and Turner explained

the emergence of labourism in terms of the Labor Party's efforts to gain the

support of social groups outside the working class. Labor embraced "purely

opportunist policies" and abandoned socialism in the interests of enhancing

the power of the Party machine.[2] More recently, Verity Burgmann has

suggested that labourism was "not an ideology in its own right" but rather

"an adaptation of colonial liberal values to a working-class reality".[3]

Burgmann, like Gollan, recognised the existence of continuities between

liberalism and labourism but deemed this process of adaptation unworthy of

serious historical attention. These historians could never treat labourism as

a serious political ideology because they believed that socialism embodied

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[1]*Age*, May 31, 1904, p.6.
[2]Robin Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics: A Study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*,
Melbourne University Press in Association with The Australian National University,
Carlton, 1970, pp.206, 208; Ian Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics: The Dynamics of the
Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900-1921*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, pp.19, 31.
[3]Verity Burgmann, *'In Our Time': Socialism and the Rise of Labor, 1885-1905*, George Allen &
Unwin, Sydney, 1985, p.195.

the real interests of the working class and the correct path for the emergent Labor Party. Labourism was a blind alley of corruption and opportunism.

Other historians have taken labourism more seriously. Stuart Macintyre and Jim Hagan have followed the Leninist approach of British historian John Saville in regarding labourism as an outgrowth of trade union organisation and an expression of class consciousness.[4] Labourism involved an acceptance of the social relations of production under capitalism, a belief that "fair dealing was available and obtainable in a capitalist society", and a recognition of the legitimacy of the capitalist state.[5] This ideology of acceptance was, according to Macintyre, "qualified by a limited but powerful class consciousness".[6] Raymond Markey, in his study of the early history of the NSW Labor Party, has offered an alternative interpretation of the relationship between labourism and class, arguing that labourism "embodied a pluralist and populist, rather than a class, view of capitalist society".[7]

The argument in this chapter is that labourism embodied both class and non-class (populist) discourses. It was neither just a class or trade union ideology in the sense implied by Hagan and Macintyre nor a populist formulation reflecting the political outlook of intermediate social strata in contrast to the class consciousness of the urban working class, as suggested by Markey. While labourism borrowed from socialist ideology and unionism an emphasis on class antagonism and the independent political role of labour, there were also strong continuities between Victorian liberalism and labourism. In the early years of the twentieth century,

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[4]John Saville, 'The Ideology of Labourism', in Robert Benewick, R.N. Berki & Bhikhu Parekh (eds.) *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1973, pp. 213-26.

[5]Stuart Macintyre, 'Early Socialism and Labor', *Intervention*, 8, March 1977, pp. 81-2. See also Jim Hagan, *The History of the A.C.T.U.*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1981, p. 14.

[6]Macintyre, 'Early Socialism and Labor', p. 82.

[7]Raymond Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales 1880-1900*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1988, p.197.

working-class people had a plurality of understandings of the social and

political order. Many labouring people had a sense of class consciousness,

and Gollan's claim that "the working class was becoming conscious of itself

as a class" from the 1880s is valid.[8] In Victoria, a sense of class identity was

embedded in labour political discourse from the 1880s. Labour leaders and

activists perceived in the social and political order a conflict between

"capital" and "labour", a formulation which struck a responsive chord in

their working-class audiences. Class consciousness, however, was not the

sum of working-class political consciousness because populist

interpretations of the social order often intersected with the language of

class to modify its meanings. Moreover, labour political discourse contained

visions of mutuality and consensual social relations as well as class conflict

and social antagonism.

British historian Patrick Joyce has criticised E.P. Thompson for

ascribing "a class consciousness to the social struggles of subordinate groups

simply because they are in struggle".[9] These groups, he argues, might have

identities which cannot be reduced to the notion of "class consciousness",

but rather embodied alternative meanings.[10] Joyce regards the concept of

populism as useful in understanding this language. Populism expresses

non-class understandings of the social and political order. It idealises "the

people" and focuses hostility on corrupt and conspiratorial ruling elites such

as "the plutocrats", "the monopolists" and the "money power".[11] There are

radical and conservative varieties of populism and the "people", as a

discursive formation central to populist discourse, derived its symbolic

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[8]Gollan, *Radical and Working Class Politics*, p.104.

[9]Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.14.

[10] In recent years, there has been a questioning of the usefulness of the concept of class of which Joyce's *Visions of the People* is a part. See also William M. Reddy, *Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Historical Understanding*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987.

[11]Peter Love, *Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism 1890-1950*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1984; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, pp.13-15.

meaning from the way in which it was evoked in actual political struggles. Similar forms of language and imagery might be employed in different varieties of populism, but meaning always depended on political and social context.

Historians and theorists have identified a range of concepts associated with populism: visions of a lost golden age, dreams of agrarian harmony, radical concepts of direct democracy, hostility to the "money power", and a "producer" ethic.[12] As we shall see, labour political discourse in Victoria incorporated many of these themes. Perhaps the salient feature of populism, and more particularly of Australian labour populism, was the belief that social relations among the "productive" sections of the community were naturally harmonious. With the elimination of the wealthy landlord, the rentier and the middleman, harmony and prosperity would be restored. A variety of radical populism thus had a major influence on the formulation of political alternatives by the labour movement. The argument in this chapter is not, however, that the Victorian Labor Party was essentially a populist party, or that populism is an adequate concept to encapsulate the ideology of the labour movement. Populism was a link between working-class liberalism and labourism. The populist vision of a union of the classes against class privilege was integral to both creeds. Moreover, working-class liberalism and labourism shared a moral economy which contrasted the idle and the industrious, the monopolist and the producer. Labourism, like working-class liberalism, involved a qualified acceptance of the social relations of production under

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[12]Ghita Ionescu & Ernest Gellner (eds.), *Populism: Its Meaning and National Characteristics*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1969; Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism*, New Left Books, London, 1977; Michael Roe, *Kenealy and the Tichborne Cause: A Study in Mid-Victorian Populism*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1974; Patrick Mullins, 'Queensland: Populist Politics and Development', in Brian Head (ed.), *The Politics of Development in Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1986, pp. 138-62; Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1989, pp.148-56; Cathy Greenfield, "'In the People's Name: Populism as a Political Form", *Australian Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1985, pp.89-103.

capitalism, a belief that a fair deal was possible for the worker.[13] In labourism, however, there was a stronger emphasis on working-class political agency derived, in part, from socialism. Moreover, the unionists who created the Labor Party believed they were introducing the culture of unionism into the parliamentary sphere.[14] After 1900, their strategy was based on the faith that an independent Labor party, supported by a strong trade union movement, could reconstruct society in the image of unionism. Labourism was an attempt to reconcile class and non-class collectivities. It merged economic, political and moral understandings of citizenship in a dynamic and electorally successful reformulation of Victorian liberalism. It was not, in the sense in which I am using the term here, another name for "economism", but rather an intricate pattern of identities which were never just about class.

## The People's Party: Labor and Populism

One notion that has been regarded as symptomatic of populism is a belief in a golden age. In Victoria, many workers experienced the effects of technological change and productive reorganisation in the 1890s. However, as Jenny Lee has argued, male workers were able to stake a claim to "key sections of the labour process" after 1896 by using the wages board system to reclassify certain types of work as skilled and renegotiate demarcations between men's and women's work in favour of men.[15] In this context, the myth of a golden age of craft production had a powerful resonance because it was a version of a familiar narrative which legitimated the claims of male workers to a higher social status, to be considered craftsmen rather than

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[13]Stuart Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: The Lost World of Three Victorian Visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p.112.
[14]Spence, *Shearers' and General Laborers' Record*, July 15, 1891.
[15]Jenny Lee, 'A Redivision of Labour: Victoria's Wages Boards in Action, 1896-1903', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 88, April 1987, p. 371.

labourers. Adherents of this myth claimed that the worker had once received the full fruits of his labour, unencumbered by the interference of the capitalist. As E. Turner explained to a Ballarat Labor meeting:

> Life had been happier in the middle ages: the 'masses' were in many respects better treated by the 'classes' than they were now...the craftsman had many advantages which he lacked in the twentieth century. There was no machinery, and he controlled production, the means of production, and the tools of labor. He had markets and large fairs where he was enabled to treat at first-hand with those who required the articles fashioned by his skill. The middleman had not then come along to take the lion's share of the profits.[16]

This version of populism exalted pre-industrial values and idealised the small independent producer who enjoyed full control over the process of production and distribution. At the same time, socialist language had entered the discourse, expressed in the reference to the "means of production". Proponents of the golden age myth believed that the encroachment of machinery ushered in new circumstances. George Roberts expressed his understanding of this transformation:

> There was a time in the history of the world that private ownership did act as a guarantee to individual liberty. Those were the days before the introduction of machinery...Capital was gradually assuming sway over them all, and men were made tools to it.[17]

Mann also articulated a version of this narrative. He emphasised the theme of "Merrie England" in his speeches, asserting that working conditions before the industrial revolution had been relatively favourable. Modern socialism, he argued, would restore these conditions.[18] This argument suggests the importance of Blatchford as an influence on Mann,

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[16]*Ballarat Courier*, April 25, 1904, p.4.
[17]*Ballarat Courier*, April 4, 1904, p.3.
[18]*Hamilton Spectator*, June 9, 1903.

particularly the highly successful *Merrie England* . Even in Blatchford's writings, however, there was an alternative discourse which emphasised the social advantages of modern nationalised industry.[19] We have seen in an earlier discussion that Labor socialists applied social darwinist concepts to an analysis of industrialism. They accepted the development of private industrial monopolies as a natural outcome of economic evolution, since it eliminated the waste associated with overcompetition and was a prelude to socialisation. G.A. Carter, the socialist cigar manufacturer, believed that the people should "push this monopoly one step further, and make it their own".[20] These socialists envisaged large and efficient nationalised industries in which private profit would be abolished. They accepted the decline small-scale production as inevitable, and embraced economic modernity.

Labor's idealisation of the independent producer, however, was not abandoned, even if the "golden age" myth lost much of its political significance with the emergence of labourism.[21] The Labor Party's idealisation of small-scale production extended to the activities of the man on the land. Labour propagandists accepted that there was intrinsic moral virtue in a living derived from the soil, and propounded a labour version of the Australian pioneer legend.[22] As the *Tocsin* declared,

> ...the man who wins fertile acres from the wild is greater than he that taketh a city. Away on their back sections, far from the pleasures of the city, braving dangers and overcoming difficulties, these heroes of the plough are laying at once the foundations and the buttresses of the State.[23]

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[19]Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England*, Clarion, London, 1895, pp.98-104; *Britain for the British*, Clarion, London, 1902, p.84.

[20]G.A. Carter, *Nationalisation of the Tobacco Industry*, Tocsin [Printer], Melbourne, 1904, p.3 (in Watson Papers, NLA MS 451/7/8).

[21]See 'Cobbler Ben', *Labor Call*, September 14, 1911, p.3.

[22]John Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 71, October 1978, pp.316-337.

[23]*Tocsin*, June 30, 1904, p.1.

This discourse portrayed the man as pioneer and nation-builder, as well as the provider for women and children from the sweat of his own brow. The masculinism of Labor agitation for land reform was also evident when John Lemmon advocated radical land reform on the grounds that the "flower of Victorian manhood were leaving the State, and only old unmarriageable men and children were remaining".[24] A similar emphasis was evident in one of Anstey's election speeches, when he claimed that the vast territory and small population of Victoria meant that "it was quite possible for every father of a family to have a home with a little patch of ground around it".[25] One reason for the popularity of Blatchford's writings in Victoria was his preference for agrarianism over the values of industrial society. He regarded national self-sufficiency in agriculture as an integral part of the socialist program.[26]

The Labor platform included policies to place the people on the land.[27] The prominence given to the land question by the Labor Party was, to some extent, a reflection of the continuing importance of pastoral and agricultural production to the Victorian economy, and the reality the state's most productive land was in the hands of pastoralists and wealthy farmers. Political agitation against the evils of land monopoly, which was integral to Victorian radicalism from the late 1850s, and later embraced by Francis Longmore and Charles Pearson, was thus incorporated into the Labor program. The land remained a meaningful symbol of independence, even for working-class electors whose daily lives revolved around the factory, the workshop and the inner-suburban terrace house. Meanwhile, for agrarian radicals such as McDougall, the land monopoly was the root of most social

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[24]*Age*, February 27, 1907, p.8.
[25]*Age*, June 1, 1904, p.8.
[26]Blatchford, *Merrie England*, p. 106.
[27]*Tocsin*, July 23, 1903, p.9.

problems: "high rents, starvation wages, sweat[ed] labour and a declining

birth-rate". The right to monopolise the land was the "right to own and

enslave the people".[28]

Labor Party propagandists attempted to show the identity of interests

between the worker and the farmer. The *Tocsin* claimed that "the higher

wages the worker gets the better the prospects of the agricultural

community" because they would provide a market for the farmers'

produce.[29] Labor claimed the allegiance of the manual workers, but it

looked outside the working class for support; its propagandists constructed

political discourses which demonstrated the bonds between the

"productive" classes in opposition to a common enemy, the monopolist, the

parasite, or the usurer. The work of the "Labor-Socialist", claimed *Tocsin*,

was "to draw country and city together; to harmonise their interests instead

of stirring up strife...".[30] Hannah declared that the role of the Labor Party

was to bring about "the complete emancipation of those who have to toil,

whether upon the land or in the factories".[31] This was a sense of collective

identity based on the common participation of farmer and city worker in

manual labour and was consistent with the idea, common in populist

movements, that all productive forms of labour are of equal moral worth. It

was only the "parasite", the non-producer, who was outside this collectivity.

Labor speakers objected to capitalists as a class who produced nothing, but

took for themselves the wealth created by the workers. These ideas were

influenced by socialism, especially that of Blatchford and, in a more indirect

way, by Fabian economic doctrines and Marx's theory of surplus value.[32]

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[28]*Tocsin*, August 4, 1904, p.2.

[29]*Tocsin*, January 8, 1903, p.4. See also Solly, *Tocsin*, November 12, 1903, p.1.

[30]*Tocsin*, January 21, 1904, p.4.

[31]*VPD*, CX, July 4, 1905, p.131.

[32]See p.290. A.M. McBriar has identified the idea that "the capitalist is the recipient of an 'unearned income'" as integral to Fabian economics. It seems likely that the writings of Blatchford, which were heavily influenced by Fabian economic doctrines, were the most important source of Fabian ideas for the Victorian labour movement. See A.M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics 1884-1918*, Cambridge at the University Press, London,

They were, however, given a populist complexion in the Victorian context and "fitted into other, sometimes older, versions of consensual social relations".[33] The terms "capitalist" and "middleman" appear to have been virtually interchangeable for Labor adherents of this "producer" ethic. Turner, vice-president of the Ballarat Labor branch, estimated that labour received only twelve per cent of the wealth created by it, the remainder "being absorbed by middlemen and others who toil not and neither do they spin".[34] D.C. McGrath explained to a Ballarat Labor audience in 1913 that the workers received only 6s 8d of every pound they produced; the remainder (13s 4d) went in rent, interest and profit. "The fight of Labor", explained McGrath, "was for that 13/4".[35] The measure of worth was honest, productive labour, whether carried out by the craftsman, labourer, farmer, clerk or businessman.[36] Even the owner of capital who invested in a productive enterprise, provided he was not an absentee, was a friend. Indeed, Labor propagandists maintained that the relationship between capital and labour should be consensual, and that each of them had mutual rights and responsibilities. As the *Tocsin* argued:

> Labourites emphatically do not war against any individual, nor do they attack any class. The rights of the capitalist are as sacred as those of the worker - indeed, capital is but accumulated labour, and so long as man has the right to sell his toil he has also the right to buy and store the product.[37]

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1962, pp.44, 296. Ironically, the influence of Blatchford is not considered by Race Mathews in his study of early Fabianism in Australia. See Race Mathews, *Australia's First Fabians: Middle-Class Radicals, Labour Activists and the Early Labour Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1993.

[33]Joyce, *Visions*, p.29.

[34]*Tocsin*, April 28, 1904, p.8. See also Blatchford, *Merrie England*, pp.72, 80-2. Blatchford used employer/capitalist and middleman interchangeably.

[35]*Ballarat Courier*, May 8, 1913, p.5.

[36]*Tocsin*, December 22, 1904, p.4.

[37]*Tocsin*, May 5, 1904, p.4.

Labor understandings of social relations remained ambivalent: they encoded both class and non-class meanings, theories of conflict and visions of mutuality and compromise.

Labor's claim that it was both a class party and a people's party was not mere vapour. It was rather a populist mode of political mobilisation which attempted to reconcile the claims of the working class with the liberal-democratic idea of popular sovereignty. Class was thus only one thread in a web of collectivities: it did not, in itself, define the political world of labour. The ambivalence of Labor propagandists about whether Labor was a "class party" was revealed when the *Tocsin* discussed the issue in May 1903. It accepted that Labor was a class party in the sense that it existed "to protect the interests of a particular class...For the same reason, the Capitalist Party is a class party". However, the *Tocsin* claimed that Labor was also a non-class party because it opposed class privilege and asserted the equal rights of all citizens. In this sense, although Labor's role was to protect the workers' rights, it was not a class party because it did not "demand for them any special privileges". Secondly, Labor's ideal was "the abolition of class distinctions" which, the *Tocsin* argued, was hardly the mark of a class party. Finally, the *Tocsin* expressed the more ambitious claim that

> ...in the deepest sense, the workers are not a class; they are the very heart and blood of a nation. Take away the capitalists, and the nation could still live. But take away the workers, and it would cease to be.[38]

This variety of political discourse bears the marks of classical populism, identifying the workers as the "real" nation, rather than merely a sectional interest. A favourite statement amongst Victorian Laborites at this time was that of English radical Frederic Harrison: "The working class is the only class

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[38]*Tocsin*, May 7, 1903, p.7.

which is not a class. It is the nation".[39]  As Love has shown, this claim has been central to labour populism and to the radical nationalist tradition.[40]

The Labor Party's reputation as the party of Australian nationalism, fostered by the *Bulletin* and the labour press (particularly the various publications of the AWU), contributed to its electoral success in the period up to 1914. Labor's commitment to "a genuine and self-reliant Australian nation" was a reassurance to voters that it stood not for selfish class interests but for the good of the nation.[41]  The strength of this populist-radical nationalist strand meant that the Australian Labor Party was more successful than its British counterpart in resisting the notion that Labor represented merely a sectional interest, the unions, against the "public" or the "community".[42]  Moreover, the idea that the workers comprised the "real nation" ensured that concepts such as "class" and "nation" were never entirely distinct in labour political discourse. Most Laborites assumed that the amelioration of the circumstances of the working class would lead to national and racial regeneration, and social reform thus acquired the status of patriotic duty.[43]  While there is evidence of a republican commitment among socialists and the Labor left from the 1890s, most sections of the labour movement professed a moderate Australian nationalism which they regarded as consistent with continuing loyalty to the British Empire.[44] When the Victorian unions discussed Joseph Chamberlain's proposals for imperial preference in 1904-5, those who opposed the scheme on the

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[39]McDougall, *Tocsin*, September 29, 1904, cover; Barker, *Age*, March 12, 1901, p.6.  See also *Tocsin*, December 6, 1900, p.7.

[40]Love, *Labour and the Money Power*, pp. 6-7, 15-9.

[41]*Tocsin*, March 10, 1904, p.4.

[42]Ross McKibbin, 'Class and Conventional Wisdom: The Conservative Party and the 'Public' in Inter-war Britain', in *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990, pp.259-93.

[43]*Tocsin*, June 2, 1904, p.4; Maloney, *Age*, March 22, 1904, p.6.

[44]For evidence of republicanism, see *Commonweal*, August 8, 1891, p.2;*Argus*, April 1, 1898, p.6; March 24, 1905, p.6;*Tocsin*, March 16, 1905, p.7; *Official Report of the Federation Conference held in the Court-House, Corowa, on Monday, 31st July, and Tuesday, 1st August 1893*, James C. Leslie [Printer], Corowa, 1893, p.21.

grounds that it was a threat to Australian independence and the Commonwealth's protectionist policy were in a minority. Laurie Cohen, who announced that he was a republican and a socialist, declared that "England owned Australia...body and soul".[45] Other Laborites such as Solly, Heagney, Roberts, Blomberg and Gray also opposed imperial preference for a combination of socialist and nationalist reasons.[46] The unions would not commit the THC to preferential trade until a definite policy had been announced by the British Government, but neither were they prepared to reject outright a scheme which might be a means of increasing rather than diminishing protection of Australian industry and strengthening the bonds of Empire.[47] They were willing to accept a scheme of imperial preference on a protectionist basis. The sentiments of the THC president, Archibald Dobson, were probably typical. He

> had more sympathy with the workers on the Yarra than he had with the workers on the Thames, but he had a great deal more sympathy with the workers on the Thames than he had with the workers on the Rhine.[48]

The union movement, no less than other sections of Australian society, felt the force of appeals to the crimson thread of kinship.[49] Indeed, as historians have recognised, the Labor Party was a bastion of support for the White Australia policy, which would not only prevent an influx of cheap foreign

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[45]*Argus*, March 24, 1905, p.6. See also *Tocsin*, March 16, 1905, p.7.

[46]*Argus*, December 3, 1904, p.16; March 24, 1905, p.6; *Age*, November 18, 1904, p.5; *Tocsin*, December 8, 1904, p.3; March 16, 1905, p.7. The Fitzroy branch of the Labor Party, which had a reputation for radicalism, poured cold water on preferential trade. The Social Democratic Party was also opposed to such a scheme. See *Argus*, December 10, 1904, p.19; *Tocsin*, March 30, 1905, p.2.

[47]THC, Minutes, March 31, 1905; *Age*, March 24, 1905, p.5; *Tocsin*, March 30, 1905, p.2.

[48]*Age*, November 18, 1904, p.5. See also John Lemmon's comment: "We must encourage local manufactures, but if a question arose between Britisher and foreigner, we should prefer our own flesh and blood." (*Tocsin*, November 3, 1904, p.5)

[49]*Tocsin*, March 30, 1905, p.2. See also Douglas Cole, '"The Crimson Thread of Kinship": Ethnic Ideas in Australia, 1870-1914', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 56, April 1971, pp.511-25.

labour but preserve racial purity and permit the development of an "enlightened and self-reliant" Australian nation.[50]

The idea that capital and labour were involved in an antagonistic relationship did influence labour politics in the early 1900s, but there were alternative interpretations of the social order. In labour political discourse, on the side of Labour and justice were democracy,[51] humanity,[52] the people,[53] the toilers,[54] the producers,[55] the workers,[56] the masses[57] and the nation. Labor's enemies consisted of the plutocracy,[58] the money power,[59] the usurer,[60] the landlord,[61] the squatter,[62] the classes,[63] the middleman,[64] and the monopolist.[65] Liberalism, in the Labor scheme of things, remained an ambiguous concept, denoting both positive and negative values. There was an attempt by Bromley in a 1904 election meeting to claim that he was a democrat, but not a liberal.[66] So complete, however, was the identification of liberalism with democracy in Victoria that Laborites rarely maintained this distinction. The survival of the Gladstonian rhetoric of "masses versus classes" highlights the ideological continuities between "Liberalised Labor"

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[50]Humphrey McQueen, *A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1986, pp.37-42; Markey, *The Making of the Labor Party*, ch.10, p.314. See also *Labor Call*, July 21, 1910, p.6.

[51]*Tocsin*, October 8, 1903, p.4.

[52]*Tocsin*, November 19, 1903, p.3.

[53]*Argus*, May 30, 1904, p.8.

[54]*Tocsin*, September 8, 1904, p.5.

[55]*Argus*, June 4, 1904, p.16.

[56]*Age*, May 10, 1904, p.6.

[57]*Tocsin*, October 20, 1904, p.5.

[58]*Tocsin*, October 8, 1903, p.4.

[59]*Tocsin*, November 19, 1903, p.3.

[60]*Tocsin*, January 21, 1904, p.4.

[61]*Age*, May 16, 1904, p.6.

[62]*Tocsin*, October 8, 1903, p.4.

[63]*Tocsin*, October 20, 1904, p.5.

[64]*Tocsin*, June 30, 1904, p.1.

[65]*Tocsin*, December 17, 1903, p.2.

[66]*Age*, May 17, 1904, p.5. Ernesto Laclau has pointed out the way in which Peron in Argentina made a similar distinction in his political rhetoric. In Argentina, however, the links between liberalism and democracy had always been tenuous, which lent credibility to Peron's distinction. See *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism - Fascism - Populism*, NLB, London, 1977, pp. 188-9.

of the 1890s and the emergent labourism of the period after 1900.[67] In 1907,
*Labor Call* explained that

> Labor stands for the Masses. The Government stands for the Classes.
> ...[Labor] does not stand for the Classes because it knows none. The
> Classes for which the Government stands would benefit under Labor
> rule, but they would benefit as part of the Mass. One physical organ
> may, by special treatment, be benefited at the expense of the body, but
> true development must regard the well-being of every organ.[68]

The emphasis on broad and inclusive collectivities in labour discourse
suggests that when notions of class conflict entered political language in the
early 1900s, they were refracted by an older moral economy. The interaction
of these components of political language may be seen in the claim of Harry
Beard before Port Melbourne electors in 1902 that he stood "as an
uncompromising upholder of the cause of down-trodden Labor as against
Capital". He then identified "land sharks and financial agents" as the
enemy.[69] Advocates of the Labor Party employed traditional imagery to
distinguish between their Party and its opponents. McDougall declared that
the "Labour Party, with its policy of progress and reform, is the people's
hope; it holds aloft the torch of life which has shone over centuries of
darkness". McDougall identified Labor with Light, Progress, Reform and
Freedom whilst its enemies stood for Darkness, Monopoly and Reaction.[70]
Many aspects of the political language and ideology of Labor conformed to
patterns that might reasonably be regarded as populist in character. The
*Tocsin* called for Labor to become a "UNITED VICTORIAN PEOPLE'S

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[67]*Tocsin*, November 19, 1903, p.8; October 20, 1904, p.5; *Argus*, April 17, 1906, p.5.
[68]*Labor Call*, March 14, 1907, p.1.
[69]*Age*, September 23, 1902, p.6.
[70]*Tocsin*, May 26, 1904, p.1.

PARTY" which would advance the interests of the producer.[71] The idea of Labor as the party of the people was a popular one among its supporters.[72]

Hostility to finance capital in general and bankers in particular has been a common feature of populist movements. This tendency was certainly present in Victorian Labor, a legacy of the calamitous crash of the banks in the colony in the early 1890s: "the money power is great and the people's power is crushed under the heel of plutocracy".[73] Anstey became the most prominent proponent of "Money Power" theories in Australia with his *Kingdom of Shylock* (1915) and *Money Power* (1921) and, as Love has shown, his financial theories had popular currency.[74] In the 1904 election campaign, Prendergast advocated the state coining its own silver, an American Populist plank.[75] The establishment of a state bank was the third plank in the 1903 Labor State Platform; it had been Labor policy since 1894.[76] The first Victorian Labor platform for the Federal Senate included the establishment of a "federal bank" and "a check on rash borrowing", which might be seen as an attempt to minimise Australia's dependence on finance capital.[77] The similarities between this plank and the financial policies of the right-wing populist National Citizens' Reform League are evident. The NCRL called for the cessation of public borrowing "save for works of an undoubtedly reproductive character or the redemption of loans".[78] While this policy was part of a broader campaign against the type of government expenditure favoured by the Labor Party, it is significant that both varieties

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[71]*Tocsin*, September 8, 1904, p.5.

[72]*Tocsin*, September 29, 1904, cover.

[73]*Tocsin*, November 19, 1903, p.3. See also McGrath, *Ballarat Courier*, May 5, 1913, p.4.

[74]Love, *Labour and the Money Power*, pp. 59-65, 76.

[75]*Age*, May 16, 1904, p.6.

[76]*Tocsin*, July 23, 1903, p.9; ULLP, *Platform and Organization*, n.d. [1894].

[77]*Argus*, March 7, 1901, p.7. In 1905, the state Labor conference adopted the policy of the restriction of public borrowing except for the conversion of existing loans. See PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 23, 1905, VSL MS 10389.

[78]H.L. Nielsen, *The Voice of the People, or The History of the Kyabram Reform Movement*, Arbuckle, Waddell & Fawckner, Melbourne, 1902, p.35.

of populism sought to reduce the state's dependence on creditors. The experience of the 1880s and 1890s, extravagance followed by a bust, sensitised many Victorians to the dangers of such policies, and a suspicion of excessive government dependence on finance capital was not confined to any particular class. For Labor, the restriction of public borrowing aimed "to prevent the re-adoption of a boom policy".[79] The Kyabram movement shared a desire to prevent a repetition of the 1880s but unlike the radicals and socialists in the labour movement, it was not antagonistic to finance capital. The country supporters of government retrenchment and reform blamed their problems on government extravagance, and saw public borrowing for non-productive purposes as one manifestation of this problem. They would not have accepted the major tenets of the "Money Power" theory, especially the implication that the working class, like the farmers, had been enslaved by the bankers. Moreover, the metropolitan unions were unlikely to have any sympathy with the anti-urbanism of the Kyabram movement, and one reason for the NCRL's hostility to public borrowing was their belief that governments spent too much money on "big cities" and thus bled the country dry.[80]

Victorian labour also propounded a radical constitutionalism which has its roots in populist politics. It is significant that the first plank in the state platform was "one adult, one vote", which denoted both opposition to plural voting and support for female suffrage.[81] Two Labor policies for constitutional reform with a strong populist flavour were elective ministries and initiative and referendum. The argument for elective ministries was that they would make the Ministry directly responsible to the people, providing a guarantee of their absolute sovereignty. Moreover, elective ministries would eliminate the worst effects of party government,

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[79]*Labor Call*, August 22, 1907, p.5.
[80]Nielsen, *The Voice of the People*, p.35.
[81]*Tocsin*, July 23, 1903, p.9.

the battle of the "ins" and "outs".[82] There remained something distasteful to labour about the party system partly, no doubt, because it was out of office at the state level and appeared likely to remain there. However, the policy had been part of the liberal program, advocated by Syme, Deakin and the *Age* .[83] The *Tocsin* looked forward to the day "when parties shall be extinct; when there shall be but the right People, guided by the clear light of Reason, Justice and Humanity".[84] When Lemmon faced the electors in 1903, he claimed not to "represent any organisation in particular, but had been chosen by the united democracy of Victoria".[85] The SPLP declared in favour of elective ministries in 1907 and McLeod, the editor of *Labor Call* and Party president in 1909 was a vigorous proponent of the policy: "Away with nomineeism, and hurray for the Sovereign People".[86]

Labor's support for initiative and referendum was based on a desire to bring the laws of the land more into conformity with the will of the people.[87] The referendum was a component of the radical liberal program in the late 1870s, advocated particularly by Pearson and Syme as a way of resolving deadlocks between a popularly-elected Assembly and an intransigent Council.[88] From the 1890s, Labor propagandists pressed for a broader application of the principle. Moreover, their proposal for popular initiative suggested a more direct role for the electors in their own

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[82]*Age*, October 23, 1900, p.6; *Tocsin*, July 7, 1904, p.4.

[83]Deakin to Crisp, February 6, 1893, Christopher Crisp Papers, NLA MS 743/304-308.

[84]*Tocsin*, November 19, 1903, p.3.

[85]*Argus*, November 25, 1903, p.8.

[86]*Age*, February 23, 1907, p.13; *Labor Call*, April 9, 1908, p.4. In 1908, the Annual Conference of the PLC voted not to support elective ministries. While the precise reasons for this decision are not clear, it seems likely that as the prospect of Labor forming a majority government at the federal level grew, most Labor Party members perceived that there was no justification for a policy of elective ministries. The policy was a casualty of the development of the Party machine. See PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 20, 1908, VSL MS 10389.

[87]*Tocsin*, November 5, 1903, p.4.

[88]John Tregenza, *Professor of Democracy: The Life of Charles Henry Pearson, 1830-1894, Oxford Don and Australian Radical*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1968, p.114. See also Deakin's advocacy of the referendum, Deakin to Crisp, February 6, 1893, Christopher Crisp Papers, NLA MS 743/304-308.

government than envisaged by the liberals. The Labor Party thus shared
with Victorian liberalism an emphasis on popular sovereignty, but
discarded the liberals' fear of unrestrained majority rule (or 'mobocracy', in
Higinbotham's terms).[89] The importance of the initiative and referendum
for Victorian Labor is indicated by its appearance as the second plank in the
1903 state platform.[90] The Victorians were disappointed by the failure of the
Federal Labor Party to fully embrace what they considered a sound
democratic policy. In the 1900 THC discussion of the Federal Labor platform,
Brown (Marble Masons) expressed support for a provision requiring
parliamentarians to appear before the electors whenever an important
matter arose and have a referendum of their constituents on it.[91] In 1902,
the Victorian delegates returned from the Commonwealth Labor
Conference bitterly disappointed that it had rejected the initiative and
referendum.[92] While the enthusiasm of the Victorians for the measure was
partly a consequence of their despair at the weakness of the Labor Party in
that state, there were more complex impulses at work. The initiative and
referendum was consistent with "labourist" theories of political
representation. In labour political discourse, the parliamentarian was a
delegate rather than a representative; his role was to register the will of the
people in the parliament. Labor tended to collapse the distinction between
direct democracy and representative democracy, at least in theory. This
contrasted with a traditional Burkean notion of the parliamentarian as a
representative who should, according to his own light, represent the

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[89]Stuart Macintyre, '"The Blessed Reign of Mobocracy": George Higinbotham and the
Maritime Strike', Jim Hagan & Andrew Wells (eds.), *The Maritime Strike: A Centennial
Retrospective: Essays in Honour of E.C. Fry*, Five Islands Press Associates in association with
the University of Wollongong Labour History Research Group and the Australian Society for
the Study of Labour History, Wollongong, 1992, p.63.
[90]*Tocsin*, July 23, 1903, p.9.
[91]*Age*, March 3, 1900, p.10.
[92]*Worker*, December 6, 1902, p.4. Harry Beard was "surprised at the many conservative
arguments that had been trotted out against the Referendum". See PLC, Minutes, December
13, 1902, VSL MS 10389.

interests of the whole state. It is significant that the young H.V. Evatt, writing from a "liberal" perspective, criticised the pledge and the initiative and referendum. For the liberals, he asserted,

> Parliament is considered something more than a machine for registering the commands of that vague and occasionally ambiguous abstraction 'the voice of the people'...Parliament is to be considered a responsible institution and not a mere delegation.[93]

The initiative and referendum was based on a suspicion of politicians and antipathy to party politics. It would, as one correspondent to the *Tocsin* argued, abolish "that political 'middleman' between the governing executive and the people. That middle man is Parliament itself".[94] The equation of parliament with the "middleman" suggests a populist basis of support for the policy, which is also reflected in labour hostility to excessive state interference in civil society and to the ceremonial aspects of parliamentary procedure. The *Tocsin* referred to "over-legislated, over-burdened Australia" and advocated the abolition of the formal aspects of parliamentary procedure: "A man accustomed to carrying a mace is hardly the kind of person to put on the land or to develop the natural resources of this great country".[95] Belief in the moral virtue of productive labour thus underpinned hostility to parliamentary pomp. The similarities between labour populism and the conservative populism of the Kyabram movement in this respect are striking. A scepticism about the motives of politicians characterised both right-wing and left-wing varieties of populist discourse. The *Tocsin* declared that the initiative and referendum meant "trusting the people" and would turn the attention of electors "to measures affecting the

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[93]H.V. Evatt, *Liberalism in Australia: An Historical Sketch of Australian Politics down to the year 1915*, Law Book Co. of Australasia, Sydney, 1918, p.70.
[94]*Tocsin*, November 3, 1904, p.3.
[95]*Tocsin*, February 4, 1904, cover.

community rather than to the rival claims of professional office seekers".[96]

Another Labor speaker thought that the policy would prove that "members

of Parliament were not the masters of the people, but only the delegates".[97]

E.J. Russell, later a Labor Senator for Victoria but in 1904, seeking the

suffrages of the Prahran electors, declared "Politicians were all alike -

dishonest and deluders of the people". Presumably he did not include

himself in this category, as he claimed that his opponents feared him

because "he uncovered their hypocrisies and exposed their betrayal of the

people's confidence".[98] In 1906, the PLC conference narrowly rejected a

proposal that the initiative and referendum be made the first plank in the

Party platform. Buchanan, the Ararat Labor delegate who proposed the

motion, declared

> Middle-class Governments had never benefited the workers. That class
> rose to power on the votes of the workers, and betrayed the men whose
> efforts had made its rule possible...They [the workers] had talked of
> socialising monopolies, but the first monopoly to be corporately
> controlled was the monopoly of Government. By direct legislation
> alone could this be effected...Then, and not until then, would the
> people be masters of their own destinies. Parliament had been weighed
> in the balance and found wanting. It served and spoke for a class, not
> for the masses.[99]

This defence of the initiative and referendum embodied class and non-class

discourses. The attack on middle-class governments appealed to the

working-class consciousness of the audience; the criticism of the institution

of parliament itself embodied a populist understanding. The speaker did

not criticise parliament on the grounds that it was an instrument of the

capitalist class, a claim sometimes advanced by socialists. Parliament was

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[96]*Tocsin*, November 5, 1903, p.4.
[97]*Ballarat Courier*, May 10, 1904, p.4.
[98]*Age*, May 16, 1904, p.6.
[99]*Tocsin*, April 19, 1906, p.8.

flawed because it usurped people's autonomy by permitting a small clique to exercise power.

The manner in which Labor recast the liberal ideal of popular sovereignty in a more radical direction is suggested by the contrast between the attitude of the Party mainstream in the early 1900s and that of Bernard O'Dowd. O'Dowd was a middle-class radical who identified strongly with the labour movement and was active in socialist circles from the later 1890s. His secularist ideas contributed to a personal ambivalence about democracy which was not shared by his working-class comrades. In his lecture *Conscience and Democracy*, published in 1902, O'Dowd argued that unless democracy was coupled with the exercise of a "noble conscience", it was

> likely to be productive of greater physical horrors, greater dangers to liberty, and greater intellectual, moral and spiritual degradation than the most odious tyranny...[100]

In particular, small minorities with unpopular moral or religious views were endangered in a democracy unrestrained by the "Moral Law".[101] Echoing an earlier generation of radicals such as Higinbotham and Pearson who were concerned about how to increase popular sovereignty without degeneration into mob rule, O'Dowd presented the alternatives of "Mass Conscience" and "Mob Frenzy".[102] Working-class radicals, on the other hand, had no doubt about the capacity of respectable working people to advance an enlightened democracy. Moreover, they rarely questioned the assumption that material improvement would enhance human happiness. O'Dowd, however, thought that the abolition of poverty would merely enable men and women to "develop their moral natures if they wish". Without moral improvement, society would

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[100]Bernard O'Dowd, *Conscience and Democracy*, Tocsin, Melbourne, 1902, p.4.
[101]O'Dowd, *Conscience*, p.4.
[102]O'Dowd, *Conscience*, p.8.

dissolve into its original elements, disorder, passion, degradation, and violence...democracy will break down and the whole awful path from slavery to freedom will have to be trodden anew.[103]

For O'Dowd, democracy was inevitable, but whether it would be for good or ill was still unsettled.[104]

## Labor, Liberalism and Class Consciousness

The Labor Party maintained an ambivalent attitude towards liberalism in the early 1900s. In 1904, the Christian Socialist L.V. Biggs and Harry Scott Bennett debated the question, 'Is a New Political Party Desirable?'. Bennett, who asserted that "all progress was the outcome of class struggles", was emphatic in his rejection of the need for a new Liberal Party:

> The middle classes who would compose the bulk of the proposed new party were a positive danger to the working classes because they were the worst exploiters of all.[105]

After federation, Labor activists showed little enthusiasm for a reunion with the declining Liberal Party. They insisted that the Liberals had betrayed their own principles and claims to the friendship of the workers. Working-class leaders, however, continued to identify with the Victorian liberal tradition despite their preference for an independent working-class political party. They portrayed the Labor Party as the natural heir to Victorian liberalism. As Bromley claimed, "the only true Liberal policy was the policy of the Labour party".[106] T.M. Burke, the Labor candidate for Glenelg in the 1904 election, declared that the PLC platform "embodied only the straight and

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[103]O'Dowd, *Conscience*, pp.16-17.
[104]O'Dowd, *Conscience*, p.12.
[105]*People's Daily*, February 2, 1904, p.1.
[106]*Argus*, May 7, 1904, p.16.

honest path of the liberalism of the Berry Government".[107]  In 1905, the

*Tocsin*  declared that "[w]ith a Seddon [New Zealand Liberal Prime Minister]

at the head of a progressive Government, it is unlikely that the Labour Party

as we now know it, would have come into existence, for the simple reason

that it would not have been required".[108]  Labour political language

sometimes included an appeal to working-class identity.  A Clifton Hill

Laborite, McDonald, thought that the "liberals and Conservatives...had been

tried and found wanting...If the interests of the workers were to be properly

looked after, they must be represented in Parliament by men from their own

ranks".[109]  The Labor Party's identification with liberalism and the cause of

"the people", however, remained a significant component of its political

appeal.  As the *Tocsin*  declared in 1906:

> ...the Victorian Labour Party has taken its place as the sole
> representative of progress in politics, and its policy is one for the people
> as a whole, not for any one section or clique.[110]

An identification with the old Liberal Party was also illustrated in 1904

when the PLC published a *Black and White List*  containing lists of votes on

recent divisions in the Legislative Assembly with the object of highlighting

the perfidy of the Liberals.  Prendergast, the compiler of the lists, explained

that the title was

> taken from a political pamphlet published by reformers during the
> troublous times of the seventies, when democracy was fighting for its
> existence against an unscrupulous combination between the land
> monopolists and the importers.[111]

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[107]*Argus*, May 9, 1904, p.7.

[108]*Tocsin*, October 26, 1905, p.5.

[109]*Ballarat Courier*, April 18, 1904, p.4.

[110]*Tocsin*, July 5, 1906, p.4.

[111]G.M. Prendergast (ed.), *Black and White List: Containing all the Important Division Lists of the Victorian Legislative Assembly for Session 1902-3, Special Strike Session of May, 1903, Session 1903 and Other Information*, G.M. Prendergast under the auspices of the Political Labor Council of Victoria, Melbourne, 1904, p. 9.

The *Black and White List* demonstrated both the betrayal of liberalism by the Liberals themselves, and the role of the Labor Party as the standard-bearer of the radical tradition in a dark era of reaction. This was not primarily a class perspective, since it identified Labor as part of a political tradition which was defined by adherence to liberal and democratic principles rather than its expression of the interests of a particular class. When we consider the social and political context in which this text was produced, however, the claim that the Liberals had betrayed their own ideas implied an analysis based on an assumption of class antagonism. Similarly the opinion of the *Tocsin* that latter-day liberals had abandoned the progressive program of the old Liberal Party of Higinbotham, Berry and Grant, which now lay "mouldering in its silent tomb, a tomb where progressive legislation is unknown and the only change is that of decay" suggested an attempt by Labor propagandists to appropriate the language and symbols of Victorian liberalism, recasting them in ways which would advance the cause of labour.[112] Such texts cannot be read in isolation from the actual political and industrial practices of labouring people in the early 1900s. When we consider both text and context, and attempt to relate them, what we find is a web of identities rather than a purely "class" perspective.[113]

The early years of the new century saw the consolidation of class as a significant component of political language. Many Labor propagandists spoke of the class division between "capital" and "labour" as the salient feature of contemporary politics. It was a perspective which was not peculiar to Labor radicals with socialist connections. Even Bromley, the SPLP leader and a Labor moderate, expressed this class-consciousness:

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[112]*Tocsin*, December 10, 1903, p.1.
[113]My discussion of "text" and "context" is informed by Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'History and Post-Modernism', *Past and Present*, 135, 1992, pp.194-208.

The old political lines of liberalism and conservatism were rapidly dying out...To-day the line of demarcation must be sharply cut. The position we had now to face was capital v. labour.[114]

In 1903 Solly told a Bendigo audience that he "sought to represent no other class but labor".[115]   The influence of Mann and the socialists is discernible in these statements.  Mann claimed to be "not such a fool as to believe it possible to bring capitalistic interests and labour interests into harmony".[116] Unemployment caused by the economic downturn of 1902-3; the threatening environment posed by the ascendancy of the Irvine Government; and the anti-socialist agitation of the employers and the NCRL prompted many unions, traditionally bastions of liberalism, to embrace a more class-oriented interpretation of the social order.  The *Typographical Journal* emphasised the antagonism between capital and labour during 1903 while in 1905, the secretary of the Operative Stonemasons congratulated the South Australian Tom Price on his elevation to premier, assuring him of the Victorian stonemasons' "sympathetic support in all matters that appeal favourably to our class 'The Workers'".[117]   Visions of mutuality, however, co-existed with the perception of class conflict.  As the ASE's *Monthly Report*  declared in December 1903,

> ...there are only two sides - labour and capital - in politics, and these sides will only be brought more closely together when the law of the land shall decide as to what is fair and just and the policeman shall assist in enforcing such decisions.[118]

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[114]*Argus*, May 21, 1904, p.13.

[115]*Bendigo Advertiser*, November 24, 1903.

[116]*Argus*, September 1, 1903, p.6.

[117]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, March 19, 1903, p.6; November 19, 1903, p.7; Laughton to Price, August 12, 1905, Stonemasons, Letterbook, NBAC, ANU E117/9/4.

[118]ASE, *Monthly Report*, December 1903, NBAC, ANU S 35.

The state would thus reconcile two classes whose interests tended to collide in the industrial sphere. Even a radical socialist such as Harry Scott Bennett accepted that the state would end class conflict and establish a peace in which the claims of labour were paramount. He declared that there "were two classes - the capitalistic and labor - and the only thing to bring the strife to a close would be a judicial vote at the ballot-box".[119] AMA president James Nankervis, in a speech to the 1904 annual conference of the Miners' Association, placed a greater emphasis on the neutrality of the state and its integrative function, but his attitude was not totally distinct from the socialist Bennett:

> It had been said that labor and capital must always be at variance, but he was hopeful that would not be so...the duty of the Government [was] to act the role of the father in the parable in the Old Book to reconcile the two sons, if he might so call them, who were at dispute. That reconciliation should be effected by arbitration.[120]

For Nankervis, the state was a neutral arbiter between the classes, resolving differences between them in the interests of society as a whole.

By 1910, a more radical language of economic class was prominent in labour political discourse. Socialist (including Marxist) ideas had some influence on the way in which this language was formulated, and many of its proponents were associated with the Socialist Party.[121] Union activists often brought a class conscious language to Labor Party affairs and, with the expansion of unionism after 1905 and the influence of syndicalist ideas from 1907, a new attitude took hold within the Party. As *Labor Call* declared

> We want the actual toilers of the country, and must have them, if our party is to preserve its working-class character. The storekeeper with a

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[119]*Ballarat Courier*, December 5, 1904, p.6.
[120]*Age*, February 24, 1904, p.6.
[121]THC, Minutes, February 3, 1910; March 3, 1910; *Age*, February 4, 1910, p.8; February 11, 1910, p.7; *Argus*, February 4, 1910, p.9;*Victorian Railway News*, June 1, 1910, p.5.

heart as big as his bank account, and the landed proprietor, with
sympathies as broad as his acres, are all very well in their way. A
political organisation controlled by these respected citizens, however,
would not be a Labor party, as we ordinarily understand the term.[122]

In early 1909, H.E. Langridge, a member of the Clerks' Union and the
Carlton Labor branch, initiated a movement against employers in the Labor
Party.[123] Langridge argued that only wage-earners should be permitted to
run as Labor candidates. His tortured definition of a wage-earner was

> A seller of labor as distinct from a buyer of labor (direct, or per rent,
> interest, or dividends): one whose income, however large, is mainly
> derived from self-employment, or from the hire of his or her services,
> manual or mental, to others, and who does not, unless compelled by
> boycott, employ others, or have given evidence of intention so to do,
> for profit, but only if at all in the expenditure of earned income, and is
> not deemed to be dissociated by social environment and connections
> from the generality of wage-earners...[124]

Labor Party members could have been forgiven for refusing to take this
proposition seriously, but Langridge's ideas gradually won support,
especially among the unionists in the PLC. In 1909, the AIMU accepted his
suggestion, and decided to send to the 1909 state conference a proposal that
Labor endorsement be given only to "bona-fide wage-earners".[125] George
Dupree, a veteran union leader, admitted that Langridge's "reasoning
cannot but be admitted by all class-conscious workers who recognise the
enormous differences between the aims and aspirations of the wage-earners
and those of the employing classes"[126] while 'Solidarity' argued that the PLC
had departed from the intentions of its founders:

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[122]*Labor Call*, February 4, 1909, p.7.
[123]For biographical details of Langridge, see *Herald*, June 23, 1945, p.5.
[124]*Labor Call*, February 11, 1909, p.5.
[125]AIMU, Minutes, January 28, 1909, UMA 2/1/1/3.
[126]*Labor Call*, February 25, 1909, p.5.

There was no idea that the P.L.C. should extend its area of membership beyond the industrial field...We might now be more correctly described as a democratic rather than a Labor party.[127]

In 1909, Langridge formed a 'Wage-Earners Group' "in view of the fast-growing practice of selecting employers to represent wage-earners". Its objects were to effect the selection of wage-earners as parliamentary candidates and to reform the Party constitution to reduce the power of employers in the Labor Party.[128] The Wage-Earners' Group received considerable support - it soon included members of the state executive, the THC executive, and secretaries and presidents of unions and branches - although supporters of exclusion remained a clear minority in the PLC.[129] At the 1910 conference, a proposal that employers be not selected as Labor candidates for any public position was defeated ninety-three to twenty-eight.[130] The arguments advanced in favour of the proposal, however, pointed to the role played by state industrial tribunals in fostering a sense of class consciousness among union activists. As one union delegate asserted, "They would not elect 'bosses' to represent them on Wages Boards, and why should they as workers appoint them to Parliament?"[131]

The 1911 state Labor conference rejected a proposal to confine Labor membership or candidature to wage-earners by 101 votes to forty-one.[132] After the conference, a debate in the *Labor Call* on the question 'Is the Labor Party a Class Party?' revealed some of the different understandings of the role of the Labor Party among members. Stephen Thompson argued that Labor was not a "class" party because the "word always conveys the idea of being only a small section of the people - the classes as opposed to the

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[127]*Labor Call*, April 1, 1909, p.2.
[128]*Labor Call*, October 14, 1909, p.8.
[129]*Labor Call*, November 25, 1909, p.6.
[130]*Labor Call*, June 16, 1910, p.3.
[131]*Labor Call*, June 16, 1910, p.3.
[132]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 15, 1911, NLA MS 131.

masses". "Class", he thought, might be interpreted as being opposed to the "People". This was a liberal conception of "class" as a narrow sectional interest to be overcome by a union of classes: that it was alive in the Labor Party in 1911 further emphasises the continuities between liberalism and labourism in Victoria. Thompson asserted : "...the Labor party stands for the masses as opposed to the classes and is opposed to all class privileges...Its aims are national, not sectional".[133] This traditional understanding was now powerfully challenged by a more positive sense of the term "class". D.P. Russell, a Ballarat miner, responded to Thompson with the assertion that

> all legislation designed to better the workers' condition must of necessity be class legislation. If the workers receive a rise in wages, it must be at the expense of the employing class...ours is not to deny the class nature of our movement, rather it is to educate the workers up to a knowledge of what it means.[134]

The Labor Party represented "the claims of the wage-receiving class as against the claims of the wage-paying class...".[135] This was an economic conception of class difference which assumed that politics was organised by an antagonism between buyers and sellers of labour. H.B. Higgins registered this development when he asserted in 1902 that Australian politics was resolving itself "into a struggle for power between those who pay wages and those who earn them".[136] An *ouvrieriste* political tradition, which emphasised the distinct identity of those engaged in manual labour for a wage, competed with discourses based on broader collectivities. In 1888, H.A. Harwood defined the working classes as

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[133]*Labor Call*, June 15, 1911, p.5.
[134]*Labor Call*, June 22, 1911, p.3.
[135]*Labor Call*, July 20, 1911, p.6.
[136]*Australian Woman's Sphere*, August 10, 1902, p.191.

that portion of the community which obtains a livelihood by manual labor or some handicraft...professional men, scholars, scientists...are always claiming to be working-men - and so they are; but if we were to class them among the working classes, they would reject the position with scorn, as would also clerks and shop assistants.[137]

Yet Labor propagandists also boasted that their Party "was not confined to the 'horny-handed' toilers, but embraced in its scope all men who worked honestly for a living".[138] They appealed to "Workers in Coats, Clerks, Shopmen, and the Like" as working men, while recognising the differences in status between manual labourers and white-collar workers which were a barrier to the co-operation of the latter class of employees with the Labor Party.[139] The discourse which constructed a working class in terms of those who engaged in manual labour for a wage remained strong enough to marginalise clerks and shop assistants as shabby-genteel.[140] L.L. Kelly, the secretary of the Shop Assistants' Union, thought that the respectability associated with shop work was a barrier to the unionisation of female shop assistants. According to Kelly, the women working in Chapel Street, Prahran "look on the union with cold disdain, and pull their skirts aside if a Labor man happens to be in the vicinity".[141] In 1911, a correspondent with *Labor Call* referred to "Mr Upstart and his typewriting daughters":

> Their life-long mania seems to be to try and convince themselves that they are a cut above the working class. Yet, with all their airs and graces, Monday morning sees them astride shank's pony going to business (not work), and at the week-end they partake of the butter as the result of Labor's churning, in the shape of decent wages. O, how miserably they fail to establish themselves as a distinct class.[142]

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[137]*Trades Hall Gazette*, September 15, 1888, p.8.
[138]Meehan, *Ballarat Courier*, March 29, 1904, p.3.
[139]*Tocsin*, May 28, 1903, p.2.
[140]*Ant*, November 26, 1891, p.12.
[141]*Labor Call*, October 1, 1914, p.1.
[142]*Labor Call*, December 14, 1911, p.3.

In 1914, the *Call* referred to "The Silly Young Clerk" who "thinks Labor low, common and vulgar".[143]  These comments might reflect the prejudices of Labor Party members more than the political predilections of clerks.  It is likely, however, that many white collar workers did regard themselves as a cut above manual labourers.  Rickard suggests that the "mass of the shabby-genteel seems to have obstinately resisted any identification with 'the workers'".[144]  In 1904, an Accountants' and Clerks' Association sought the assistance of the VEF "so as to avoid any need of legislation which they disbelieve in...'.[145]  Even in 1911, it had more members than the Clerks' Union.  While the creation of a clerks' wages board in 1911 provided clerical workers with a motive to support the Party, a large proportion clearly remained outside the orbit of labour politics.[146]  For Langridge, however, who as a clerk and radical political activist had a personal interest in broadening the meaning of "working class" to encompass workers outside the manual labourers, the central conflict was "'Capital versus Labor' - employers v. wage-earners - labor buyers v. labor sellers...".[147]  Similarly, the *Railway Gazette* declared that

> Whether or not men acknowledge the class war as ordinarily preached,
> nobody can deny the conflict of interest between the sellers and buyers
> of labor power.[148]

The bitter miners' strikes at Broken Hill and Newcastle in 1909, the Victorian agricultural implement employees' strike (1911) and the Brisbane tram strike (1912) received considerable press attention and, for some in the

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[143]*Labor Call*, August 6, 1914, p.2.

[144]Rickard, *Class and Politics*, p.300.

[145]VEF Executive, Minutes, February 3, 1904, NBAC, ANU M 65/1/3.

[146]Melanie Nolan, 'Sex or Class? The Politics of the Earliest Equal Pay Campaign in Victoria', in Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates (eds.), *Women, Work and the Labour Movement in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney, 1991, p.101.

[147]*Labor Call*, December 24, 1913, cover.

[148]*Railway Gazette*, May 15, 1909, p.5.

labour movement, seemed to confirm the idea of class struggle.[149] Even relatively minor incidents could reinforce class identity. The practice of employers boycotting employee representatives on wages boards and Labor Party activists highlighted the subordination of the labourer in the wage relationship.[150] In July 1909, the THC passed a motion expressing its indignation at the action of Clement Davidson, an employer in the agricultural implements industry, who dismissed an engine driver requested by the Factory Inspector to give evidence in a case of a breach of the Factories Act. Furthermore, Davidson was convicted by the court of having violated the Act by failing to pay the award wage.[151] The THC took special interest in the case because Davidson was a prominent Labor man and a member of the Melbourne City Council. In 1910, there was also dissatisfaction in the Labor Party with the preselection of the clothing trade employer and socialist J.P. Jones for a Legislative Council seat. Herbert Carter, the secretary of the Clothing Trades Union, said that

> the Union was not satisfied with Mr. Jones as an employer that he
> employed no male workers, had introduced the task system &
> demanded an amount of service that was unreasonable.[152]

The Union accused Jones of failing to run his business in accordance with Union principles and with indifference to the welfare of his employees. While Carter was probably taking the opportunity to gain a wage increase for Jones's employees, other members of the Union opposed the principle of

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[149]Ken Buckley and Ted Wheelwright, *No Paradise for Workers: Capitalism and the Common People in Australia 1788-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 221; Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, pp. 36-8, 40-5.

[150]David Plowman, 'Forced March: the Employers and Arbitration', in Stuart Macintyre & Richard Mitchell (eds.), *Foundations of Arbitration: The Origins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration 1890-1914*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, p.140; Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes*, p.134 (June 29, 1904); PLC CE, Minutes, June 1, 1907, VSL MS 10389; PLC (Creswick), Minutes, January 17, 1905; February 20, 1905, UMA; *Tocsin*, June 15, 1905, p.1; *Worker*, September 13, 1906, p.1; *Argus*, August 29, 1906, p.8; January 5, 1907, p.4.

[151] THC, Minutes, July 2, 1909; AIMU, Minutes, July 1, 1909, UMA 2/1/1/3.

[152]PLC CE, Minutes, April 2, 1910, VSL MS 10389.

employers representing labour.[153] Jones defended himself against these charges with considerable dignity, claiming that he had advised his employees to join the Union as early as 1896. However, his admission that he had not been an active member of the Labor Party for several years and that "whilst a socialist outside, he was a capitalist inside" cannot have pleased the more class-conscious members of the Party. Still, the central executive endorsed his candidature and Jones won the seat.[154] These incidents received considerable attention because they involved men with Labor sympathies. For many activists, they seemed to confirm that while the wage system continued, an employer's actions would inevitably be delimited by his or her class position. As a member of the THC, Dave Stephen, asserted

> The employer who claims to be a Laborite, is analagous [sic] to the non-unionist who affirms that he is a believer in, and sympathiser with, unionism, when he ought to know that the non-unionist is the greatest obstacle in the path of unionism.[155]

The 1912 state conference rejected a Langridge motion to alter the objective of the Labor Party by 100 votes to sixty-one. Langridge wanted the objective to be

> to secure the election of wage-earners to Parliament, and all local bodies, with a view to securing the full results of their industry to all wealth-producers by the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange, to be attained through the extension of the industrial and economic functions of the State and local governing bodies.[156]

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[153]Clothing Trades Union, Minutes, March 21, 1910, in Federated Clothing and Allied Trades Union of Australia (Victoria Branch) Collection, UMA 1/1/2. Jones raised the wages of many of his employees from £1/1/0 to 22s 6d at this time, most likely as an attempt to gain the favour of the Union. See Clothing Trades Union, Minutes, April 4, 1910, UMA 1/1/2.
[154]PLC, Minutes, April 23, 1910, VSL MS 10389.
[155]*Labor Call*, February 25, 1909, p.5.
[156]*Labor Call*, April 25, 1912, p.3.

This movement to exclude employers from the Party now had widespread union support. The attitude of many unionists was succinctly expressed by W.H. Turner, a delegate of the Carters and Drivers, who declared that "[e]mployers could not properly represent wage-earners in parliament, because the interest of one was diametrically opposed to that of the other".[157] The same conference which evinced growing support for the exclusion of employers also decided that any candidate for selection who offered to pay any of his or her election expenses would be immediately disqualified, a decision aimed at wealthy members of the leagues.[158]

There was no state conference in 1913, but Langridge intensified the propaganda:

> Dear Fellow Unionists -
>
> You fools! After instituting a 'Labor' party to capture Parliament and its armed forces from Capital by effecting representation by wage-earners instead of by employers, you are 'SELECTING' and electing Capitalists - employers - buyers of labor...as Labor members to fight against their own interests, and those of their class, for you - the sellers of labor.[159]

In the Labor branches, there was justified concern that these proposals were gaining support. Arthur V. Greenwood (Ringwood PLC) warned that the unions were creating a desire for a country Labor Party.[160] The Labor Party did "not belong solely to the Unionists" and the real social struggle was not between capital and labour but "the Producer and non-Producer".[161] This was a populist discourse which was increasingly rejected by class conscious unionists, who wanted to create a party which would be the compliant political wing of the industrial movement. The Wage-Earners Group was

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[157]*Labor Call*, April 25, 1912, p.3.
[158]*Labor Call*, April 25, 1912, p.6.
[159]*Labor Call*, December 4, 1913, p.8.
[160]*Labor Call*, December 11, 1913, p.3.
[161]*Labor Call*, January 15, 1914, cover.

still in existence and agitating energetically.[162]  At the 1914 state conference,

delegates debated for nine hours a motion introduced by E.F. Russell

(AIMU) to exclude employers from PLC membership; it was rejected by

eighty-one votes to fifty-two.[163]

It is evident that, despite the evidence of a burgeoning class

consciousness in the Labor Party, a more traditional understanding of

"class" as something to be overcome by the "people" or the "masses"

continued to exert considerable influence.  In 1914, a writer in the *Labor Call*

expressed this understanding:

> On the one hand we have the great Labor-Progressive party - the
> people's party - a party of progress - a national party - a party that
> legislates for the masses, not a small portion of the community...

Labor was fighting against the "money power", the "trusts, rings and

combines", the "boodlers" and "middlemen".[164]  As Love has shown, there

remained in the labour movement a strong populist cross-current which

could be aroused in particular political crises as a means of resolving

various, often contradictory, demands among the Labor Party's supporters

and focusing discontent on an easily identifiable enemy.[165]  Labor's political

mobilisation of working-class electors in the twentieth century involved the

construction of both class and non-class collectivities.  On the one hand, the

Labor Party appealed to the "working class" as a class apart, whose interests

were different from and even opposed to the employers.  A political strategy

based entirely on appeals to class identity would never have secured for

Labor a parliamentary majority, however, since it ignored differences in

status between blue-collar and white-collar workers, potential supporters

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[162]*Labor Call*, April 16, 1914, p.8.
[163]PLC, Annual Conference, Minutes, April 11, 1914, NLA MS 131.
[164]*Labor Call*, July 30, 1914, p.5.
[165]Love, *Labour and the Money Power*.

outside the working class and working-class electors who rejected the political significance of class categories. Labour political discourse thus recognised a community of interest between employers and workers, farmers and wage-earners, white-collar and blue-collar employees. Labor propagandists did not construct a political world on a "simple class basis".[166] At political meetings, in the Party press, in the theatre of parliament, they spun an intricate web of meanings which sought to define the political identity of potential supporters and to mould their political allegiances.

**Conclusion**

The language and symbolism of labour populism harked back to the Victorian liberal reform tradition but it was not merely a continuation of this tradition because the social and political context of its production had changed dramatically. Working-class appropriation of traditional political symbols could lead to a process of redefinition. The invocation of these symbols of Victorian liberalism was now a working-class affair; they were given meanings derived from the experiences of the working class. The labour movement thus created its own Higinbotham, its own Berry, and its own version of the Victorian liberal tradition. The Labor Party's success in appropriating the language of liberal democracy was highlighted by the increasing discomfort of conservative employers in the presence of the discourse. *Liberty and Progress*, the VEF organ, declared in 1905:

> There was a time when a sentimental feeling prevailed that to be 'democratic' was to be something good. Those days have gone. The word has so long been associated with everything that is bad in our legislation, and is so deeply implicated in all the evil that is promised us in the future, that people generally wish to hear no more of it...it

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[166]D.W. Rawson, 'Labour, Socialism and the Working Class', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 7, No. 1, May 1961, p.88.

now stands only for the Labour socialists, who represent a very small class in the community.[167]

*Liberty and Progress* 's comment suggested the way in which labour had reformulated the language of democracy, broadening its social and economic dimensions. As Archibald Stewart, a future secretary of the PLC remarked in 1909,

> Organised Labor seeks to give a real citizenship to all, when work and the conditions of work shall be controlled in the interests of humanity instead of that of privilege.[168]

The inattention of Australian labour historians to political language has led to an inadequate explanation of how working-class politics came about. Moreover, these historians have not examined the interaction of social experiences and institutional responses out of which emerged labour politics, and of the ways in which class consciousness intersected with other collectivities, such as "the people" and "the producers". A close analysis of the political language of the labour movement reveals the richness and complexity of the social visions of a people who have been inaccurately characterised as indifferent to ideas and interested only in "how many 'bob' a man got in a day".[169]

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[167]*Liberty and Progress*, April 25, 1905, p.4.
[168]*Labor Vanguard*, December 23, 1909.
[169]C.M.H. Clark, *A History of Australia, Volume V*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981, p.41.

# CONCLUSION

By 1914, many of the patterns which dominated the Victorian Labor Party's history up to 1955 were evident. Labor women had been marginalised, and their claims to a moderate degree of autonomy rejected by a male-dominated Party leadership. Labor activists constructed class and citizenship in masculine terms and in their appeals to female electors. They assumed that women were dependents whose natural sphere was private and centred on the home and the family and whose interests were congruent with male breadwinners. Labor's commitment to women's rights (the Party had officially supported women's suffrage since 1894) did not involve the subversion of traditional gender roles.

In the years leading up to the Great War, the Party was increasingly dominated by the unions. They were the most important source of Party finance, sent a majority of delegates to the annual conference (many delegates representing branches were also unionists), and maintained a strong presence on the central executive. Union control of the Party, however, was never absolute. It was the branches, not the unions, which selected parliamentary candidates under the supervision of the central executive. Unionists could take part in selections, but there were barriers to such participation.[1] Moreover, unionists did not necessarily speak with a united voice when it came to political matters.

The union officials who formed the leadership of the Party organisation regarded political action as an integral part of their unions' activities. By 1914, most of these unions were committed to either the state wages boards, the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, or both. Many unionists had expressed dissatisfaction with these systems in the years before the war, and syndicalist ideas began to penetrate the labour

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[1]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, November 1909, p.21; January 1911, pp.12-13.

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# USE OF THESES

# LABOUR AND POLITICS IN VICTORIA, 1885-1914

Francis Robert Bongiorno

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of the Australian National University

February 1994

# CONCLUSION

By 1914, many of the patterns which dominated the Victorian Labor Party's history up to 1955 were evident. Labor women had been marginalised, and their claims to a moderate degree of autonomy rejected by a male-dominated Party leadership. Labor activists constructed class and citizenship in masculine terms and in their appeals to female electors. They assumed that women were dependents whose natural sphere was private and centred on the home and the family and whose interests were congruent with male breadwinners. Labor's commitment to women's rights (the Party had officially supported women's suffrage since 1894) did not involve the subversion of traditional gender roles.

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[1]*Australasian Typographical Journal*, November 1909, p.21; January 1911, pp.12-13.

movement. Syndicalism, however, in its emphasis on direct action, could not compete with state arbitration as a source of institutional stability for the unions, nor was it seen by a large section of the rank-and-file as likely to yield better results for wage-earners than state industrial tribunals. Even in 1918, Australian syndicalism was mainly the preserve of left-wing union leaders and activists. It had much less influence on the "half-conscripted recruits to trade unionism".[2]

Similarly, it was union officials and activists who brought a powerful sense of class consciousness to the affairs of the Labor Party. Ross McKibbin's comment on the British Labour Party might also be applied to its Victorian counterpart: "The rise of the Labor Party and the slow attrition of the Liberal Party...both came from an acutely developed working-class consciousness".[3] It is unclear, however, just how significant "working-class consciousness" was in the growth of support for the Labor Party. It is evident that by 1914, many Victorian workers, like their British counterparts, were attached to a defensive labourism which asserted the moral worth and cultural autonomy of the working class without ever closing off the possibilities of political co-operation with other classes. It was these workers who provided Labor with important reserves of enthusiasm and support, even when its political stocks were low. It is doubtful, however, whether the development of a Labor Party can be explained primarily in terms of the growth of a working-class consciousness. It is an argument of this thesis that unions, political parties and the state have played a significant role in class formation. As Giovanni Sartori has argued, "it is the class that receives its identity from the party".[4] This study of labour

[2]D.W. Rawson, 'Labour, Socialism and the Working Class', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 7, No. 1, May 1961, p.87. See Turner, *Industrial Labour and Politics*, pp.182-6.
[3]McKibbin, Ross, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924*, Oxford University Press, London, 1974, xiv.
[4]Giovanni Sartori, 'From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology', in Seymour Martin Lipset (ed.), *Politics and the Social Sciences*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1969, p.84.

politics in Victoria suggests that the relationship between party and class is more complex than Sartori allows here, but he is correct in suggesting that parties should not be regarded as epiphenomenal, or mere reflections of class interests. The political process itself played a significant role in the emergence of working-class consciousness in Victoria. The development of various state industrial tribunals fostered a class consciousness by institutionalising "labour" (as well as "capital") and encouraged the unionisation of the workforce. It is true that this did not guarantee Labor political support. As Rawson has noted, many unionists voted for the non-Labor parties or were politically apathetic.[5] A strongly unionised working class, however, was probably more likely to accept the "class image"[6] which the Labor Party fostered than a working class without strong trade unions or an associational culture capable of playing a similar role. Moreover, the development of state industrial tribunals "politicised" relations between employers and unions. The Liberals and Laborites to whom the wages boards and Arbitration Court owed their existence sought to create a neutral setting for the determination of wages and conditions, but both employers and union officials were aware that the way in which these tribunals functioned depended on the political environment. Victorian unionists knew from harsh experience that the effectiveness of the wages board system was dependent on the whims of politicians (the system was not even a permanent system until 1905) while the obvious shortcomings of the Arbitration Court led the unions to seek amendment of the Act. It was in this sense that industrial relations were politicised in the period after 1895. The process encouraged the unions to increase their commitment to the Labor Party, and it was certainly a significant reason for the growth of working-class support for Labor in the period before 1914.

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[5]Rawson, 'Labour, Socialism and the Working Class', p.87.
[6]See footnote 4.

There is a further problem with understanding the growth of electoral support for the Labor Party as an outcome of increasing working-class consciousness. Labor received considerable electoral support from electors outside the working class such as farmers, shopkeepers and professionals. Moreover, the political leadership of the labour movement mobilised voters, including working class electors, by appeals to populist identities and traditions. Class consciousness was never the sum of working-class political consciousness, and there were strong populist cross-currents in the labour movement which not only provided a sense of continuity with an earlier colonial liberalism, but were a way of resolving tensions in Labor's diverse constituencies and organising discontent for party political purposes.

By 1914, Labor had retreated from any strong commitment to radical socialism. Instead, the Party leadership professed a evolutionary state socialism which was consistent with the program of piecemeal reform in the Party platform. The dominant labourism of the Party had its roots in Victorian liberalism; it was not, as has been implied by most historians, a debased socialism. Still, there were some new political patterns in labourism. By 1910, a radical language of economic class was prominent in labour political discourse. Mainly through the influence of socialist ideology, class had become a more inclusive concept. There was a greater emphasis on working-class political agency in labour discourse. Moreover, the Labor Party extended the concept of popular sovereignty in its radical constitutional policies, and gave to political organisation a cultural significance which it had never acquired in the hands of colonial liberals. Labor's emphasis on solidarity and discipline was not shared by the Liberals, who claimed that the development of a Labor machine led to rule by a clique.

The position of Catholics in relation to the Labor Party also suggested a departure from earlier patterns. While Catholics' relationship to colonial

liberalism in the 1870s and 1880s had been ambivalent due to their hostility to secular education, Labor received solid Catholic support by 1914. The precise impact of religious affiliation on voting patterns, however, is far from clear. Many Catholics voted Labor for reasons that had little to do with their religious affiliation. The education issue was probably of much greater concern to the Catholic Federation, press and hierarchy than to most Catholic Labor voters.

Victorian Labor's continued electoral weakness in state politics was also evident on the eve of the Great War. Rawson has argued convincingly that the main reason for this weakness was an electoral system heavily biased towards country electorates.[7] Labor's difficulties in Victoria were highlighted in December 1913, when it took office (with Elmslie as premier) after the non-Labor parties fell out over the question of electoral reform. Labor's political enemies, however, resolved their differences to turn it out of office in less than a fortnight.[8] Labor received strong support in Victorian state elections from 1908, particularly in Melbourne and the major provincial towns, but it was electorally weaker outside the metropolitan area than its counterparts in New South Wales and Queensland. In 1914, Labor held only three non-mining rural seats in state politics. As Rawson has suggested, in Commonwealth elections the Victorian Party's support did not lag behind that of its interstate counterparts and even outside Melbourne, Labor performed creditably in federal elections before 1919.[9]

If Victorian Labor Party policy diverged unmistakeably from that of its interstate counterparts in any matter, it was in defence and international relations. As Rawson has suggested, this was evident in the branch's suspicion of collective security in the 1930s, but the trend was apparent

[7]D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria, 1910-1966: Out of Step, or Merely Shuffling?', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 49, October 1967, p.62.
[8]Humphrey McQueen, 'Victoria', in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia 1880-1920*, University of Queensland Press, St.Lucia, 1975, p.322.
[9]Rawson, 'Victoria, 1910-1966', p.69.

much earlier in the Victorian labour movement's response to the defence policies of the Deakin Ministry and the Federal Labor Party.[10]  From 1908, there was considerable hostility to compulsory military training, which had been embraced by the Commonwealth Labor Conference in that year. Victorian Labor Party leaders such as Findley, Tudor, Anstey, Tunnecliffe, Cohen, Solly, Barker and E.F. Russell opposed the proposal, and the THC passed a resolution critical of compulsion.[11]  McLeod declared in *Labor Call*, "Anti-militarism means a working-class Labor party, militarism means the political soldiery of capitalism swaggering in the uniform of Labor".[12] Indeed, the Federal Party's policy created such a clamour that the state executive was compelled to call a conference to resolve the matter.  When it met in November 1908, a majority of delegates voted that the conference was not competent to deal with the matter.[13]  The AWU's opposition to any alteration of the federal policy was a crucial factor in this outcome, since the Union wielded considerable moral authority, especially among the country branches of the PLC through its journal, the *Worker*.[14]  Hostility to compulsory military training was strongest in the metropolitan branches and the THC but even here, there was division.[15]  Many Party members accepted the argument that compulsory training and a citizen soldiery was preferable to a professional standing army, which could be more readily utilised against striking unionists.  These activists regarded compulsory training as a responsibility of citizenship and an alternative to a military

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[10]Rawson, 'Victoria, 1910-1966', p.73.

[11]*Labor Call*, January 23, 1908, p.8; March 5, 1908, p.5; August 20, 1908, p.8; October 22, 1908, p.8; October 29, 1908, pp.2-4; November 5, 1908, p.4; Australian Labor Party, *Official Report of the Fourth Commonwealth Political Labour Conference*, Worker [Printers], Brisbane, 1908, pp.18-20.

[12]*Labor Call*, October 29, 1908, p.8.

[13]*Labor Call*, November 26, 1908, p.3.

[14]*Worker*, October 1, 1908, p.17; *Labor Call*, November 5, 1908, p.8; November 12, 1908, p.8; November 19, 1908, p.7.

[15]*Labor Call*, January 2, 1908, p.8; November 12, 1908, p.8.

caste.[16] Still, the controversy indicated the presence of a strong anti-militarist sentiment in the labour movement. Victorians such as Anstey, Curtin, Brennan and Muriel Heagney were products of this tradition.[17] It was this radical anti-militarism which underpinned the Victorian branch of the Labor Party's opposition to Hughes's conscription proposals in 1916 and 1917.

In 1914, the Fisher Labor Government was returned to office with major gains in Victoria but even as the Labor Party celebrated its victory, the armies of Europe and the British Empire were massing for a war which would change the face of the western world. Its impact would be felt by a Labor Party in a small and isolated nation whose people had once dreamed that they could build a paradise for the working man, free of the evils of the old world.

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[16]*Labor Call*, August 20, 1908, pp.8, 20.

[17]In May 1914, Curtin moved a successful motion in the THC declaring support for the Hardie-Vaillant resolution favouring a general strike as a means of preventing war and emphasising international working-class solidarity. See THC, Minutes, May 28, 1914.

# Appendixes

## Appendix A

## Labor Members of the Victorian Parliament, 1891-1914

Note: The informality of Labor political organisation in the 1890s means that it is not possible to determine with any precision who was a Labor member before 1900. Those who were either present or former members of the Melbourne THC, one of the provincial TLCs, or the AMA are in italics, but note that J.B. Burton, an AMA official and the MLA for Stawell, was elected to the Assembly as a Liberal. The other members were Liberals who received Labor Party endorsement, or were accepted by the PLP as sympathetic to labour and permitted to participate in its meetings. Only William Maloney, an avowed socialist and labour member from 1889, does not fit easily into any of these categories, although he participated in the affairs of the THC in 1901. In 1894, the United Liberal and Labor Party endorsed a group of Labor and Liberal candidates. It is the successful candidates from among its list of endorsements which is reproduced here, with the addition of the Bendigo People's Party candidate and union leader, W.A. Hamilton, who joined the PLP after the election. The same principle has been applied to the candidates endorsed by the ULP in 1897.

## *Legislative Assembly*

John Hancock won the Collingwood by-election on 17 April 1891.

### 20 April 1892

*W.D. Beazley* (Collingwood), *F.H. Bromley* (Carlton), *J.B. Burton* (Stawell), W.T. Carter (Williamstown), Thomas Smith (Emerald Hill), W.R.N. Maloney (Melbourne West), John Murray (Warrnambool), Samuel Samuel (Dundas), *W.A. Trenwith* (Richmond), *Joseph Winter* (Melbourne South), *D.R. Wyllie* (Melbourne North), P.M. Salmon (Port Melbourne), G.H. Bennett (Richmond)

### 20 September 1894

*F.H. Bromley* (Carlton), J.N.H. Hume Cook (East Bourke Boroughs), William Ievers (Carlton South), Francis Longmore (Dandenong and Berwick), R.W. Best (Fitzroy), A.L. Tucker (Fitzroy), Graham Berry (East

Bourke Boroughs), *W.A. Hamilton* [People's Party] (Sandhurst), *John Hancock* (Footscray), G.H. Bennett (Richmond), *G.M. Prendergast* (Melbourne North), *George Sangster* (Port Melbourne), Alfred Deakin (Essendon and Flemington), James Styles (Williamstown), *W.A. Trenwith* (Richmond), *Joseph Winter* (Melbourne South), W.R.N. Maloney (Melbourne West)

*J.G. Barrett* (Labor) won the Carlton South by-election as a Labor candidate on 15 March 1895.

**14 October 1897**

*W.D. Beazley* (Collingwood), Edgar Wilkins (Collingwood), *F.H. Bromley* (Carlton), *John Hancock* (Footscray), W.R.N. Maloney (Melbourne West), *George Sangster* (Port Melbourne), Thomas Smith (Emerald Hill), James Styles (Williamstown), *W.A. Trenwith* (Richmond), G.H. Bennett (Richmond) *J.B. Tucker* (Melbourne South), *W.A. Hamilton* (Sandhurst), John Murray (Warrnambool), *J.B. Burton* (Stawell), J.N.H. Hume Cook (East Bourke Boroughs), William Gurr (Geelong)

**1 November 1900**

W.A. Trenwith (Richmond), G.M. Prendergast (Melbourne North), E.C. Warde (Essendon and Flemington), George Sangster (Port Melbourne), J.B. Tucker (Melbourne South), W.D. Beazley (Collingwood), F.H. Bromley (Carlton), Edward Findley (Melbourne), Edgar Wilkins (Collingwood), W.R.N. Maloney (Melbourne West), Thomas Smith (Emerald Hill), J.W. Billson (Fitzroy), J.B. Burton (Stawell)

**1 October 1902**

F.H. Bromley (Carlton), J.W. Billson (Fitzroy), W.D. Beazley (Collingwood), Frank Anstey (East Bourke Boroughs), G.A. Elmslie (Albert Park), J.B. Tucker (Melbourne South), E.C. Warde (Essendon and Flemington), W.R.N. Maloney (Melbourne West), Thomas Smith (Emerald Hill), G.M. Prendergast (Melbourne North), Edgar Wilkins (Collingwood)

George Roberts won the Richmond by-election on 21 December 1903.

Thomas Tunnecliffe won the Melbourne West by-election on 5 December 1903.

**1 June 1904**

Frank Anstey (Brunswick), W.D. Beazley (Abbotsford), J.W. Billson (Fitzroy), W.H. Colechin (Geelong), G.A. Elmslie (Albert Park), D.C. McGrath (Grenville), David Smith (Bendigo West), John Lemmon (Williamstown), E.C. Warde (Flemington), G.M. Prendergast (Melbourne North), H.E. Beard (Jika Jika), H.S. Bennett (Ballarat West), R.H. Solly (Railway Officers), Edgar Wilkins (Collingwood), A.R. Outtrim (Maryborough), F.H. Bromley (Carlton), Martin Hannah (Railway Officers)

**15 March 1907**

W.D. Beazley (Abbotsford), G.A. Elmslie (Albert Park), Thomas Glass (Bendigo East), David Smith (Bendigo West), Frank Anstey (Brunswick), F.H. Bromley (Carlton), Thomas Tunnecliffe (Eaglehawk), J.W. Billson (Fitzroy), E.C. Warde (Flemington), D.C. McGrath (Grenville), A.R. Outtrim (Maryborough), G.M. Prendergast (Melbourne North), George Sangster (Port Melbourne), John Lemmon (Williamstown)

E.J. Cotter won the Richmond by-election on 2 October 1908.
R.H. Solly won the Carlton by-election on 23 October 1908.

**29 December 1908**

Thomas Glass (Bendigo East), Jeremiah Wall (Port Fairy), A.R. Outtrim (Maryborough), George Sangster (Port Melbourne), Thomas Tunnecliffe (Eaglehawk), David Smith (Bendigo West), John Lemmon (Williamstown), G.M. Prendergast (Melbourne North), G.A. Elmslie (Albert Park), Martin Hannah (Collingwood), D.C. McGrath (Grenville), R.H. Solly (Carlton), E.J. Cotter (Richmond), William Plain (Geelong), A.N. McKissock (Ballarat West), Frank Anstey (Brunswick), J.W. Billson (Fitzroy), W.D. Beazley (Abbotsford), Alexander Rogers (Melbourne), E.C. Warde (Flemington), J.W. McLachlan (Gippsland North)

J.R. Jewell won the Brunswick by-election on 18 March 1910.
A.J. Hampson won the Bendigo East by-election on 16 June 1911.

**16 November 1911**

Martin Hannah (Collingwood), Alexander Rogers (Melbourne), G.M. Prendergast (Melbourne North), David Smith (Bendigo West), E.C. Warde (Flemington), E.J. Cotter (Richmond), John Lemmon (Williamstown), J.R. Jewell (Brunswick), George Sangster (Port Melbourne), A.R. Outtrim (Maryborough), J.W. Billson(Fitzroy), G.A. Elmslie (Albert Park), D.C. McGrath (Grenville), Thomas Tunnecliffe (Eaglehawk), J.W. McLachlan (Gippsland North), A.J. Hampson (Bendigo East), W.D. Beazley (Abbotsford), R.H. Solly (Carlton), William Plain (Geelong)

G.C. Webber won the Abbotsford by-election on 26 July 1912.
E.J. Hogan won the Warrenheip by-election on 28 February 1913.
John Chatham won the Grenville by-election on 15 May 1913.
The Labor members G.A Elmslie, J.W. Billson, William Plain, A.R. Outtrim, G.M. Prendergast and John Lemmon were returned at by-elections on 20 December 1913.
M.M. Blackburn won the Essendon by-election on 23 July 1914.

**26 November 1914**

G.C. Webber (Abbotsford), G.A. Elmslie (Albert Park), A.J. Hampson (Bendigo East), David Smith (Bendigo West), J.R. Jewell (Brunswick), R.H. Solly (Carlton), Martin Hannah (Collingwood), Thomas Tunnecliffe (Eaglehawk), M.M. Blackburn (Essendon), J.W. Billson (Fitzroy), E.C. Warde (Flemington), William Plain (Geelong), J.W. McLachlan (Gippsland North), John Chatham (Grenville), A.R. Outtrim (Maryborough), Alexander Rogers (Melbourne), G.M. Prendergast (Melbourne North), H.S. Bailey (Port Fairy), George Sangster (Port Melbourne), E.J. Cotter (Richmond), E.J. Hogan (Warrenheip), John Lemmon (Williamstown).

## Legislative Council

W.J. Evans, Public Officers and Railway Officers, 1904-1907, Melbourne North, 1907-1914.
Adam McLellan, Melbourne East, 1904-1917.
J.P. Jones, Melbourne East, 1910-1934, South Western, 1934-1940 (Left the Labor Party in 1931).

W.H. Fielding, Melbourne West, 1913-1916.

# Appendix B

## Victorian Labor Members of the Commonwealth Parliament

### *Senate*

Stephen Barker, Presser and Union official, 1910-1919, 1922-1924.

John Barnes, Shearer and Union official, 1913-1920, 1922-1935, 1937.

J.G. Barrett, Tinsmith, 1901-1903.

A.E.H. Blakey, Clerk, 1910-1917.

Edward Findley, Compositor, 1903-1917, 1922-1929.

A.N. McKissock, Printer and Union official, 1914-1917.

E.J. Russell, Estate Agent, 1906-1925 (Left the Labor Party in 1916)

### *House of Representatives*

Frank Anstey, Seaman, **Bourke**, 1910-1934.

J.A. Arthur, Lawyer, **Bendigo**, 1913-1914.

H.E. Beard, Bricklayer, **Batman**, 1910.

Frank Brennan, Lawyer, **Batman**, 1911-1931, 1934-1949.

J.E. Fenton, Printer and Journalist, **Maribyrnong**, 1910-1934 (Left the Labor Party in 1931)

J.F. Hannan, Ironworker, **Fawkner**, 1913-1917, Senator, 1924-1925.

E.F.G. Jolley, Lawyer, **Grampians**, 1914-1915.

J.K. McDougall, Farmer, **Wannon**, 1906-1913.

D.C. McGrath, Grocer, **Ballaarat**, 1913-1934 (Left the Labor Party in 1931).

W.R.N. Maloney, Surgeon, **Melbourne**, 1904-1940.

James Mathews, Tailor, **Melbourne Ports**, 1906-1931.

P.J. Moloney, Teacher and Land Agent, **Indi**, 1910-1913, 1914-1917, **Hume** (NSW) 1919-1931.

A.T. Ozanne, Accountant, **Corio**, 1910-1913, 1914-1917.

J.B. Ronald, Presbyterian Minister, **Southern Melbourne**, 1901-1906.

J.H. Scullin, Grocer and Journalist, **Corangamite**, 1910-1913, **Yarra**, 1922-1949.

F.G. Tudor, Hatter, **Yarra**, 1901-1922.

# Appendix C

## Trades Hall Council Parliamentary Committee Platform

### (1886)

1. Amendment of Trades Union Act

2. Introduction of an "Employers Liability Bill"

3. Introduction of a Comprehensive Bill for the legalization of the Eight Hours

4. Appointment of Practical working men as Inspectors under the Factories & Shops Act

5. Amendment of Masters & Servants Act

6. Appointment of Honorary Magistrates from Competent Working Men

7. Increase and better mode of distribution of the vote for Prospecting purposes, and the strict enforcement of Labour covenants in mining leases

8. Payment of members of Parliament

Source: Murphy to Smith, February 1, 1886, Trades Hall Council, Parliamentary Committee Letterbook, in Geoff McDonald Collection, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University, P 94/20.

# Appendix D

## Trades Hall Council Platform

### (1889)

1, The maintenance and extension of protection to local industries;

2, the extension of the same principle to the farming and grazing interests by an adequate increase in the duties on imported cereals and stock;

3, making public boards and trusts directly responsible to Parliament in all matters involving the expenditure of public money;

4, representation of Labor upon all public boards, trusts, and the Commission of the Peace;

5, extension of the franchise and the provisions of the Employers' Liability Act to Seamen;

6, repealing or modifying the Civil Service Act, and the regulations under the Railway Management Act, especially in reference to the limitation of age of employees;

7, a bill for the compulsory indenturing and teaching of apprentices, and amendment of the Master and Apprentice Act, to provide for greater compensation for neglect of employers to teach apprentices, and to facilitate the recovery thereof;

8, the repeal or radical alteration of the Master and Servant Act, to provide that breaches of agreements either by masters or servants may be punishable by fine or imprisonment, and for making agreements entered into outside the colony invalid;

9, Wages Lien Bill;

10, Eight Hours Legalisation Bill

11, abolition of plural voting

12, proper inspection of all workshops, factories land boilers, scaffolding, and appliances used in the construction or erection of buildings, machinery , &c., and the appointment of practical workmen as inspectors;

13, a bill to prevent the introduction of criminal, pauper and Asiatic labor;

14, amendment of the Factories and Shops Act, to provide for a uniform time for closing shops throughout the colony.

# Appendix E
## Progressive Political League of Victoria (1891)

### THE OBJECT OF THE LEAGUE

Is to secure for all classes such legislation as will advance their interests by

(a) The enrolment of all persons desirous of promoting progressive legislation
(b) The return of Candidates to Parliament pledged to support the Platform of the League.  The subscription shall be not less than one shilling per annum, payable in advance.

## PLATFORM

### Ist. - ELECTORAL REFORM

(a) Abolition of Plural Voting.  One general roll on the basis of Manhood Suffrage.
(b) Special provision for Seamen and others following migratory occupations to record their votes at Parliamentary Elections.
(c) Extension of the Hours of Polling from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., to be uniform throughout the Colony.
(d) Equal Electoral Districts on a population basis, and single electorates.

### 2nd. - REFORM OF THE LABOR LAWS

(a) Repeal of the 6 Geo. IV. cap 129, and other Acts relating to conspiracy in Industrial Disputes
(b) A Law enacting a Maximum Labor Day of Eight Hours.
(c) The Repeal of that portion of the Employers and Employees Act formerly known as the Master and Servants Act.
(d) Amendment of the Factories and Shops Act.
(e) Extension of the Provisions of the Employers' Liability Act to seamen.
(f) A Mining Act providing for the proper ventilation and safety in Gold, Coal and other Mines.
(g) All Inspectors under any Act of Parliament requiring practical knowledge to be appointed from workers in their respective trades and occupations.
(h) Prohibition of the Importation of Chinese and Coolie laborers and of laborers under contract.
(i) The establishment of a Department of Labor
(j) The establishment by law of Courts of Conciliation for the Settlement of Disputes between Employers and Employees.

3rd. - SOCIAL REFORM

(a) The application of the principle of the Referendum to the Opening of Public Libraries, Museums, and Art Galleries on Sundays.
(b) The application of the same principle to the Closing of Public Houses on Sundays.
(c) No more Crown lands to be alienated, the land and material thereon being the common property of the people.
(d) A Tax on Land Values, exclusive of improvements, sufficient to secure for the community the unearned increment.
(e) A Cumulative Tax on all incomes over £300 per annum.

4th. - FEDERATION

Federation of the Colonies on a Democratic Basis

# Appendix F

## United Labor and Liberal Party

### (1894)

### 1. - CONSTITUTIONAL

(a) One adult, one vote.
(b) Provision for the enfranchisement of seamen and other persons following migratory occupations, and for recording their votes at all elections.
(c) The referendum to be applied for the settlement of vexed public questions.

### 2.-TAXATION

(a) A progressive tax on town and country land values, exclusive of improvements.
(b) A cumulative tax on all incomes over £200 per year; and a tax on absentees.

### 3. - SOCIAL REFORM

(a) The establishment of a State bank of issue.
(b) A law enacting a maximum labor day of eight hours, wherever practicable.
(c) The adoption of a minimum rate of wage in connection with all Government works.
(d) The establishment of a Department of Industry.
(e) The establishment by law of courts of conciliation and compulsory arbitration for the settlement of disputes between employers and employes.
(f) The prohibition of the importation of Chinese and other Asiatic labor; and of workmen under contract.
(g) That it is the duty of the Government to provide work for its own unemployed people, and make provision for the destitute.
(h) The maintenance and perfection of the policy of Protection.

### 4. - FEDERATION.
To be consummated by a convention elected directly by the people to draw up a Federal Constitution, such constitution to be eventually submitted to the people by means of the referendum for acceptance or rejection.

# Appendix G

## Platform of the People's Party [Bendigo] (1894)

Abolition of Plural Voting.   One general roll on the basis of One Man One Vote.   An Absent Voters' Bill to provide for those following migratory occupations to record their votes at Parliamentary Elections.   Extension of the Hours of Polling from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m.   A Law enacting a Maximum Labor Day of Eight Hours wherever applicable.   Amendment of the Factories and Shops Act.   Extension of the provisions of the Employers' Liability Act to all workers.   A Mining Act providing for proper ventilation and safety in gold, coal, and other mines.   All Inspectors under any Act of Parliament requiring practical knowledge to be appointed from workers in their respective trades and occupations.   Prohibition of the importation of Chinese, Coolie, Hindoo, Kanaka, Asiatic, and other laborers and persons under contract.   The establishment of a Department of Labor.   The establishment by law of Courts of Conciliation and arbitration for the settlement of disputes between employers and employees.

A law to establish the principle of the Referendum (vote by the people) for the settlement of vexed public questions.   No more Crown Lands to be alienated, the land and material therein being the common property of the people.

A Tax on Land Values, exclusive of improvements.   An Income Tax on all incomes over £200 per annum.   Abolition of certain Taxes that are now in force - Primage duties, and duties on Sugar, Tea, Coffee, Cocoa, Stock, &c. and on any other necessaries of life that are not produced in the colony.

Federation of the colonies on a Democratic basis.

# Appendix H

## United Labor Party of Victoria:
## Fighting Platform

### (1897)

(a) One Adult One Vote.

(b) The Referendum to be applied to the settlement of vexed public questions.

(c) Progressive tax on land values, town and country, without exemptions, exclusive of improvements.

(d) The establishment of a State Bank.

(e) The establishment of a Department of Labor with a responsible Minister.

(f) The establishment by law of Courts of Conciliation and Compulsory Arbitration for the settlement of disputes between employers and employees.

(g) The maintenance and perfection of the policy of Protection, the adoption of the eight hours system, a trades union wage in all protected industries and the abolition of all revenue duties.

(h) The establishment of a Pension Fund for Aged Persons.

(i) The sustaining of Village Settlements and the creation of a body of small landholders in contra-distinction to large ones.

(j) Provision for enfranchisement of seamen and others following migratory occupations.

(k) A cumulative tax on all incomes over £200 per year.

(l) That with a view of preventing undesirable aliens being brought into the Colony by sea and land, a poll tax of £100 be imposed on Chinese and other Asiatics.

(m) No further alienation of land.

(n) Federation to be consummated by a convention elected directly by the people to draw up a federal constitution, such constitution to be eventually submitted to the people by means of the referendum for acceptance or rejection.

# Appendix I

## The *Tocsin* Platform

### (1897)

## CONSTITUTIONAL

1. One Adult, One Vote.
2. One General Electors' Roll, to be compiled solely by the State, with Triennial Census as Basis.
3. The Effectual Enfranchisement of Seamen, Shearers, and other following migratory occupations.
4. Payment of Members of BOTH Houses.
5. Legislative Initiative and the Referendum
6. Legislative Council Reform in the direction of abolition.
7. Election of Members of Parliament by an Absolute Majority.
8. Repeal of the Purification of Rolls Act.
9. Purity of Elections.
10. Annual Parliaments, accompanied by State Payment of election expenses, abolition of the deposit, increase of signatories to nominations, and the institution of equal electoral districts.
11. A Progressive tax on Land Values, exclusive of improvements.

## INDUSTRIAL

12. Maintenance of the Independence of the Labour Party.
13. A Department of Labour.
14. A Universal Maximum Labour Day of Eight Hours.
15. A Universal Minimum Wage.
16. A Universal Saturday Half-Holiday.
17. The Abolition, as far as possible, of all Sunday Labour.
18. Court of Arbitration for Labour Disputes.
19. State Provision of Work for its Unemployed.
20. The Exclusion of all Undesirable Immigrants and of Workmen under Contract.
21. Factories Reform, including the election of Factories Inspectors, male and female.
22. The Perfection of the Policy of Protection.
23. Old Age Pensions.

24. Direct Employment of Labour by the State.

25. Establishment of the Principle of the Employers' Liability.

26. Abolition of all Laws which Place the Women, whether a private or public capacity, at a Disadvantage as compared with the Man.

27. The Federation of Trades.

28. The General Fraternal Organisation of the Workers.

## GENERAL

29. Public Payment for ALL Public Services.

30. A State Bank.

31. Suppression of Fraudulent Adulteration

32. The Repression of Private Monopolies, Rings, and Trusts.

33. Companies Reform.

34. Mining Law Reform, including State Ownership of Coal Mines.

35. Charities Reform.

36. Law Reform -

(a) The Remedy of all Abuses in the Law, the repeal of all Barbarous and Obsolete Acts, and the reduction of the Cost of Law Proceedings in the direction of Free Justice.

(b) Codification of the Law.

(c) Court of Criminal Appeal.

(d) Abolition of Flogging and Capital Punishment.

(e) Prison Reform.

(f) Compensation to Persons Accused, Imprisoned, or Condemned unjustly.

37. Libel Law Amendment with reference to public utterances.

38. Removal of the Disabilities of Illegitimate Children, including provision for Legitimation by Subsequent Marriage.

39. The Protection of Neglected Children.

40. Abolition of Imprisonment for debt in any form.

41. Drastic Reform of the Law of Inheritance, including provision for the recognition of the claims of widows and children and for increased progressive succession duties.

42. Patents, Trade Marks, and Copyrights Reform.

43. Appointment of a Public Trustee.

44. Effective State Supervision of the Food Supply.

45. The State Monopoly of Narcotics and Stimulants.

46. State Dispensaries and Medical Services.

47. Abolition of "Spec." Selling in Wheat. &c.

48. No Further Alienation of Crown Lands.

49. The Approximation of Agricultural and Pastoral Titles to Mining Titles

50. Preservation of Commons and Public Reserves and the Opening of all Closed Roads.

51. Nationalisation of Water Frontages.

52. Nationalisation of Victorian Shipping.

53. Application of Victorian Laws to all Shipping in Victorian Waters.

54. Abolition of Port Charges on Shipping.

55. The Democratisation of the Municipalities.

56. Defence Reform.

57. Reform of the System of Government Borrowing.

58. Extension of the Principles of Beneficial Co-operation towards the Ultimate Socialisation of the Means of Production and Distribution.

59. Educational Reform, including -

(a) The Maintenance of the Principles of Free, Secular, and Compulsory Education.

(b) The Provision of State Secondary and Technical Schools for Qualified Pupils and a Democratic University.

60.State Insurance, including Insurance against Want of Employment and Sickness.

61. To Bring the People Nearer to Art and Art Nearer to the People.

62. A State Theatre.

63. Purification of Sport.

64. Non-recognition of titles of "Nobility".

65. A Free *Hansard* .

66. Free Railways.

67. A State Pawn-shop and the Repression of Usury.

68. The Abolition of Class Privilege.

69. Opposition to any iniquitous tendencies of "Freedom of Contract".

70. To Raise the Social, Industrial, and Intellectual Status of those Units of the Community who have been rendered least effective by the conditions of society.


FEDERATION


71. The Consummation of Federation by a Convention elected directly by the People of all the states to draw up a Federal Constitution, such

Constitution to be eventually submitted to the People by Means of the Referendum.

72. Initiative.

73. Referendum of the whole of the people of Australia.

74. A Watchful Attitude Towards Federation.

# Appendix J

## Workers' Political League

### (1899)

## 1. - CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM.

(a) One Adult  One Vote
(b) Three Months' Residence in the Colony to be Qualification for the Franchise.
(c) Provisions to enable Electors changing their Residence, or when travelling to Effectually Exercise the Franchise.
(d) Abolition of all Property Qualifications in connection with Parliamentary Elections.
(e) Payment of all Parliamentary Representatives.
(f) The Referendum to be applied to the Settlement of Vexed Political Questions.

## 2 - LAND REFORM

(a) Abolition of the Further Sales of Crown Lands.
(b) Resumption by the State of Large Estates suitable for Agriculture, and the leasing of same in small Farming Areas, on the Perpetual Lease System.
(c) The Opening of Closed Roads where necessary for the convenience of the public.
(d) Taxation of Land to be based upon its Unimproved value, Improvements to be exempt.

## 3 - INDUSTRIAL REFORM

(a) The Establishment of a Department of Labour with a responsible Minister.
(b) The establishment by Law of Courts of Conciliation and Compulsory Arbitration, for the Preservation and Settlement of Industrial Disputes.
(c) Eight Hours to be the Legal Maximum Working Day in all occupations when practicable.
(d) The general Extention [sic] of the Minimum Wage Provisions and sanitary regulations of the Factories Act.
(e) All Government Work to be executed in the Colony, without the intervention of contractors.
(f) State Pension for Aged and Infirm Citizens.

## GENERAL

(a) The Establishment of a State Bank.
(b) Exclusion of Undesirable Aliens.
(c) Federation of the Australian Colonies, under a flexible Constitution.

# Appendix K

## Victorian Labor Senate Platform

### (1901)

We are issuing this manifesto as a warning and a guide to the electors. The labour party are contending for popular rights against class interests. They will advocate and work for the following:-

1. The widest franchise.

2. For protection to the worker.

3. Substantial encouragement to the agriculturalist and his products.

4. For nationalising federal territory.

5. For the abolition of black labour.

6. For a check on rash borrowing.

7. For a living wage to workers on all contracts let by the Federal Parliament.

8. For a federal bank.

9. For a citizen soldiery.

10. For encouragement for new and important industries within the Commonwealth.

11. For the initiative and the referendum.

12. For the consolidation of state debts and the federal control of railways.

13. That factory legislation shall be made a federal matter.

14. Conciliation and compulsory arbitration in industrial disputes. extending beyond the limits of any one state.

15. Invalid and old-age pensions.

# Appendix L

## Political Labor Council of Victoria

### (1901)

### FEDERAL PLATFORM

One adult one vote.

Amendment of the Constitution, providing for the Initiative and the National Referendum

- (a) For the alteration of the Constitution;
- (b) substitution of the National Referendum for the Double Dissolution in the settlement of dead-locks between the two Houses.

Total exclusion of coloured or other undesirable races.

Old Age Pensions.

Fiscal Question - All candidates in the Labour interest must be pledged to a Protectionist policy.

### STATE PLATFORM

One adult one vote.

The Referendum to be applied to the settlement of vexed public questions.

Progressive tax on land values, town and country, without exemptions, exclusive of improvements.

The establishment of a State Bank.

The establishment of a Department of Labour with a responsible Minister.

The establishment by law of Courts of Conciliation and Compulsory Arbitration for the settlement of disputes between employers and employes.

The maintenance and perfection of the policy of Protection, the adoption of the eight hours system, a trades union wage in all protected industries, and the abolition of all revenue duties.

The establishment of a Pension Fund for aged persons.

The sustaining of village settlements and the creation of a body of small landholders in contradistinction to large ones.

Provision for enfranchisement of seamen and other following migratory occupations.

A cumulative tax on all incomes over £200 per year.

That with a view of preventing undesirable aliens being brought into the colony by sea and land, a poll tax on £100 be imposed on Chinese and other Asiatics.

No further alienation of land.

Reform of the upper House on the electoral basis of the Legislative Assembly, with single electorates.

# Appendix M

## Political Labor Council Platform (1903)

### FEDERAL PLATFORM

1. Maintenance of a White Australia.
2. Compulsory Arbitration.
3. Old Age Pensions.
4. Nationalisation of Monopolies.
5. Citizen Defence Force.
6. Restriction of Public Borrowing.
7. Navigation Laws.

### GENERAL PLATFORM

1. Maintenance of a White Australia.
2. Compulsory Arbitration to settle industrial disputes, with provision for the exclusion of the legal profession.
3. Old Age Pensions.
4. Nationalisation of Monopolies.
5. Citizen Military Force and Australian-owned Navy
6. Restriction of Public Borrowing.
7. Navigation Laws to provide (a) for the protection of Australian shipping against unfair competition; (b) registration of all vessels engaged in the coastal trade; (c) the efficient manning of vessels; (d) the proper supply of life-saving and other equipment; (e) the regulation of hours and conditions of work; (f) proper accommodation for passengers and seamen; (g) proper loading gear and inspection of same.
8. Commonwealth Bank of Deposit and Issue and Life and Fire Insurance Department, the management of each to be free from political influence.
9. Federal Patent law, providing for simplifying and cheapening the registration of patents.
10. Uniform industrial legislation; amendment of Constitution to provide for same.

### STATE PLATFORM

(a) One adult one vote.
(b) Initiative and referendum.
(c) The establishment of a State Bank.
(d) The establishment of a Department of Labour with a responsible Minister.
(e) The legalising of the eight hour system and a minimum wage for all workers.
(f) The establishment by law of Courts of Compulsory Arbitration between employers and employees.
(g) The maintenance and extension of technical education by the State.
(h) Free, primary, secondary and University education with all necessary requisites provided by the State.

(i) Progressive tax on land values, town and country, without exemptions, exclusive of improvement.

(j) The sustaining of village settlements and the creation of small landholders under a system of perpetual lease, with periodical valuations.

(k) No further alienation of Crown land.

(l) Pensions for all aged or disabled persons.

(m) A cumulative tax on all incomes over £200 per year.

(n) Reform of the State Constitution.

# Appendix N

## Political Labor Council of Victoria
## Mining Platform, 1905

1. Consolidation of Mining Acts
2. That forest and timber reserves be placed under the control of the Mines Department
3. That all dividend-paying mining companies be compelled to establish a reserve fund
4. Abolition of the royalty system.
5. Liberal financial assistance to mining, particularly to encourage bona-fide prospecting in new fields.
6. A judicious system of rewards for the discovery of payable alluvial leads or quartz lodes.
7. To oppose unreasonable consolidation of leases, particularly in quartz districts.
8. To abolish shepherding of leases.
9. Increased powers of mining boards.
10. To secure sufficient ventilation of mines.
11. To secure liberal tributing conditions.
12. To secure shorter hours of labor for miners working in overheated mines.
13. A rigid system of sanitation of mines.
14. Suppression of the dust nuisance and fumes from explosives.
15. Compulsory escape drives in all alluvial mines.
16. That the principle of arbitration for the settlement of disputes be applied to mining.
17. Government subsidy towards Worn-out Miners' Fund.
18. Guarantees by mining directors for the payment of miners and enginedrivers' wages when a mine ceases to work.
19. Preservation of young timber in the interests of mining industry.
20. Public enquiry into the cause of all mining accidents.
21. Institution of a working week of five and a half days.
22. That an annual prospecting licence be issued by the Mines department, stating the area granted.

# Appendix O

## Political Labor Council of Victoria,

## State Platform (1909)

### LAND POLICY

1. Compulsory resumption of land for closer settlement.
2. (a) No further alienation of Crown land.
(b) Restriction of the aggregation of large estates.
(c) The establishment of a State Forestry Department.
(d) Fair rent boards.
(e) State advanced to settlers.
3. The sustaining of village settlements, and the creation of smallholders under a system of perpetual lease, with periodical valuations.

### FINANCIAL POLICY

4. Restriction of Public Borrowing, except for conversion of existing loans.
5. A graduated tax on the unimproved value of land, subject to an exemption of £500, portion of proceeds to be applied to a reduction of railway freights and fares.
6. A cumulative tax on incomes over £200 per year.
Note. - This resolution was carried unanimously by Annual Conference, March, 1907:- "The Conference regrets that any misconception exists in relation to the respective fields of operation of the land and income taxes, and affirms the principle that the income tax is not intended to apply to land, or the produce of land that is subject to a land tax."
7. The establishment of a State bank, and extension of the Credit Foncier system to the whole State.
8. The establishment of a State Life, and General Fire Insurance Department.

### CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

9. (a) One adult one vote (State or Municipal)
(b) Electoral Reform - To provide proper machinery for the true representation of the people, and the general adoption of the Federal method of enfranchisement.
10. Initiative and Referendum.

11. Abolition of the Legislative Council.

12. Abolition of State Governorship.

13. Amendment of the Local Government Act, in order to facilitate the realisation of the Municipal Platform.

14. (a) Civil equality of men and women.

(b) Full political rights to public servants.

## INDUSTRIAL REGULATION

15. (a) The establishment of a Department of Labor, with a responsible Minister.

(b) Abolition of private registry offices, and establishment of Central Labour Bureau, with branches throughout the State.

16. The legalisation of the eight-hour system and a minimum wage for all workers.

17. Equal pay for equal work.

18. The establishment by law of Courts of Compulsory Arbitration between employers and employees.

## EDUCATIONAL

19. (a) Education - Primary, Secondary, Technical, and University - to be free and secular; with all requisites provided by the State.  Primary education to be compulsory.

(b) The maintenance and extension of Technical education by the State.

(c) Free night schools for persons over 16 years of age.

(d) Government to provide breakfast and dinner to all children attending the State schools.

## SOCIAL

20. (a) Adequate pensions for all aged or disabled persons.

(b) Children's pensions.

(c) State system of medical aid, under which all women shall have the right to obtain free necessary medical attention during periods of maternity.

(d) State control and administration of charitable institutions such as hospitals and asylums.

21. Socialisation of the drink traffic.

22. Family Homes Protection Act, to exempt family homes, registered under the Act, to the value of £2000, from seizure under execution or otherwise.

## COLLECTIVE ORGANISATION OF INDUSTRY

23. The establishment of State farms, mines, factories, and shops, for the purpose of affording employment, under Government supervision, to citizens requiring it. The employes to be as far as possible the consumers of the wealth they produce, and to receive as wages an equivalent of the net total produced.

24. (a) State marketing of produce.

(b) State advances against produce for export.

# Appendix P

## Catholics in Melbourne, 1901

| | |
|---|---|
| Brighton | 12.13 |
| Brunswick | 20.60 |
| Caulfield | 11.71 |
| Collingwood | 22.58 |
| Essendon | 16.22 |
| Fitzroy | 22.06 |
| Flemington & Kensington | 23.87 |
| Footscray | 18.93 |
| Hawthorn | 13.73 |
| Kew | 17.69 |
| Malvern | 13.00 |
| Melbourne | 29.09 |
| Northcote | 18.29 |
| North Melbourne | 35.26 |
| Oakleigh | 15.95 |
| Prahran | 13.82 |
| Port Melbourne | 24.68 |
| Richmond | 26.05 |
| South Melbourne | 23.66 |
| St. Kilda | 17.97 |
| Williamstown | 17.47 |

Source: *Census of Victoria*, 1901

# Appendix Q

## Unions Affiliated with the Political Labor Council, c.1914

Agricultural Implement Makers
Amalgamated Society of Engineers
Amalgamated Ironfoundries' Employees
Amalgamated Miners' Employes Association
Artificial Manure Workers'
Australian Institute of Marine Engineers
Australian Workers' Union
Bakers
Bedstead and Fender Makers
Bill Posters
Bootmakers
Bookbinders and Paper Rulers
Brass Workers
Bread Carters
Bricklayers
Brushmakers
Builders' Labourers
Butchers
Brick, Tile and Pottery
Cardboard Box and Carton
Carpenters and Joiners
Carters and Drivers
Cab Owners and Drivers
Candle, Starch, Soap and Soda
Certificated Engine Drivers
Cigar Makers
Clerks and Book-keepers
Coachmakers
Confectioners
Coopers
Cycle Trade Employes
Dock Yard and Ship Labourers
Domestic Workers
Electrical Workers
Federal Iron, Brass and Steel Moulders
Fellmongers
Felt Hatters
Felt Hat Trimmers
Firewood, Coal and Hay Employes
Furniture Trades
Federated Tanners and Leather Dressers
Federated Clothing Trades
Farriers
Federated Tobacco Workers
Glass Bottle Blowers

Hairdressers and Wigmakers
Hawkers and Dealers
Hotel and Caterers' Employes
Ironworkers' Assistants
Licensed Collectors
Light Ironmoulders
Liquor Trades Employes
Lithographers
Marble and Stone Workers
Marine Store and Bottle Yard Employes
Operative Masons
Match Workers
Mildura Workers' Union
Millers
Millet Broom Makers
Amalgamated Musicians' Union
Municipal Employes
Painters and Decorators
Picture Frame Makers
Plasterers
Plumbers
Port Phillip Eight Hours' Stevedores
Rubber Workers
Rural Workers
Saddlers Union
Saw Mill Employes
Shop Assistants and Warehouse Employes
Seamen
Sewerage and General Labourers
Straw Hat Makers
Stage Employes
Sugar Refiners
Supernumeraries
Timber Stackers and Sorters
Tinsmiths
Typographical Society
Travellers, Canvassers, Collectors' Agents
Victorian Coal Miners'
Victorian Wool and Grain Stores Employes
Wharf Labourers (Melbourne)

Source: Political Labor Council of Victoria, *List of Affiliated Unions*, Labor Call [Printer], Melbourne, n.d [c.1914], in AIMU, Minute Book, 1908-10, UMA 2/1/1/3.

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